

**Building a State in Exile:
Women in the African National Congress, 1960-1990**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines women's participation in the African National Congress (ANC) during its exile years, from 1960 to 1990. In the 1960s, the ANC was first a primarily diplomatic and military organization, comprising only about 5,000 members, based in military camps in eastern Africa, and offices in Zambia, Tanzania, and London. But following the 1976 uprisings inside South Africa, which sent upwards of fifteen thousand young adults into exile, the ANC found itself responsible for a huge new membership who depended on the ANC for shelter, food, education, and medical care. In response, the ANC developed a rudimentary 'state in exile', with departments of healthcare, education, and justice, largely based in an ANC community in Tanzania. My dissertation is the first historical work to examine this process in detail. I first trace the ANC's early diplomatic efforts, arguing that the organization, including several high-profile women diplomats, consciously foregrounded gender equality as a main plank in its platform, even before the events of 1976. I then turn to the shift that occurred after 1976, and examine ANC authorities' efforts to develop birth control programming, care for pregnant women, and daycares. In so doing, I argue that the ANC unexpectedly found itself confronting issues that are still major challenges in most countries today: how to guarantee the equality of women, and their participation in society, in practice. The ANC's debates over these issues, I argue, tell us a great deal about life within the ANC, revealing tensions between junior and senior members, and between men and women. I close by examining the ANC's efforts to address gender-based violence in exile, including delving into the post-exile period to consider the ways violence has been remembered and narrated in the years since the ANC's return to

South Africa. In its entirety, my dissertation paints a detailed picture of everyday life in exile, illuminating both the multiple ideologies informing the ANC's practice, and the practical challenges of realizing ideals in a resource-constrained environment.

PRÉCIS

Cette dissertation porte sur la participation des femmes dans le Congrès national africain (ANC) au cours de ses années en exil (1960-1990). Dans les années 60, l'ANC était d'abord une organisation diplomatique et militaire, composée de seulement 5000 membres, basée dans leurs camps militaires en Afrique de l'est et dans ses bureaux situés en Zambie, en Tanzanie, et à Londres. Après les soulèvements de 1976 à l'intérieur de l'Afrique du Sud, une situation qui a provoqué la fuite en exil de plus de 15000 jeunes adultes, l'ANC s'est retrouvé responsable pour la fourniture d'abri, de nourriture, d'éducation, et de soins médicaux pour cette immense ensemble de nouveaux adhérents. En réponse, l'ANC a élaboré un «état en exil» élémentaire, avec des départements de santé, éducation, et justice, principalement basée dans une communauté de l'ANC en Tanzanie. Cette dissertation constitue la première tentative à examiner ce processus en détail. Tout d'abord, j'analyse les premières actions diplomatiques de l'ANC, en estimant que l'organisation, y compris plusieurs femmes diplomates bien connus, a consciemment souligné l'égalité des sexes comme un des axes principaux de son programme, même avant les événements de 1976. Le deuxième point porte sur le changement après 1976, en examinant les actions des autorités de l'ANC de développer des méthodes contraceptives, soins médicaux des femmes enceintes, et des garderies. Ce faisant, je signale que l'ANC était confronté, de façon

inattendue, par de nombreux enjeux qui demeurent des grands défis pour la plupart des sociétés d'aujourd'hui: comment garantir l'égalité des sexes et l'égalité de participation sociale dans la pratique. Les débats au sein de l'ANC sur ces questions nous en dit long sur la caractèrè de la vie à l'intérieur de l'ANC en révélant les tensions entre la jeunesse et les plus âgées, entre hommes et femmes. Je conclus en examinant les actions de l'ANC à aborder la question de la violence contre des femmes dans les années en exil, et en étudiant la période post-exil pour réfléchir sur les façons dans lesquelles la violence s'inscrit dans la mémoire et dans la narration de l'histoire depuis le retour de l'ANC en Afrique du Sud. Dans sa totalité, la dissertation dépeint également un portrait détaillé de la vie quotidienne en exil en faisant la lumière sur les idéologies diverses en arrière-plan de la politique de l'ANC, et les défis de pratique de la réalisation des idéaux dans un environnement à ressources limitées.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED

Libraries and Archives Abbreviations

Bodleian	Bodleian Library, Oxford
ICS	Institute for Commonwealth Studies, London
Mayibuye	Mayibuye Archives, Cape Town
SAHA	South African History Archive, Johannesburg
UCT	University of Cape Town Manuscripts, Cape Town
UFH	University of Fort Hare, Liberation Movements Archive, Alice, South Africa
Wits	Wits Historical Papers, Johannesburg

Other Acronyms

AAPSO – Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organization

AAWC – All-Africa Women’s Congress

ANC – African National Congress

FEDSAW – Federation of South African Women

GDR – German Democratic Republic

MK – Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) – ANC military wing

NEC – National Executive Committee (of ANC)

PAC – Pan Africanist Congress

PAWO – Pan African Women’s Organization

RPC – Regional Political Council (of ANC)

SOMAFCO – Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (ANC school)

VOW – *Voice of Women*, ANC women’s newspaper

WIDF – Women’s International Democratic Federation

WSEA – Women’s Section of East Africa (my abbreviation, for convenience)

INTRODUCTION

In 1978, newly exiled African National Congress (ANC) member Baleka Mbete-Kgositsile published an article in the ANC women's newspaper, *Voice of Women*, describing the choices that led her into politics, and out of South Africa. Vivid and personal, the piece contrasts the brutality of the apartheid state with the physicality of Mbete-Kgositsile's motherhood. She describes being beaten by the police at a pro-FRELIMO rally in Durban in 1974, recalling the "incredible pain as an ugly police boot lands inches away from Nonkululeko's head, who was to be born two months later." She describes how the police later separated her from her baby and "locked her up in a stinking cell. They couldn't be bothered with the sick child or the throbbing breasts of the mother which makes her scream for the baby to breastfeed it."¹ Posing life under the violence of the apartheid state as irreconcilable with responsible motherhood, Mbete-Kgositsile uses this juxtaposition to explain her choice to enter exile, leaving behind her own children. Although she had to abandon her own children, she did so for the sake of the many black South African children, "our life, our future, mowed down by bullets from the guns of the Boers." Her own love for these children, she argued, made it impossible for her to ignore apartheid, and incited her to enter politics, participating in rallies and demonstrations, and eventually fleeing the country.

Mbete-Kgositsile's piece presents a compelling appeal, arguing that women in South Africa should sacrifice their own immediate maternity for the good of all South African

¹ "International Year of the Child – 1979," Baleka Kgositsile, *Voice of Women*, 1978, issue 3, p.6, MCH01-22, Mayibuye. Baleka Mbete-Kgositsile was known only as Baleka Kgositsile in this period – this is how her name appears in the ANC archive. However, she now goes by Baleka Mbete or Mbete-Kgositsile. For clarity, I will use the latter here.

children, posed as the prime victims of apartheid, and the potential citizens of a future and liberated nation. The piece's intended audience would have been both women inside South Africa (copies of the *Voice of Women* were sporadically smuggled into South Africa), and other women in exile, as well as members of other organizations sympathetic to the ANC's cause, who received copies of the publication. As such, Mbete-Kgositsile's piece can be read in the vein of other stories and images that the ANC and other liberation organizations produced, which foregrounded a vision of war-like motherhood.

But as persuasive as the piece is, Mbete-Kgositsile's narrative collapses in on itself, under the weight of the experiences it seeks to capture. Her painful words highlight the challenges of maternity within the exiled ANC. She writes, "I hope my son will grow up to understand that it was because of love that I cannot begin to explain that he had to be motherless at that tender age." The love she "cannot begin to explain" can be read in two senses – a love for her child that could not be resolved except by leaving him (because to stay would condemn both of them to a life of suffering), and a love for freedom or politics, which required her to leave him behind. Mbete-Kgositsile's words thus index the contested place of motherhood and children in the ANC, as young women entered exile and sought to reconcile their pregnancies, and children, with their political commitments.

Read within the larger narrative of Mbete-Kgositsile's trajectory in exile, the article appears as one piece in a complicated puzzle. In a recent memoir, Mbete-Kgositsile describes leaving her children not once, but twice – the first time to enter exile in Swaziland, and the second time, when she was forced to leave Swaziland after reuniting with her family, travelling into Mozambique and eventually Tanzania. Her children would finally join her three years later. But she also describes having three more children in exile –

despite being castigated for it by senior ANC women, who told her to focus on the struggle. She also recounts her role in establishing childcare facilities in exile to support young ANC women who fell pregnant.² Mbete-Kgositsile's choices provide a provocative introduction to the questions the ANC and its members confronted around pregnancy, love, sexuality, and family in the External Mission.

Between the 1950s, when members of the ANC first began to establish military camps and diplomatic posts outside South Africa, and 1990, when the South African government unbanned the ANC and allowed its exiled members to return, some 20,000 people left South Africa to join the ANC. The majority of these people were men, but many, particularly in later years, were women. Mbete-Kgositsile's experiences draw attention to three key ways in which gender, and women, mattered in the ANC's exile history. First, her self-representation in both her 1978 and 2012 writings highlight the lived contradictions between personal motherhood and what might be termed 'political motherhood.' In seeking political participation, and in living out their political commitments, women in the ANC found themselves negotiating difficult relationships with their own families. Secondly, despite leaving children behind in South Africa, Mbete-Kgositsile had children in exile, building a family in this space. Many other women in the ANC, particularly women who left South Africa in the 1970s, would make the same choice. As young women had children, the organizational structure of the ANC found itself confronting questions more familiar to nation-state government than political parties, including what kind of care to provide to ANC children, and how to do so. Debates over these issues preoccupied ANC membership and leadership at all levels in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as the organization and its

² Baleka Mbete, "In for the Long Haul," in *Prodigal Daughters: Stories of South African Women in Exile*, ed. Lauretta Ngcobo (Durban: University of Kwazulu Natal Press, 2012).

members sought to define the limit and extension of what members owed the organization, and vice versa. And thirdly, Mbete-Kgositsile's career reveals that women in exile were able to rise to high ranks inside the ANC. Mbete-Kgositsile built a formidable career for herself, one that included managing childcare provision in ANC locations in East Africa, but also representing the organization as a whole at ANC diplomatic missions in multiple countries. Throughout the 1980s, Mbete-Kgositsile travelled extensively in her work for the ANC. On returning to South Africa, Mbete-Kgositsile has continued to be powerful in politics – she has served as the Deputy President of South Africa, and is also the current Speaker of the National Assembly. She is also National Chairperson of the ANC.³ Her trajectory points to the influence small numbers of women were able to wield inside the ANC in exile, and also underscores the links between exile politics and contemporary South African politics.

These three facets of exiled women's experience form the core of this thesis - women's efforts to negotiate between the demand of motherhood and "politics", debates around how the ANC should accommodate pregnancies and young families, and women's international diplomatic work. Using gender as an analytical lens, this thesis asks how we can see the ANC differently when we take gender seriously; it also sheds light on the under-explored history of women in exile. It will argue first that using gender as a category of analysis provides us greater insight into the ANC's specific links with other leftist political organizations, allowing for a resituating of the ANC inside wider anti-colonial political networks, and secondly, that considering gender allows us to take seriously the debates over correct gendered behaviour that unfolded inside the organization. These heavily gendered debates, this thesis will demonstrate, reveal the tensions over loyalty,

³ "Baleka Mbete Personal Page," http://www.anc.org.za/list_by.php?by=Baleka%20Mbete (accessed December 12, 2014)

membership, and belonging that the ANC struggled with throughout this period. This thesis will first trace the diplomatic careers of the few powerful women who left South Africa in the early exile period, the 1960s, exploring their many travels and considering how they represented the ANC internationally, and how their work mattered to the organization internally. It will then turn to the shift that occurred in the ANC in the 1970s, as thousands of young people, including many young women, fled unrest inside South Africa and joined the ANC. These new members precipitated significant policy debate, as the ANC found itself responsible for providing basic welfare services, including shelter, education, and childcare for these new members. Since entering exile, the ANC had been mobilizing ideas of gender equality in its official publications, making this principle a plank in its policies. But it was the arrival of these new members, and the social demands they brought, I will argue, that made the ANC confront the meaning of gender equality in practice. Discussions around service provision, especially the prevention of pregnancy and the establishment of childcare, became occasions for debating appropriate gendered behavior. These discussions also occasioned debate over what members owed the ANC, in terms of loyalty and conduct, and what the ANC owed its members, in terms of responsibility and care. These negotiations were necessarily gendered, but involved considerations beyond gender. They underscore the vulnerability of the ANC in exile, reminding us of the contingency of the organization, the many apparently hopeless moments it faced, and the difficulties of negotiating between membership in a political organization, and everyday life in exile. In these ways, undertaking both a history of women and a gendered history of the ANC allows us to see more deeply into everyday life in the ANC in exile, its politics, preoccupations, and policies.

Historical Context

In 1960, the first members of the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa began setting up diplomatic missions outside of South Africa. High-profile leaders, including Nelson Mandela, toured multiple African countries in the early 1960s, soliciting diplomatic and military support for the ANC's campaign against the South African state. In 1964, the ANC established its first military camp outside South Africa, in Tanzania, with the support of the Tanzanian government and the Organization for African Unity (OAU).⁴ The ANC shared this first camp with its fellow liberation movements, FRELIMO (of Mozambique) and SWAPO (of Namibia), although ANC members soon predominated numerically – there were about 400 ANC cadres in the camp in the early 1960s. Some of these recruits came directly from South Africa, while others had been for training in Egypt or the USSR.⁵ The OAU, founded in Ethiopia in 1963, provided financial support to liberation movements, including the ANC, via its “Liberation Committee” throughout the years to come.⁶ In 1963, the main leadership of the ANC was arrested in the Rivonia raid, inside South Africa. After this moment, those members already abroad realised return would be impossible for the foreseeable future, and those who had escaped arrest inside the country began to leave in greater numbers.

⁴ Christian A. Williams, “Living in Exile: Daily Life and International Relations at SWAPO’s Kongwa Camp,” *Kronos* 37, no. 1 (2011): 62. See also Scott Thomas, *The Diplomacy of Liberation: The Foreign Relations of the African National Congress since 1960* (London; New York; New York: Tauris Academic Studies ; In the United States of America and Canada distributed by St. Martin’s Press, 1996).

⁵ Williams, “Living in Exile,” 62.

⁶ Williams 2011 p. 62

Established in 1912, the ANC had for the first decades of its existence functioned as a relatively genteel organization, focused on legal protest of South Africa's racist laws.⁷ The 1948 election of the apartheid government, and the resultant increase in racial legislation and suppression of dissent, along with growing popular resistance movements among black communities across the country, pushed the ANC in a more radical direction. In 1952, under the guidance of the militant Youth League, the ANC launched its first illegal actions, the Defiance Campaign, which saw thousands of volunteers offer themselves for arrest by peacefully violating segregation laws. The 1950s was a turbulent decade, with trade union activity, rural uprisings, mass women's protests against pass laws, bus boycotts, and squatter movements. This decade also saw increased cooperation across colour lines, as Africans, Indians, 'Coloured', and white South Africans worked together across the boundaries imposed by the apartheid state. Repression increased accordingly, with many arrests, including the mass arrests of the 1956 Treason Trial, which saw 156 people arrested and charged with treason. In 1960, the Pan-African Congress (PAC), a rival political formation to the ANC (formed by breakaway members from the ANC), organized a massive anti-pass protest. The event culminated in the Sharpeville Massacre of 21 March, 1960, when South African police fired upon unarmed protesters, killing 69 people. In the aftermath, the government banned the ANC and PAC, forcing the organizations to disband or continue their operations underground.⁸

⁷ Saul Dubow, *The African National Congress* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), Peter Limb, *The ANC's Early Years : Nation, Class and Place in South Africa before 1940* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010); Arianna Lissoni et al., eds., *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012); Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders, eds., *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives* (Cape Town: UCT press, 2013).

⁸ Pamela E. Brooks, *Boycotts, Buses, And Passes: Black Women's Resistance in the U.S. South and South Africa* (Amherst MA: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2008); Saul Dubow and Alan Jeeves, *South Africa's 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2005); Nomboniso Gasa, *Women in South African History: They*

In December of 1960, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) was formed – this was a military wing of the ANC. Its name meant “Spear of the Nation” in Zulu and Xhosa. Unlike the ANC, its membership was not restricted to Africans, and from the outset, white, Indian, and ‘Coloured’ South Africans played a prominent role, including in the command structures of MK. Members of the South African Communist Party (SACP), which had been underground since its own banning in 1950, played an important role in MK. The launch of MK’s sabotage operations, directed against symbols of the apartheid state, including electricity pylons, government offices (including those that administered the notorious passes), and other state infrastructure, marked the turn away from peaceful resistance. Scholars have debated the “turn to the armed struggle” in depth, with controversy centering on who in the ANC supported or opposed the move.⁹ For our purposes here, what’s important to note is the cooperation between the ANC and the SACP, which was to continue in exile, and the fact that the rise of armed struggle significantly raised the stakes inside the country. Participants in resistance could now be charged with much more serious crimes. And indeed, when the senior leadership of the ANC and MK was arrested at Rivonia in 1963, the members were charged with attempting to violently overthrow the state. They could have been sentenced to death, but received life sentences instead.

Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007); Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London; New York: Longman, 1983); Cheryl Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (London: Onyx Press, 1982).

⁹ Scott Couper, *Albert Luthuli: Bound by Faith* (Durban: University of Kwazulu Natal Press, 2010); Stephen Ellis, “The Genesis of the ANC’s Armed Struggle in South Africa 1948–1961,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37, no. 4 (2011): 657–76; Paul S. Landau, “The ANC, MK, and ‘The Turn to Violence’ (1960–1962),” *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 538–63.

After 1963, although resistance did not cease inside South Africa, underground networks were in tatters, and most of ANC leadership not in jail was based outside the country.¹⁰ From 1963 until the ANC's unbanning in 1990, then, the organization functioned as an exiled movement, and it was developments in exile that helped contribute to the ANC's eventual ability to take power in the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa. As historians have observed, understanding the exile period of the ANC's history is therefore key to understanding the organization more broadly.¹¹ Accordingly, many historians have examined the ANC's exile years, particularly in recent years, as more published and archival sources on these years have become available. While earlier studies tended to focus on the ANC's official military and diplomatic policy,¹² recent years have seen a turn towards social history, as scholars investigate life in particular sites, tensions within the organization, and the micro-politics of relationships between the ANC the SACP, and the nations that hosted both formations, in Africa, Europe, and the Eastern Bloc.¹³ But fewer studies have addressed the experiences of women inside the ANC during this period.

¹⁰ Raymond Suttner has persuasively argued that the ANC maintained some effective underground organizing even after Rivonia, but he acknowledges that the organization's work was massively set back by the arrests and the ongoing political repression and violence that followed. See Raymond Suttner, *The ANC Underground in South Africa, 1950-1976* (Boulder, Colo.: FirstForumPress, 2009).

¹¹ Thomas, *The Diplomacy of Liberation*.

¹² Howard Barrell, *Conscripts to Their Age: African National Congress Operational Strategy, 1976-1986* (University of Oxford, 1994); Howard Barrell, "The Turn to the Masses: The African National Congress' Strategic Review of 1978-79," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 1 (1992): 64-92; Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid: The Anc & the South African Communist Party in Exile* (Indiana University Press, 1992); Tom Lodge, "State of Exile: The African National Congress of South Africa, 1976-86," *Third World Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (January 1987): 1-27; Thomas, *The Diplomacy of Liberation*.

¹³ Steve Davis, "The ANC: From Freedom Radio to Radio Freedom," in *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives*, ed. Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), 117-41; Arianna Lissoni, "The South African Liberation Movements in Exile, 1945-1970" (School of Oriental and Asian Studies, 2008); Arianna Lissoni and Maria Suriano, "Married to the ANC: Tanzanian Women's Entanglement in South Africa's Liberation Struggle," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, no. 1 (2014): 129-50; Hugh Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia, 1963 to 1994* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana Media, 2013); Hugh Macmillan, "After Morogoro: The Continuing Crisis in the African National Congress (of South Africa) in Zambia, 1969-1971," *Social Dynamics* 35, no. 2 (2009): 295-311; Thula Simpson, "'The Bay and the Ocean': A History of the ANC in Swaziland, 1960-1979," *African Historical Review*

There can be no single or generalizable experience for women in the ANC at this time – although there were many shared experiences – because women operated in such different contexts. In the earliest generation of exiles, women leaving in the 1960s, the women who left were primarily those who had been heavily involved in politics inside South Africa, either in trade union or ANC politics, or both. The same is true for the early male exiles. (This would change for both men and women after 1976, as we shall see below.) The trajectories of these new exiles were shaped by race and class, although exile also diminished some of these distinctions. Earlier white exiles, men and women both, often had the resources to leave the country legally – they had access to passports, or at least exit permits (these documents enabled people to leave the country, but not return). Joe Slovo, for example, slipped out of the country semi-legally; his wife, Ruth First, joined him later, in a legal and well-publicized departure.¹⁴ Both were prominent Communists and activists, and Slovo was also (unbeknownst to the state) a member of MK's high command. Others left more surreptitiously – Ronnie Kasrils and his soon-to-be-wife Eleanor, for example, travelled in disguise and climbed the border fence to get into Bechuanaland (today's Botswana).¹⁵ Hilda and Rusty Bernstein also escaped over the Botswana border on foot, after Rusty Bernstein was acquitted at the Rivonia Trial.¹⁶ Many white South Africans had financial resources independent of the ANC, and many could access citizenship rights in the UK. As a result, these members could travel on British travel documents, rather than

41, no. 1 (2009): 90–117., Vladimir Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow*, Second Edition, Second edition edition (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2009).

¹⁴ Alan Wieder, *Ruth First and Joe Slovo in the War against Apartheid* (Monthly Review Press, 2013).

¹⁵ Ronald Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous: From Undercover Struggle to Freedom*, Rev. and further updated (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2004). See also interview with Eleanor Kasrils, in Hilda Bernstein, *The Rift: The Exile Experience of South Africans* (J. Cape, 1994).

¹⁶ Hilda Bernstein, *The World That Was Ours* (London: Heinemann, 1967).

international refugee documents, which were much more restrictive. Many white South Africans worked in positions outside of the ANC, for example in universities (Ruth First, Albie Sachs) or other similar types of work. While they may have viewed their 'real work' as being in "the movement," in practice, the ANC did not have to be responsible for their everyday needs.¹⁷ They could give time to the ANC in the evenings and weekends, and make income outside the organization. In these early days, most white women who entered exile, or who, once outside South Africa joined the ANC, were married or partnered to men who were in the ANC.

Black South Africans were more likely to leave the country in a clandestine manner, meaning they could bring fewer resources with them. In the early 1960s and into the early 1970s, new members leaving South Africa would be met by ANC representatives in frontline states, such as Bechuanaland (Botswana), Swaziland, or even Lesotho. The ANC representatives would then arrange for them to be transported, at first to Tanzania, where the ANC initially established its headquarters, and in later years, to Zambia, where the ANC moved their headquarters in 1967.¹⁸ Black South Africans tended to have fewer international connections outside the organization, and were more likely to work full-time inside the ANC's offices. (Some of the more high-profile members, of course, were very well connected, and had extensive experience with international travel prior to formally entering exile.) Some did find work outside the ANC, for example with local host

¹⁷ In her work on male memoirs of exile, Elaine Unterhalter makes the interesting point that these memoirs tend to elide or minimize the paid work the men did, and emphasize "the struggle" as their true work. As a result, it's hard to get a picture of how people actually made ends meet. Elaine Unterhalter, "The Work of the Nation: Heroic Masculinity in South African Autobiographical Writing of the Anti-Apartheid Struggle," *European Journal of Development Research* 12, no. 2 (December 2000): 157-78.

¹⁸ Hugh Macmillan, "The African National Congress of South Africa in Zambia: The Culture of Exile and the Changing Relationship with Home, 1964-1990* *," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2009): 308.

governments or in universities. Several women also worked as nurses. In a few notable cases, women's work subsidized their male partner's political pursuits – Adelaide Tambo worked as a nurse in London and held the family together while her husband Oliver Tambo led the ANC.¹⁹ Blanche La Guma, whose husband Alex La Guma was prominent in the SACP and the ANC, similarly worked as a midwife in London and supported the family that way.²⁰ But equally, there were cases where married women were as involved in politics as their husbands were – here we can think of Magdalena Resha, who was married to prominent ANC member Robert Resha, but had an extensive international career of her own, and also Gertrude Shope, who was as influential in the ANC as her trade unionist husband Mark Shope.²¹ Equally, as we shall see in Chapter One, some black women entered exile without a husband, and functioned as important political figures on their own.

Until the arrival of thousands of new recruits after the Soweto uprisings of 1976, numbers in exile were relatively small. Scholars have estimated that between 1960 and 1976, the ANC had approximately 5,000 members.²² There are no written statistics about how many of these were women. My best guess would be that, in this period, there were several hundred women in the organization. Like the men, these women were scattered across a series of locations, and worked in a variety of contexts – either full-time in MK, full-time in an ANC office, or part-time in an ANC office while working another “day job.” Most of the white women in the organization would have been based in London, although many,

¹⁹ Luli Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004).

²⁰ Blanche La Guma and Martin Klammer, *In the Dark with My Dress on Fire: My Life in Cape Town, London, Havana and Home Again*. (Chicago: Jacana Media, 2011).

²¹ Maggie Resha, *My Life in the Struggle = 'Mangoana Tsoara Thipa Ka Bohaleng* (London; Johannesburg: SA Writers ; Congress of South African Writers, 1991).

²² Shireen Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority* (Madison WI: Univ of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 95.

including Mary Turok and Eleanor Kasrils, spent a stint of time at the ANC offices in Dar es Salaam; Ruth First also spent significant amounts of time in Mozambique and Tanzania. Many black women members were also based in London, either temporarily or permanently (Adelaide Tambo, for example, lived there permanently, while Blanche La Guma and Ruth Mompati, whom we will meet in Chapter One, also spent time there in more short-term ways.) The majority of black women, however, seem to have been based in the African countries where the ANC operated.

Where the ANC could operate was contingent on international politics. At this time, the ANC was one of many liberation movements in Africa and beyond, seeking international endorsement and financial support. A great deal of the ANC's work in the early days focussed on getting sufficient funding to continue to exist, and seeking permission to operate in various countries. Ghana, for example, which would seem like a natural supporter, given its early independence and espousal of continent-wide liberation, preferred to support the PAC, mistrusting the ANC's relationships with white Communists. The ANC's presence in Ghana was always small as a result.²³ Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, on the other hand, was an early supporter of the ANC, hence the ANC's long presence in Dar es Salaam. Even after the ANC moved its operation headquarters to Lusaka, Zambia, they maintained personnel in Dar es Salaam, and later, Morogoro, a town several hundred kilometres from Dar. Tanzania was also the site of the ANC's first military camp, at Kongwa. In Tanzania, both in Dar es Salaam and at the camp, the ANC was one of multiple liberation

²³ Lissoni, "The South African Liberation Movements in Exile, 1945-1970," 160. Lissoni makes the interesting additional observation that Ghana's prestige was so high that the ANC avoided setting up offices elsewhere in West Africa – had they been perceived as operating elsewhere in the region, but not in Ghana, this would have dealt a serious blow to their credibility.

movements – FRELIMO, the Mozambican movement, and SWAPO (South West Africa People’s Organization), a Namibian movement, were also present.²⁴ The same was true after the ANC established a presence in Zambia; there, they would again have encountered members of SWAPO and FRELIMO, but also the MPLA (Angola), PAIGC (Guinea), ZAPU (Zimbabwe), and others. The Zambian government, however, preferred for the ANC not to conduct military operations inside its borders, and on several occasions, Zambian authorities arrested ANC members for storing weapons.²⁵ The situation was similarly touchy in Swaziland, where the ANC operated in a semi-clandestine manner, due to the presence of numerous South African state agents, but also because of the disagreements within Swazi political circles about how much support to accord to the ANC.²⁶ After Angola and Mozambique achieved independence in 1974, the ANC was able to do a lot from these countries, as the liberation movements that took over in each country were long-time allies of the ANC. There was considerable ANC presence in Mozambique, both military and diplomatic, and by the late 1970s, the majority of the ANC’s military camps were located in Angola. It’s important to underscore, though, that despite the support these countries provided to the ANC, in terms of granting residency rights and financial aid, ANC members were never entirely secure in these countries. Particularly by the 1980s, the South African state was aggressive in conducting cross-border raids (particularly in Lesotho, Swaziland, and Botswana, but they also did a full-scale military raid in Mozambique), and in carrying

²⁴ Kasrils reminisces about meeting FRELIMO cadres; indeed, a South African woman, Pamela Beira, famously married Marcelino dos Santos, a FRELIMO member who was to become the Deputy President of Mozambique. See Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*; Nadja Manghezi, *The Maputo Connection: The ANC in the World of Frelimo* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2009). For more on the cosmopolitan scene of Dar es Salaam, see Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

²⁵ Macmillan, “The African National Congress of South Africa in Zambia.”

²⁶ Simpson, “The Bay and the Ocean.”

out kidnappings and targeted executions. In addition to this real physical threat, the South African state applied strong political pressure on states that hosted the ANC. In 1984, South Africa succeeded in pressuring Mozambique into signing a non-aggression pact, the infamous “Nkomati Accord,” forcing ANC members to hide their weapons and vacate the country rapidly.²⁷ (South Africa continued to fund the counter-revolutionary group RENAMO, prolonging Mozambique’s civil war, in violation of the pact. The South African government is also widely suspected of having assassinated Mozambican president Samora Machel in 1986.)

In the background of all of this was the Soviet Union. The ANC had long-lasting connections to the USSR through the SACP. Many early ANC leaders, such as Moses Kotane and JB Marks, were also SACP members, and many had travelled extensively in the USSR prior to officially becoming “exiles.” From the earliest years of the ANC’s exile period, it received significant funding from the USSR, and many thousands of ANC members went to the Soviet Union for military and tactical training. Many ANC memoirists emphasized their positive experiences there, citing its non-racism and social progress.²⁸ (In recent years, these memoirists have reflected on how they only saw a partial picture of life in the Soviet Union – but most nevertheless insist on the real social gains that endured there.) Recent historical work provides greater detail about the exchanges between the USSR and the ANC.²⁹ However, the

²⁷ Manghezi provides vivid accounts of ANC cadres rushing out the back doors of their houses with grocery bags of grenades as the Mozambican police knocked on the front door. Manghezi, *The Maputo Connection*.

²⁸ Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*; La Guma and Klammer, *In the Dark with My Dress on Fire: My Life in Cape Town, London, Havana and Home Again*.; James Ngculu, *The Honour to Serve: Recollections of an Umkhonto Soldier* (Claremont [South Africa]: David Philip, 2009); Joe Slovo and Helena Dolny, *Slovo: The Unfinished Autobiography* (Randburg; London: Ravan Press ; Hodder & Stoughton, 1995).

²⁹ Irina Filatova, “The Lasting Legacy: The Soviet Theory of the National-Democratic Revolution and South Africa,” *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 507–37; Irina Filatova and Apollon Davidson, *The*

specifics of financing and military supply remain murky. In the early years of exile and prior to the exile period, ANC members also pursued relationships with China. Some prominent leaders visited China and received military training there.³⁰ However, following the Sino-Soviet split of the early 1960s, the ANC sided with the USSR, and broke off relationships with China.³¹

The ANC's involvement with the USSR has long been a source of controversy. Many western governments refused to support the ANC as a result, particularly during the height of the Cold War. In the past and still today, some critics have suggested the ANC was unduly influenced by the SACP, some going so far as to say the ANC was entirely run from Moscow.³² These debates are not the main topic of this thesis, but connections between the Soviet Union, East Germany, the SACP, and the ANC are evident throughout the coming chapters. I will underscore the influence that not just the Soviet Union, but a particular Soviet-inspired worldview, one guided by hope for a new world order, had on ANC members. I'll also point to the significant intellectual exchanges between ANC and SACP members, as well as with their hosts in a variety of communist or communist-inspired nations. But the evidence I present does not suggest any nefarious or secretive "communist influence" or "plotting" – instead, it suggests open discussion and collaboration, and a period of shared interests. Insofar as this thesis focuses on the Cold War and the ANC, it is

Hidden Thread: Russia & South Africa in the Soviet Era (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers SA, 2013); Shubin, *ANC*.

³⁰ Stephen Ellis, *External Mission* (South Africa: Jonathan Ball, 2012), 29.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 35., 54

³² Ellis and Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid*; Ellis, *External Mission*. For evidence that these ideas persist even today, see RW Johnson's blog piece, in which he blames the Marikana massacre in part on the ANC's past Soviet connections. RW Johnson, "After Marikana," *LRB Blog*, August 19, 2012, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2012/08/19/hsfbilliafrica-com/after-marikana/>.

interested in the cultural connections of this period, cultural here meaning not just literary and artistic connection, but also shared ideas and aspirations. In the words of Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza, these mobile ANC members can be seen as “travelers who moved across the blocs, and whose movements were not confined by the solid walls or iron curtains that purportedly divided Cold War worlds.”³³ What this meant in practice was that the ANC had offices not just in sympathetic African countries, but also in the USSR and the GDR.

Returning to the topic of women’s work within the ANC, we can say that women in the organization, like men, worked either in ANC offices in the ANC’s many sites, or, in a smaller number of cases, were based in the ANC’s military camps. Women working in ANC offices, whether in Zambia, Algeria, or the UK, or other of the ANC’s locations, would have done relatively similar work in the 1960s and 1970s. In these decades, the main work of the ANC – for men and women both – was to solicit support for the ANC, both material support (such as money and material aid in the form of supplies, training, and housing), and the more vague ‘moral support.’ In these decades, the ANC was insecure, vying with other liberation movements, such as the PAC, for the position of ‘sole legitimate representative of the South African people.’ It was also working to delegitimize the South African state, which still had much support around the world, and was waging a vigorous (and better funded) propaganda war of its own. ANC members, men and women both, in these years spent a great deal of time travelling to international conferences, giving speeches at events and demonstrations, and preparing publications to put forward their cause. In 1967, the ANC

³³ Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza, *De-Centering Cold War History: Local and Global Change* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 6.

began publishing its journal, *Sechaba*, which continued throughout the years of exile. Later in the 1970s, *Voice of Women* (VOW) was launched to highlight women's suffering in South Africa and women's experience in the liberation struggle – but even before VOW's inception, women had been front and central in the ANC's promotional material. Publications and speeches celebrated the achievements of a list of heroic women from the ANC, and also emphasized the apartheid government's unique and particular violence towards women and families. As I'll explore in the first chapter, women were a key symbol in the ANC's work, and were also active participants in the organization in these years, despite their small numbers. Although women worked in the ANC "general offices," they were also expected to participate in their regional "Women's Section." Everywhere where there were women affiliated to the ANC, these women were to constitute a Women's Section, which had the responsibility of organizing the women in the region, and inducting these women into full political participation in the ANC's work. As we shall see, the fortunes of various regional Women's Sections rose and fell during exile, and also changed significantly, as women's work in the organization changed.

Before 1976, there were probably fewer than thirty women who received military training, compared to several thousand men. But in these years, as I'll discuss in greater depth in the thesis, the ANC promoted equality between men and women as one of the main planks of its platform. While women have since complained about the sexism that nevertheless featured in the organization, it's still worth noting that the ANC officially did not discriminate, and indeed, celebrated the equality of men and women, including in its military. The differences between theory and practice in this regard are a central topic of this thesis - indeed, I argue

that gender policies in exile posed so many challenges in part because 'equality in theory' found itself forced to consider 'equality in practice' when the ANC took on the responsibility to develop practical service provision for men, women, and children. But before considering these eventual challenges, it is worth pausing at the first instance to consider that there was no necessary reason for the ANC to promote gender equality at all, however rhetorically, in the early 1950s and 1960s. That it chose to do so merits exploration.

1976 marked a sharp change in the exiled organization's fortunes, and indeed, precipitated the ANC's practical work on gender. The Soweto Uprisings inside South Africa led to harsh state crackdowns, resulting in the arrests of thousands of young people. In response, thousands more fled South Africa, most heading overland into Swaziland or Botswana. The ANC, as the most organized and established exiled South African organization, absorbed most of these young people – although some also joined the PAC, and others attempted to establish their own political formations. These new arrivals dramatically increased the size of the ANC – by the end of the 1980s, less than fifteen years after the Soweto uprisings, the ANC counted 20,000 members, in comparison with 5,000 before this influx.³⁴ They also changed the gender balance. In comparison to the earlier exiles, a higher proportion of these new members were women (though the majority were men). Also distinct from the earlier generation of exiles, these new recruits for the most part lacked prior international networks and connections. Many were also very young, some just in high school, others, university-aged. These factors meant that the ANC found itself becoming responsible for

³⁴ Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*, 95; Carla Tsampiras, "Sex in a Time of Exile: An Examination of Sexual Health, AIDS, Gender, and the ANC, 1980–1990," *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 649.

basic welfare functions on an unprecedented scale. The organization needed to provide food, shelter, and also education or employment to these young people, who had no other means of support.

Political scientist Tom Lodge has described the ANC that resulted as “a state in exile.”³⁵ As the ANC confronted the challenges these new members brought, it began to establish rudimentary state functions, including Departments of Health and Education, a Code of Conduct, and even a basic justice system. In addition, the ANC established a school, the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO). Construction on SOMAFCO began in 1979 in Morogoro, a Tanzanian community about 200 kilometres from Dar es Salaam. Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere had granted the ANC a large tract of land there, allowing them to build the school and establish a settlement. By the mid-1980s, the ANC community there numbered approximately 5,000; it was situated in what was effectively a suburb, Mazimbu, of the larger Tanzanian town of Morogoro. Although many new recruits wanted to join MK immediately, the ANC encouraged some to go to SOMAFCO instead. The purpose of the school was to train the next generation of South African leaders.³⁶

These new arrivals also generated tensions within the ANC. Many of the youth came from a different political tradition – because the ANC had been so debilitated inside South Africa after the early 1960s, the younger generation was less aware of the organization’s programs and history. More of the youth were influenced by Black Consciousness (BC). BC

³⁵T. Lodge, “State of Exile: The African National Congress of South Africa, 1976-86”, *Third World Quarterly*, 9,3 (1987)

³⁶ Sean Morrow, Brown Maaba, and Loyiso Pulumani, *Education in Exile: SOMAFCO, the African National Congress School in Tanzania, 1978-1992* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 2005).

thought had intellectual connections with international movements such as Black Power in the United States, as well as radical theology movements. In South Africa, its adherents emphasized a positive conceptualization of blackness, to counter apartheid's degradation of blackness, and also an inclusive definition of blackness. Rather than use the apartheid categories of African, Coloured, and Indian, BC thinkers redefined the identity of "black" to include anyone sharing in the experience of racial oppression in South Africa. It was therefore a movement of solidarity across the lines of some communities.³⁷ BC practice focussed on community work, for example providing health care in rural communities, motivated by a spirit of uplift and solidarity.³⁸ BC had its origins among university students in Natal, and while it spread more widely, its demographics tended to focus on university-aged people. Some of these university-aged activists entered exile and joined the ANC (well-known figures here include the writers Mongane Wally Serote and Willie Keorapetse Kgositsile). But the high-school aged students of Soweto were also influenced by BC thought, even if they were not formally implicated in BC structures. Politically, then, the new recruits differed from the ANC, which itself generated some friction. Training for the new recruits, whether in the military camps or at SOMAFCO, emphasized educating them about the history and policy of the ANC (see Figure One).

³⁷ Steve Biko and Aelred Stubbs, *I Write What I Like: Selected Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); N. Barney Pitso, *Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko & Black Consciousness* (Cape Town; London; Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: D. Philip ; Zed Books, 1991).

³⁸ Leslie Hadfield, "Biko, Black Consciousness, and 'the System' eZinyoka: Oral History and Black Consciousness in Practice in a Rural Ciskei Village," *South African Historical Journal* 62, no. 1 (2010): 78-99; Leslie Hadfield, "Challenging The Status Quo: Young Women And Men In Black Consciousness Community Work, 1970s South Africa," *The Journal of African History* 54, no. 02 (2013): 247-67.



Figure one: Theoretical training of guerillas in a camp of the African National Congress, July 14, 1982. Photo and copyright: AND-Zentralbild Berlin, GDR. Source: ANC Archives.³⁹

The new recruits also posed real security risks. By 1981, ANC leaders had become aware that the South African government was infiltrating spies and saboteurs amongst the new arrivals. In 1979, for example, an ANC camp in Angola, Novo Catengue, suffered a mass poisoning, and was later bombed by the South African Defense Forces.⁴⁰ Both events revealed that the South African state had access to ANC inside information. It's difficult to get a sense of how many spies did gain entrance to the ANC in this way. Certainly the fear of

³⁹ <http://ancarchives.org.za/theoretical-training-of-guerillas-in-a-camp-of-the-african-national-congress/> accessed July 1, 2014.

⁴⁰ See accounts in Stephen Davis, "Cosmopolitans in Close Quarters: Everyday Life in the Ranks of Umkhonto We Sizwe, 1961-Present" (Doctoral thesis, University of Florida, 2010); Macmillan, "After Morogoro." Stephen Ellis disputes in *External Mission* the idea that these events necessarily imply infiltration or spying.

infiltration precipitated security crackdowns and some abuses of power, as I will address in greater depth in Chapter Five. It's nevertheless clear that some fear was justified, and that the ANC's security services were not initially up to the task of discerning who was a genuine recruit and who was not.

In addition to these more overarching problems, the new recruits posed a variety of quotidian problems – what scholar Shireen Hassim has drily described as “the problems of teenagers everywhere.”⁴¹ Older ANC authorities found themselves confronting youth drinking, smoking *dagga* (marijuana), fighting, and having sexual relationships that occasionally led to pregnancy. These behaviours occurred in multiple settings – in the ANC community in Morogoro, in towns and cities where the ANC had offices, in the military camps, and in the sites where ANC students were sent on scholarships, such as Cuba and East Germany. The ANC's archive is replete with letters of complaint about the conduct of these youth. As will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three, it's difficult to untangle to what extent ANC leaders were anxious to maintain their authority and control, and were therefore overly disciplinarian, and to what extent they were really facing a situation of youth being “out of control.” At any rate, it seems safe to generalize that there were thousands of young men and women in various ANC locations who at times challenged the ANC's policies or expectations. And these new recruits equally seem to have challenged received gender norms, as they entered into casual and serious relationships and conceived children in exile.

⁴¹ Hassim, *Women's Organization and Democracy*, p. 90

These pregnancies, and the need for care for pregnant women and their eventual children, spurred significant changes in the work of Women's Section beginning in the late 1970s. If in the early decades of exile, women's work was mainly diplomatic, by the 1980s, ANC Women's Sections in multiple different ANC areas (for example, Morogoro, Mozambique, and the Angolan camps) were corresponding about how to provide for pregnant women and their children, and developing programmes and policies for them. Some scholars and past ANC members have since criticized these programmes, complaining that women were relegated to 'welfare roles,' and also that these programmes ultimately did not serve women well. Indeed, as noted at the outset, many women were not satisfied with their treatment at the hands of the ANC. However, I'll suggest through this thesis that examining these programmes in depth provides important insights into the possibilities for women within the ANC, as well as the limitations they encountered.

The 1980s, then, saw a growing number of children being born in exile – by 1985, there were several hundred infant children affiliated to the ANC in Morogoro, being cared for either by the ANC or by their mothers directly. There were also ANC daycares in Lusaka, Zambia, and possibly in Mozambique (accounts differ on this). The various regional Women's Sections were working to maintain funding and support for these mothers and their children, with uneven success. At the same time, ANC women continued to solicit international support for the organization. Women also served in increasing numbers in MK, meaning there were more women in the military camps, and more women in the command structures of MK. Although complaints have since surfaced about women's experiences in these contexts, as we shall see in Chapters Four and Five, small numbers of

women did serve in the highest levels of the ANC in these years, both on the ANC's governing body, the National Executive Committee (NEC), and on the Revolutionary Council, which directed military strategy.

Historiography

Scholarship on the ANC in exile remains thin, although recent years have seen increasing scholarly interest in the period. However, scholars examined the longer history of the ANC in great depth. The wider field of work on the ANC, and on South African politics more broadly, including women's politics, provides a vital context for understanding the exile period.

Early works on exile largely focused on the ANC's military strategy.⁴² In part, this emphasis reflected preoccupations of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when open political contestation was ongoing, the outcome of the South African struggle was uncertain, and when limited information was available. After the ANC's return to South Africa, and particularly after the 1994 elections, more information became accessible in the public domain, as former exiles gave interviews and wrote memoirs, and the ANC opened its archives. With these new sources, historians have begun to paint a richer picture of the ANC's years in exile, detailing the at times difficult relationships between host countries and the ANC, evaluating how national politics affected the ANC's ability to operate in different

⁴² Barrell, "The Turn to the Masses"; Barrell, *Conscripts to Their Age*; Lodge, "State of Exile: The African National Congress of South Africa, 1976-86."

spaces, and examining in greater depth moments of political disunity within the ANC.⁴³ Scholars have also taken an interest in the ties between the ANC and the global anti-apartheid movement, most focusing on British and western European activist groups.⁴⁴ Using oral history and biographical approaches, historians have begun to consider family relationships and the hardships exile life imposed on these relationships.⁴⁵ But to date, only three book-length works address exile – Arianna Lissoni’s doctoral dissertation, and monographs by Stephen Ellis and Hugh Macmillan. Lissoni’s work provides an in-depth examination of the early years of exile, until 1970, with a particular focus on the intertwined histories of the ANC and its (sometime) rival, the Pan African Congress (PAC). Lissoni’s research underscores the close ties the ANC negotiated with primarily British anti-apartheid movement activists, and provides a careful consideration of the early years of ANC strategies and campaigns, both military and diplomatic, in exile.⁴⁶ Stephen Ellis’s recent book, *External Mission*, profits from Ellis’s decades of research on the ANC, as well as from extensive archival explorations and oral history interviews. Ellis’s focus is primarily on the ANC’s military and diplomatic strategy, and his overwhelming interest is on the supposed infiltration of the SACP into the ANC.⁴⁷ This narrow focus at times means that an otherwise rich historical picture of the complex configurations of exile politics gets reduced to simply “communist influence.” By contrast, Hugh Macmillan’s detailed study of the ANC’s

⁴³ Davis, “The ANC: From Freedom Radio to Radio Freedom”; Macmillan, “The African National Congress of South Africa in Zambia”; Macmillan, “After Morogoro”; Simpson, “The Bay and the Ocean.”

⁴⁴ Christabelle Gurney, “The 1970s: The Anti-Apartheid Movement’s Difficult Decade,” in *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives*, ed. Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2012), 229–50; Tor Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999); Elizabeth Williams, “Anti-Apartheid: The Black British Response,” *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 685–706.

⁴⁵ Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*; Lissoni and Suriano, “Married to the ANC.”

⁴⁶ Lissoni, “The South African Liberation Movements in Exile, 1945-1970.”

⁴⁷ Ellis, *External Mission*.

time in Lusaka provides an in-depth discussion of exile life, ranging from everyday questions of work, to analyses of key moments in exile politics, including early efforts at military incursions into South Africa in the 1960s, the so-called “spy crisis” of the early 1980s, and the last major ANC conference in exile, in Kabwe 1985.⁴⁸

In combination, these monographs and the many articles on exile have begun to make clear the contours of the ANC leadership’s diplomatic and military preoccupations during this period, as well as its efforts to manage internal crises of discipline, and external crises of support. In addition, these works are shedding new light on the everyday experiences of ANC rank and file during these years. This dissertation adds to this literature by providing a more detailed picture of the intricacies of everyday life in exile, particularly in the intimate domains of sexuality and family life. It also argues that considering gender, and women’s experiences, enhances our understanding of the ANC’s work in exile, the transformations the organization underwent throughout this period, and the ways in which members negotiated their experiences within the organization. Highlighting women’s work, in both international diplomacy and welfare service provision inside the ANC, as well as examining debates that took place around gendered behavior and the formulation of policy, makes clear the centrality of gender within the organization throughout these years. This thesis will make these arguments in dialogue with the extensive debates around gender, nationalism, and political engagement that have unfolded in South Africa and beyond.

⁴⁸ Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years*.

Starting in the 1980s and continuing into the 1990s, South African scholars and activists entered into a rich debate over women's history more broadly, but also about the place and experience of women inside the ANC's External Mission.⁴⁹ This early period of feminist scholarship coincided both with the growth of 'Women's History' as a field in History departments across the Anglophone academic world, and with growing political insurgency inside South Africa. Feminist scholars analysed the ANC's formal position on the place of women inside a national liberation movement, as well as the quotidian experiences women faced in exile, including sexual violence and discrimination.⁵⁰ In doing so, they produced pathbreaking analyses of the interactions between gender and nationalism, and women and militarism.⁵¹ Many of these scholars emphasized the failures of the national liberation movement to provide equality for women, and the weaknesses of ANC policy and practice around the question of feminism – criticisms that many within the ANC shared at this time. Indeed, many of the early generation of authors working on feminism and the politics of liberation were involved with activism in the women's movement.⁵² For the most part, these scholars were not optimistic about women's participation in the ANC-led national

⁴⁹ See for example B. Bozzoli with M. Nkotsoe, *Women of Phokeng: consciousness, life strategy, and migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991), C. Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1991); C. Walker, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (New Africa Books, 1990); J. Wells, *We Now Demand! The History of Women's Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 1993).

⁵⁰ See discussion in S. Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2006)

⁵¹ McClintock 1993 (Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism, and the Family", *Feminist Review*, No 44, Summer 1993) has become foundational beyond South Africa; See also Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy*; Cock *Women and war in South Africa* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1993); T. Modise and R. Curnow, "Thandi Modise, a Woman in War interview with Thandi Modise," *Agenda* 43 (2000)

⁵² See particularly J. Beall Hassim, and Todes, "'A Bit on the Side?': Gender Struggles in the Politics of Transformation in South Africa", *Feminist Review* 33 (1982). Kimble and Unterhalter 1982 provide a particularly rich analysis of debates around western feminism and the ANC's positions – Judy Kimble and Elaine Unterhalter, "'We opened the road for you, you must go forward': ANC Women's Struggles, 1912-1982", *Feminist Review*, No 12 (1982), pp.11-35; see also Deborah Gaitskell, "Introduction – Special Issue on Women in Southern Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.10, No.1, 1983

liberation struggle – a sentiment perhaps reinforced by women’s evident marginalization in the township struggles of the late 1980s.⁵³

In recent years, new scholarship has been emerging on women’s participation in the earlier years of the ANC, responding to old debates, and generating new conversations about the nuances of African women’s participation in the ANC and politics more widely. Most scholars write in dialogue with Cheryl Walker’s 1982 work *Women and Resistance in South Africa* and her 1990 *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*. Walker’s work, alongside Julia Wells’ *We Now Demand!*, provided the first and most detailed analyses of women’s participation both in anti-pass law demonstrations (dating from 1913), and in the ANC itself. While providing rich and unprecedented detail about women’s organization, and early women’s political formations, including the Federation of South African Women, Walker and Wells both also criticized African women’s conservative approach to politics. Their argument here was that African women mobilized around essentially conservative notions, founded on their presumed identities as “mothers”. The goals of their politics were the preservation of home and family, and resisting the state intrusion into these domains via the imposition of pass laws. Wells in particular argued that such “motherist” politics could not be considered feminist because “women swept up in mother-centered movements are not fighting for their own personal rights as women but for their custodial rights as mothers.”⁵⁴ Such political engagements were, Wells argued, “explosive [and]

⁵³ C. Campbell, “The Township Family and Women's Struggles”, *Agenda* 6 (6) 1990, 1-22; see also Beall et.al.,(1987) “African Women in the Durban Struggle, 1985-1986”, *South Africa Review* 4, pp.93-103, and J. Seekings, (1991) “Gender Ideology and Township Politics in the 1980's”, *Agenda* issue 10, pp.77-88.

⁵⁴ J. Wells, “Maternal Politics in Organizing Black South African Women: The Historical Lesson” in O. Nnaemeka, *Sisterhood, feminisms, and power: from Africa to the diaspora*, Trenton: Africa World Press, 1998. P.253

spontaneous”, therefore not the result of durable political organizing, or likely to produce longstanding changes in women’s lives, even if they produced temporary benefits. Walker argued differently in the 1992 republication of her *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, and in a 1995 article on political motherhood. In these pieces, Walker called for a more sustained historical investigation of exactly how the (historically contingent) category of “mother” was shaped, and how women used and deployed this signifier, and to what end.

New scholarship has engaged with this challenge, particularly via renewed considerations of the early years of the ANC. Frene Ginwala, herself an ANC member and scholar, launched this debate in the 1990s with the publication of an article on the history of women inside the ANC. Ginwala contended that, just because women were formally excluded from full ANC membership until 1943 (after its founding in 1912), there is no reason to assume they were inactive within the organization. Women, Ginwala pointed out, were involved in organizing outside the ANC, both through political formations like the Bantu Women’s League (founded 1918), and through clubs and social groups, like Zenzele and the Daughters of Africa. In addition, Ginwala argues that women participated in the ANC (and its precursor, the South African Native National Congress), both through the Women’s League (created 1927), and via their participation in the ANC’s Conferences and branches.⁵⁵ Other authors had, of course, also discussed these groups, and have continued to do so – the difference is and has been between scholars who see this work as politically limited, and those who see it as indicative of women’s agentive political participation.

⁵⁵ Frene Ginwala, “Women and the African National Congress 1912-1943,” *Agenda*, no. 8 (1990).

Historian Nomboniso Gasa has taken up this charge most forthrightly, describing herself as attempting “to recast the meanings of the early struggles in a manner that gives greater weight to women’s political agency.”⁵⁶ In her work, Gasa rereads the early histories of women’s engagement both inside and outside the ANC to argue that the women’s movement in early 20th century South Africa was broad-based (not elite), and radical (not conservative). Gasa’s central contribution is to argue that:

At the heart of the earlier struggles is the fact that African women were homeless by state design. They were defined by the economic and political activity of the dominant ethos and practices at the time. Their struggle against the pass laws, which were a tangible way of infringing their rights, was, in fact, a struggle to be in the public domain at the same time as it was a struggle for free movement.⁵⁷

With this contention, Gasa reminds her readers of the stakes of asserting claims to home under apartheid, including the defence of home. She also underlines the importance of searching for the political subjectivity of these women, asking what their actions may have meant to them in their context.⁵⁸

Alongside this scholarship, and in dialogue with it, scholars have continued to examine early nationalism and gender. Natasha Erlank, examining nationalist discourse within the ANC in the first half of the 20th century, has demonstrated that the language of the ANC at this time relied on masculine tropes. Echoing Ann McClintock’s foundational scholarship on gender and nationalism, Erlank reminds us that all nationalisms are gendered, and in the case of the ANC, public and private conservative gender ideologies underlay their earlier

⁵⁶ Gasa, *Women in South African History*, 129

⁵⁷ Gasa, *Women in South African History*, 214

⁵⁸ See, for example, her excellent discussion of the power of silence and women’s choices to be silent. Pg. 217, in N. Gasa, *Women in South African History*. This point resonates with Nthabiseng Motsemme’s later analysis of women’s silences in the TRC. N. Motsemme, “The Mute Always Speak: On Women’s Silences at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission”, *Current Sociology*, 52, 5 (2004).

theses on national liberation. While still acknowledging women's political participation, Erlank argues that we must also be attentive to the limiting effects such political discourses have had.⁵⁹

Writing on later periods, both sociologist Raymond Suttner and literary scholar Pumla Dineo Gqola have engaged with Erlank's analysis. Suttner has advanced the argument that masculinist language, and discourses of masculinity, must be understood as about more than "gender," in a context where the apartheid state denied adulthood to African men – permanently treated as "boys." Under apartheid, Suttner argues, "The struggle to be a man meant the struggle for dignity and reclaiming of rights and to be treated as an adult human being." This, he suggests, "is something that needs to be read into any analysis of ANC masculinities."⁶⁰ Suttner also cautions against an over-reliance on textual sources and discourse analysis, observing that such a methodology can risk overstating the "emphasis on manhood" and occluding the political role of women.⁶¹ Suttner's work highlights the multiple and changing models of masculinity within the ANC, acknowledging the significance of militarist models of manhood, but placing them in the wider context of violence oppression. At the same time, it is worth also acknowledging literary and gender scholar Pumla Dineo Gqola's observation that "Suttner's warning notwithstanding, assertions of masculinity need not function on a single plane. It is possible to both profess

⁵⁹ Natasha Erlank, "Gender and Masculinity in South African Nationalist Discourse, 1912-1950," *Feminist Studies* 29, no. 3 (October 1, 2003): 653–71. See Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review* 44, no. 1 (July 1993): 61–80., Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁶⁰ Raymond Suttner, "Masculinities in the ANC-Led Liberation Movement," in *From Boys to Men: Social Constructions of Masculinity in Contemporary Society*, ed. Tamara Shefer (Lansdowne [South Africa]: UCT Press, 2007), 199.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 195.

gendered adulthood to the apartheid state and imply hierarchical relationships between genders."⁶² In other words, while she acknowledges the utility of Suttner's intervention, Gqola nevertheless insists upon reading gendered hierarchies from multiple perspectives – not merely as assertions of adulthood or humanity in the face of an apartheid system which denied this, but also potential assertions of a particularly gendered humanity.

Moving back to works on the early part of the 20th century, historian Meghan Healy-Clancy's recent work takes Gasa's enunciation of the importance of home seriously. Healy-Clancy proposes a new direction of study, one that centres on African women's activism in the fields where they were most active, namely, clubs and civil societies in the 1940s. In analysing these women's projects, Healy-Clancy argues that if we read "women's familial concerns as public and political matters, a more complex gendered history of nationalism emerges."⁶³ Healy-Clancy's work proposes a detailed reconsideration of early iterations of nationalism, one that accords importance to women's participation on its own grounds, in its own sites.

In addition, recent biographical work has opened up consideration of the active roles certain women played in the early ANC. Historian Heather Hughes has championed the biographical as a potentially powerful methodology for opening up feminist histories of early nationalism in this period. Such studies can, she argues, serve as "fertile sources for questioning scholarly assumptions and providing new details and insights that might

⁶²Pumla Dineo Gqola, "'The Difficult Task of Normalizing Freedom': Spectacular Masculinities, Ndebele's Literary/Cultural Commentary and Post-Apartheid Life," *English in Africa* 36, no. 1 (May 1, 2009): 66.

⁶³ Meghan Healy-Clancy, "Women and the Problem of Family in Early African Nationalist History and Historiography," *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 450–71, p. 455.

otherwise not be treated as significant in the historical record."⁶⁴ Hughes puts this method to work in her treatment of ANC "First President" John Dube – Hughes' work emphasises the important role Dube's wife, Nokutela played, in shaping the course of his life and his thought.⁶⁵ Similarly, Thozama April's work on early ANC Women's League member and activist Charlotte Maxeke, and Iris Berger's work on ANC President Guma's wife, Maidie Hall Xuma, have added to our understanding of the practical and intellectual work women did inside and beside the early ANC.⁶⁶ These new feminist biographies resonate with new research outside South Africa – increasingly, it seems, feminist historians are turning to biography as a provocative methodology for questioning past understandings of women's positions.⁶⁷

But despite these many debates, few scholars have further investigated the lives and experiences of women in exile, despite the growing body of work re-considering histories of gender and politics inside the country.⁶⁸ Shireen Hassim has produced the most substantial

⁶⁴ Heather Hughes, "Lives and Wives: Understanding African Nationalism in South Africa through a Biographical Approach," *History Compass* 10, no. 8 (2012): 562–73, p.570.

⁶⁵ Heather Hughes, *The First President: A Life of John L. Dube, Founding President of the ANC* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2011). See also, in a similar vein, Ciraj Rassool's doctoral dissertation, which problematizes biography as a medium, arguing subjects are constituted by interaction – an approach that facilitates important feminist insights. See C. Rassool, *The Individual, Auto/biography and History in South Africa*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, UWC 2004.

⁶⁶ T. April, "Charlotte Maxeke: A Celebrated and Neglected Figure in History," in in A. Lissoni, J. Soske, N. Erlank, N. Nieftagodien, and O. Badsha (eds), *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today* (Johannesburg/Cape Town, Wits University Press/SAHO, 2012); Iris Berger, "An African American 'Mother of the Nation': Madie Hall Xuma in South Africa, 1940-1963," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 1, 2001): 547–66.

⁶⁷ See for example, J. Allman, "Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot Named Hanna, and the Contingencies of Postcolonial History-Writing", *The American Historical Review* vol 118, issue 1 (2013); J. Allman, "The Disappearing of Hannah Kudjoe: Nationalism, Feminism, and the Tyrannies of History," *Journal of Women's History* Vol 21, issue 3 (2009); A. Burton, *The postcolonial careers of Santha Rama Rau*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁶⁸ E.g. G. Elder, *Hostels, sexuality, and the apartheid legacy: malevolent geographies* (Athens, Ohio U Press, 2003); M. Healy-Clancy *A World of Their Own: A History of South African Women's Education* (Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013); M. Healy-Clancy, "Women and the Problem of

work in this direction, providing an overview and analysis of the Women's Section and its challenges in exile, mainly in the 1980s.⁶⁹ As rich as this material is, however, the exile period comprises only one chapter of her book. Arianna Lissoni and Maria Suriano have published a recent article opening consideration on family and reproduction in exile, as they explore the marriages between Tanzanian women and ANC men based in Tanzania.⁷⁰ Equally, Carla Tsampiras has, in the context of her larger project on the history of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, produced an article detailing the history of contraceptive provision in exile.⁷¹ These new pieces deepen our understanding of exile. But we do not yet have a detailed social historical picture of the ANC's years outside the country, particularly as concerns women's participation, and the politics of gender in the organization.

Scholarship from outside South Africa can provide some useful new directions here, as well as illuminating connections between the ANC and international movements. Recent years have seen a renewed interest in examining women's participation in self-described revolutionary political movements. Several recent works examine the participation of women in the Zimbabwean liberation struggle of the 1980s, highlighting women's contributions while also criticizing the treatment women received.⁷² Feminist scholars have also turned their attentions to women's participation in nationalist struggle elsewhere,

Family in Early African Nationalist History and Historiography," *South African Historical Journal* 64, 3 (2012); A. Mager *Gender and the making of a South African Bantustan: a social history of the Ciskei, 1945-1959* (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 1999)

⁶⁹ S. Hassim, *Women's Organization and Democracy*

⁷⁰ Lissoni and Suriano, "Married to the ANC."

⁷¹ Tsampiras, "Sex in a Time of Exile."

⁷² Tanya Lyons, *Guns and Guerilla Girls : Women in the Zimbabwean National Liberation Struggle* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004); Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse?: Women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* (Avondale, Harare; Oxford: Weaver Press ; African Book Collective, the Jam Factory (distributor), 2000); Eleanor O'Gorman, *The Front Line Runs through Every Woman: Women & Local Resistance in the Zimbabwean Liberation War* (Woodbridge; Zimbabwe; Rochester, N.Y.: James Currey ; Weaver Press ; Boydell & Brewer, 2011).

from Basque nationalism to women in Naxalite movements in India.⁷³ While acknowledging the abuses women experienced in some of these situations – challenging simple celebratory accounts – these studies also make clear women’s motivated participation in party and underground politics. Another promising direction of study, one with significant ramifications for the ANC, is the renewal of interest in African-American radicals throughout the 20th century. A number of recent works explore African American women’s participation in both Old and New Left politics, highlighting women’s critical engagements with black nationalist politics. These works offer new insights into active debates in these movements between “national liberation” and “women’s liberation”, and also highlight the important transnational linkages that many in these movements formed – including with the ANC.⁷⁴ Cheryl Higashida notes that most postnationalist critics, particularly feminist critics, tend to homogenize and dismiss nationalist struggles as inevitably repressive. To counter this trend, Higashida insists that “when we dismiss intellectual and political formations that hold national liberation to be indispensable to emancipatory politics, we

⁷³ Carrie Hamilton, *Women and ETA: The Gender Politics of Radical Basque Nationalism* (Manchester, UK; New York; New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave, 2007); Srila Roy, *Remembering Revolution Gender, Violence, and Subjectivity in India’s Naxalbari Movement* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁷⁴ Kate A Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002); Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Kevin Gaines, “From Center to Margin: Internationalism and the Origins of Black Feminism,” in *Materializing Democracy: Towards a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, by Russ Castronovo (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Dayo F Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Robin D. G Kelley, *Freedom Dreams the Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); Erik S. McDuffie, “‘For Full Freedom of . . . Colored Women in Africa, Asia, and in These United States . . .’: Black Women Radicals and the Practice of a Black Women’s International,” *Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender, and the Black International* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–30; Erik S McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2011); Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945-1995* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women’s Liberation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001). See also film, *Eldridge Cleaver, Black Panther*, directed by William Klein, which has fascinating footage of a conversation between Cleaver and ANC representatives in Algeria.

silence a rich strand of Black feminism and deny the very heterogeneity it strives to foster.”⁷⁵ Higashida’s words, and this new body of work, inspire this dissertation as I ask what meaning women in the ANC found in their participation in the national liberation struggle.

Chapter Summaries

In Chapter One, I employ a biographical approach to open up a consideration of women’s international work in the early years of exile, the 1960s and the 1970s. Florence Mophosho and Ruth Mompati are the main characters of the chapter. Their personal histories of intensive work with the ANC and the South African women’s movement before leaving South Africa, and their segue into working with Soviet-oriented women’s organizations once in exile, highlight the intimate links that existed between these three overlapping organizational sites: the ANC, the South African women’s movement, and a series of internationalist leftist organizations, most notably the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF). The work they did promoting the ANC and seeking support, the travels they undertook, and the worries and anxieties they expressed over the ANC’s successes and failures reveals, I argue, the extent to which the ANC saw itself as participating in a community of anti-imperialist actors. Their work points to the importance of women in representing the ANC internationally, but it also underscores the importance of a particular kind of “international” – namely, a leftist, Soviet-inspired orientation in favour of anti-colonial struggle and solidarity. This reading resituates the ANC within a community of

⁷⁵ Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism*, 9.

liberation movements, arguing that the ANC at this time saw their struggle as intimately linked to struggles in, for example, Vietnam and Palestine; it also argues that women's international organizations provided an important site for ANC members to think through these connections.

In Chapters Two and Three, I move chronologically to consider the changes in the organization following the arrival of the "Soweto Generation" in the late 1970s. I highlight the changing work of women, as Women's Sections began to devote significant amounts of time to dealing with pregnancy and childcare. Here, I shift from the biographical focus to a more organizational emphasis, relying heavily on the rich archives of the ANC's Women's Sections, and the SOMAFCO school, which are filled with reports, correspondence, and investigations into conditions in ANC communities. I supplement these accounts with published memoirs and oral histories. These chapters provide the most detailed reconstruction to date of the conceptualization and construction of a series of ANC childcare centres, known as the "Charlotte Maxeke Childcare Centres," or the Charlottes for short. There was a great deal of disagreement within the ANC over how to deal with pregnant women and their children – controversially, it was for some years obligatory for pregnant women to go to the Charlottes in Morogoro, Tanzania, to deliver their babies. They were then expected to stay in Tanzania supervising their children for two years, meaning two years of interruption to their work or studies. As we shall see, this policy was never perfectly enforced or enacted, but it nevertheless generated great debate among Women's Sections, ANC leadership, and the youth who were most affected by this policy. I use these debates to explore women's changing roles in the organization, and the ways thought on

women changed as the ANC found itself confronting the practical challenges of enacting “women’s equality” even in the face of pregnancy and childbirth. (It’s worth noting that these problems remain unresolved in most wealthy nation-states today, where pay and seniority gaps between men and women persist.) I also argue that these debates reveal the tensions of exile, as the ANC sought to define and delimit membership in their political community during the fraught years of the early 1980s.

In Chapter Four, I turn to a discussion of changing thought about women, and by women, in the ANC, undertaking an intellectual history of the Women’s Section in the 1980s. If Chapters Two and Three emphasize the quotidian gendered practices in the organization, Chapter Four reflects on how women theorized their own role in the ANC, and in national liberation more broadly. It does so by reading ANC women’s reports and discussion documents and ANC policies on the “political upgrading of women.” It then places these documents in the context of women’s thought that the ANC would have encountered, namely, the revolutionary Marxism of neighbouring Mozambique, and also Soviet thought on women. This chapter engages seriously with the ANC Women’s Section rejection of “feminism,” asking what this meant in practice, and also how this thinking shifted such that, in 1990, women in the ANC were much more prepared to say that “women’s issues” were an issue in need of specific attention, apart from the overarching issue of national liberation.

Chapter Five turns to the difficult legacies of violence of exile. This chapter brings together accounts of the ANC’s “camps scandals,” abuses that occurred in the wake of security

crackdowns in the ANC's military camps, and accounts of violence against women in exile. Rather than relying on archival accounts, this chapter compares the public reckoning of these two types of violence, asking why the controversial political scandals have received such different treatment than the "private" scandals of intimate violence. It does so by exploring newspaper accounts, the ANC's official submissions to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), other testimonies at the TRC, and some fictional representations of violence, as well as memoirs. Its purpose is to highlight the ongoing 'absent presence' of violence against women in exile in these accounts.

Chapter One: The ANC and International Women

So she disappears. She disappears into what is known about the mission, in that country at that time. No history of her can really be personal history, then; its ends were all apparently outside herself.¹



Figure One: Postcard, Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, July 1979.²

¹ Nadine Gordimer, *A Sport of Nature: A Novel* (New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1987), 225.

² Postcard, July 1979, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3.2, UCT

In July 1979, ANC representative Florence Mophosho sent the above postcard to her friend, Ray Simons, a trade unionist and ANC member based in Lusaka, Zambia. The postcard was from Sierra Leone, where Mophosho was attending a conference of the German-Africa Friendship Society. The contents of her brief message were innocuous, describing the pleasant climate of Sierra Leone. At this time, Mophosho was working as the ANC representative to the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), a Soviet-inclined international women's group based in East Berlin. The WIDF had likely funded Mophosho's conference trip to Sierra Leone, where she would have joined other anti-imperialist actors to discuss themes of mutual interest to the GDR and African leaders.

In tracing the diplomatic careers of two high-profile ANC women, Florence Mophosho and her friend and colleague Ruth Mompati, this chapter sheds new light on the ANC in the 1960s and early 1970s, arguing for a re-evaluation of the role of women in the period, and resituating the ANC inside a networked world of anti-colonial solidarity. Mompati and Mophosho both represented the ANC at the WIDF for periods of several years; they also both travelled extensively to multiple sites around the world to represent the ANC in a variety of other gatherings. Through their surviving letters and reports, we can piece together a picture of life in the ANC in exile – life that consisted of struggling hard to gain legitimacy for the ANC, including by foregrounding its progressive gender politics. But specifically, these women worked to gain legitimacy for the ANC in anti-colonial spheres.

In a recent piece on ANC member, writer, and cultural diplomat Alex La Guma, Christopher Lee highlights that the ANC, and the antiapartheid movement more broadly, can be

productively read as “anticolonial in character.” In exile in particular, Lee underlines, “working within this context of late decolonization, South African activist-intellectuals utilized an evolving political language and rhetoric to make sense of their situation and how it approximated political conditions elsewhere.”³ ANC diplomacy in the 1960s and 1970s, Lee explains, focussed on explaining their cause and soliciting aid, via transnational travels, conversations, and correspondence. Through these efforts, ANC members rhetorically linked their struggles with a wider global effort – the Vietnam war, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the African-American civil rights movement, Guinea’s anti-colonial struggle, and southern African liberation movements. This wider “anticolonial world”, Lee demonstrates, was the setting for the ANC’s work in these decades.

Scholars of African nationalism and decolonization more widely have turned their attention to this period in recent years, in intersection with new studies of the Cold War. Meredith Terretta uses the term “extra-metropolitan” to “describe movements that deliberately bypassed inclusion in or collaboration with metropolitan political institutions and frameworks.”⁴ The term works well to describe the ANC’s orientation in this period, although the ANC did not have the same connections to Pan-Africanist networks that Terretta describes. Terretta’s discussion focuses on Cameroonian nationalists in the early 1960s, and describes the rise and fall of ideas of Pan Africanism in West Africa. In this period, as Terretta and other scholars have emphasized, political figures in a series of

³ Christopher J. Lee, “Tricontinentalism in Question The Cold War Politics of Alex La Guma and the African National Congress,” in *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, ed. Christopher J. Lee (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010), 268.

⁴ Meredith Terretta, “Cameroonian Nationalists Go Global: From Forest Maquis To A Pan-African Accra,” *The Journal of African History* 51, no. 02 (2010): 190.

largely West African nations invested in the idea of an extra-territorial sovereignty, a “United States of Africa.”⁵ The ANC had only limited connections to such Pan Africanist ideas – indeed, West African states, particularly Ghana, minimized their support of the ANC specifically because of the ANC’s move away from Africanism, in contrast to the PAC.⁶ But the concept of “extra-metropolitan” is nevertheless useful for understanding the ANC in these early years of exile, a time when the ANC looked to a whole set of actors outside the main circuits of “the west” in order to seek support, and also define the meaning of their struggle. The ANC was an early participant in many continent-wide formations, including the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Pan African Freedom Movement for East and Central Africa (PAFMECA), both organizations that gave funding to anti-colonial movements, including the ANC. (Nelson Mandela snuck out of South Africa in 1962 to attend the PAFMECA conference specifically to solicit support for the newly formed MK.)⁷ But beyond these military and strategic connections, ANC members participated in a variety of more culturally-oriented formations, on the continent and beyond, including the All-Africa Women’s Conference (later to become the Pan African Women’s Organization, PAWO). ANC members also worked closely with other African liberation movements, most notably the MPLA in Angola and FRELIMO in Mozambique. These collaborations in particular yielded shared quotidian work, including cultural discussions, beyond just military cooperation. In these settings, the ANC was one of many liberation movements,

⁵ See for example Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁶ See Arianna Lissoni, “The South African Liberation Movements in Exile, 1945-1970” (School of Oriental and Asian Studies, 2008).

⁷ Scott Thomas, *The Diplomacy of Liberation: The Foreign Relations of the African National Congress since 1960* (London; New York; New York: Tauris Academic Studies ; In the United States of America and Canada distributed by St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 7.

meaning they competed for financing and endorsement, but also shared in commitments and beliefs.

Scholars of the ANC have long been aware of the importance of similar international diplomatic work for the organization. Well before the exile period, the ANC undertook diplomatic missions to elicit support, for example to the UK; the ANC also began lobbying the UN as early as 1948, with assistance from India.⁸ The global dimensions of the antiapartheid struggle, and its international solidarity movements, have been discussed at length.⁹ But recent work adds to this a deeper understanding of the influence that non-metropolitan circuits, such as those of decolonizing Africa and the eastern bloc, had on life inside the ANC in exile. Scholars have emphasized significant influence that the Soviet Union, and its support for decolonizing nations, had on ANC members.¹⁰ Literary scholar Monica Popescu similarly explores the “role played by the Eastern Bloc in the South African

⁸ Thomas, *The Diplomacy of Liberation*. See also discussion of the importance of India in Jon Soske, “Unravelling the 1947 ‘Doctors’ Pact’: Race, Metonymy and the Evasions of Nationalist History,” in *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today*, ed. Arianna Lissoni et al. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012). Jon Soske, “‘Wash Me Black Again’: African Nationalism, the Indian Diaspora, and Kwa-Zulu Natal, 1944-1960” (Doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 2009).

⁹ Colin Bundy, “National Liberation and International Solidarity: Anatomy of a Special Relationship,” in *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives*, ed. Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2012), 212–28; Christabelle Gurney, “The 1970s: The Anti-Apartheid Movement’s Difficult Decade,” in *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives*, ed. Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2012), 229–50; Lissoni, “The South African Liberation Movements in Exile, 1945-1970”; Tor Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999); Elizabeth Williams, “Black British Solidarity With the Anti-Apartheid Struggle: The West Indian Standing Conference and Black Action for the Liberation of Southern Africa,” in *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives*, ed. Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2012), 251–73.

¹⁰ Irina Filatova, “The Lasting Legacy: The Soviet Theory of the National-Democratic Revolution and South Africa,” *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 507–37; Irina Filatova and Apollon Davidson, *The Hidden Thread: Russia & South Africa in the Soviet Era* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers SA, 2013); Vladimir Shubin, *ANC: A View from Moscow*, Second Edition, Second edition edition (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2009).

imaginary,” pointing to the admiration many in the ANC expressed for the Soviet model.¹¹ Memoirs by ANC figures make this clear, as many fondly recall the comradeship and solidarity, as well as, for black members in particular, the non-racist society they encountered in the Soviet Union.¹²

Christopher Lee uses the figure of Alex LaGuma and his travels to consider how the ANC put into practice its support for anticolonial theory and practice. In this chapter, I build on Lee’s insights by examining the work of the ANC Women’s Secretariat, in particular relation to eastern bloc nations and other decolonizing African nations, and international liberation movements. LaGuma spent most of his exiled life travelling between London, the Soviet Union, and Cuba. While these sites were important to the ANC Women’s Secretariat, their work also reveals a broader connection to a series of continental African women’s groups. In spelling out these connections, I will argue that we gain a deeper understanding of the ANC if we take seriously its membership’s active interest in anti-colonial and revolutionary solidarity.

Focussing on women raises complex questions. It is certainly true that men as well as women in the ANC oriented themselves towards Soviet-style internationalism. I will focus on women here for four reasons. First, the work women did in these internationalist spheres is more readily available – high-ranking men in the ANC and MK were more covert

¹¹ Monica Popescu, *South African Literature beyond the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 9.

¹² Ronald Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous: From Undercover Struggle to Freedom*, Rev. and further updated (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2004); Blanche La Guma and Martin Klammer, *In the Dark with My Dress on Fire: My Life in Cape Town, London, Havana and Home Again*. (Chicago: Jacana Media, 2011); James Ngculu, *The Honour to Serve: Recollections of an Umkhonto Soldier* (Claremont [South Africa]: David Philip, 2009); Joe Slovo and Helena Dolny, *Slovo: The Unfinished Autobiography* (Randburg; London: Ravan Press ; Hodder & Stoughton, 1995).

in their actions, because they were more involved in financing and weapons. As a result, many files from the upper echelons of the ANC and MK are not publicly available, whereas the Women's Section files are. But it would not be impossible to access men's accounts of internationalist solidarity, and indeed, many existing studies do, as I indicated above. There are three additional and more compelling reasons to focus on women. First, exploring women's active international diplomatic work for the ANC recasts women's position in the ANC. Scholarly accounts have largely focussed on women's experiences in the later exile period, when, as later chapters in this dissertation will explore, women were increasingly involved in welfare-type work within the organization. Tracing women's earlier diplomatic work makes clear that the shift to welfarist work was a change for women in the organization, not a seamless continuity. Secondly, I will also pose a tentative argument that women in the ANC actually led the movement into some forms of international work. Tracing women's work back to before the exile period, I'll demonstrate that links with international women's groups that pre-dated the ANC's entry to exile helped the ANC participate in certain internationalist settings. And finally, beyond the ANC itself, following these women's ANC work sheds new light on histories of the Cold War, and women's international history. Describing a world of international conference-going and solidarity meetings paints a picture of a dense network of women's anti-colonial resistance work, one that is often missing in both contemporary scholarship on the Cold War, and on histories of women's international movements. The work these ANC women did offers a window onto a period of African women's political work, including their pan-continental solidarity work, that is only beginning to receive attention from historians.

Inspired by recent work inside South African historiography, I use a biographical approach to paint a picture of this networked anti-colonial world, and women's work within it. I follow the careers of two women, Florence Mophosho and Ruth Mompati, in as much depth as possible, using their official reports and publications and their private correspondence to illuminate their travels, and their own analyses of their work, and the ANC's mission more broadly. As Heather Hughes has demonstrated in her own work on the first ANC president, John Dube, and his wife Nokutela, biographical study of women can yield unexpected results.¹³ Women, Hughes and others have argued, may have occupied a greater place in past political situations than is necessarily captured by the public record.¹⁴ New biographical scholarship, Hughes observes, is less interested in highlighting exemplars, and more interested in "shining light in places we otherwise would not have thought to look."¹⁵ The careers of Mophosho and Mompati fit here – following their global trajectories reveals the unexpected participation of women, small in number but nevertheless prominent, in global circuits of promotion of the ANC, and elaboration of anti-colonial solidarity.

This chapter will first describe the trajectories of Ruth Mompati and Florence Mophosho, tracing their political commitments inside South Africa, their journeys into exile, and the work they did abroad. It will then provide brief background on the role of the Women's Secretariat inside the ANC. Following their work allows for an in-depth discussion of the

¹³ Heather Hughes, *The First President: A Life of John L. Dube, Founding President of the ANC* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2011); Heather Hughes, "Lives and Wives: Understanding African Nationalism in South Africa through a Biographical Approach," *History Compass* 10, no. 8 (2012): 562–73.

¹⁴ Indeed, in her work on Maidie Hall Xuma, a community worker and activist of the 1940s and 1950s, Iris Berger observes that even Hall Xuma's husband, ANC President AB Xuma, minimized the legacy of her work in his own written accounts. Iris Berger, "An African American 'Mother of the Nation': Madie Hall Xuma in South Africa, 1940-1963," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 1, 2001): 548.

¹⁵ Hughes, "Lives and Wives," 569.

organizations they joined, most notably FEDSAW (the Federation of South African Women), the WIDF and the All-Africa Women's Conference. Through their letters and reports, this chapter will reconstruct the anxieties and frustrations of the international work they did – and from these concerns, it will explicate aspects of the ANC's analysis, and its early existential insecurity, as its members attempted to establish the organization as a significant actor in a community of anti-colonial resistance movements.

I. Ruth Mompati and Florence Mophosho, and Women's Politics Leading into Exile

Ruth Mompati and Florence Mophosho were two women who were highly active inside the ANC in the 1950s, and also prominent in FEDSAW, the South African national women's movement formed in the 1950s. Their participation in these two formations underscores the close links between them inside South Africa, but also may have contributed to the ANC's ongoing links with FEDSAW once in exile. Ruth Mompati and Florence Mophosho were approximately the same age; Mompati was born in 1925, Mophosho in 1921. Mompati came from a rural area, Vryburg, in today's North West Province, while Mophosho was born in Alexandra, a populous township inside Johannesburg.

Both women are almost invisible in scholarly sources and memoirs describing the 1950s. However, the brief biographies of them that appear on the ANC's own websites describe their multiple political involvements in this period. Ruth Mompati's prominence is clear. From 1953 to 1961, she worked as a secretary and typist for Nelson Mandela and OR Tambo's law firm. At this time, she became heavily involved with politics. She was present

at the founding of FEDSAW, and was also elected to the National Executive of the ANC Women's League in 1954. In 1955, she helped to organize the Congress of the People, going door to door to elicit people's opinions for this grand effort of democratic participation. In 1956, one year after her first child was born, she was one of the leaders of the FEDSAW Women's March against passes – this was the largest demonstration of the decade, mobilizing 20,000 women to march on the government buildings in Pretoria. In 1960, during the State of Emergency, she reports that “the leaders” of the ANC chose her to meet with Moses Kotane, who was in contact with jailed ANC leaders.¹⁶ Kotane, who was then the Secretary General of the underground South African Communist Party, became her close and lasting friend. During this time, she was also put in charge of distributing pamphlets about the ANC – dangerous and illegal activities. She was arrested several times, once with her child in her arms.¹⁷ In 1962, when JB Marks, prominent ANC and SACP leader, went into exile, she first went underground, and was then instructed by the ANC to go into exile.

Florence Mophosho was heavily involved in the ANC, local politics in Alexandra, and FEDSAW – but, like Mompati, few accounts of the period mention her directly. Having dropped out of high school, Mophosho worked as a domestic, and as a garment worker. She appears once in Pamela Brooks' chapter on women's organizing in the 1950s, where she is cited as a fiery activist from Alexandra, whose activism with regard to passes leapt ahead of ANC organizing. Citing Maggie Resha's memoir, Brooks describes how “a large contingent of women from Alexandra, led by the forceful Florence Mophosho, was also arrested for

¹⁶ South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), “Ruth Mompati,” in *The Road to Democracy -South Africans Telling Their Stories*, vol. 1 (Houghton [South Africa]: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust, 2008).

¹⁷ Ibid.

demonstrating [against passes] that day,” in October 1958.¹⁸ Her ANC and SAHO biographies describe her as involved with the Congress of the People, FEDSAW, and also the Alexandra bus boycott. In 1960, she went underground and was apparently arrested a number of times, but for short periods of time only. In 1964, she was banned, indicating that the authorities perceived her as an active threat. At this time, she was ordered into exile. Although no clear account of her exit survives, it’s worth noting that she knew Alfred Nzo and Thomas Nkobi from her political work in Alexandra. These men were both powerful figures in exile, and may have facilitated her departure.¹⁹

Both women were connected, therefore, through FEDSAW, as well as the ANC. The 1950s inside South Africa saw a great deal of political action by women. Indeed, scholars and commentators have suggested that women activists were leading the masses in struggle during this decade.²⁰ If the ANC/Congress Alliance campaigns of 1952 mobilized several thousands volunteers, women’s anti-pass campaigns mobilized six times more women than that. The 1956 Women’s March on the Union Buildings, at 20,000 participants, was the single largest political action of the decade.²¹ To what extent the power of women in this decade influenced their position within the ANC in exile is difficult to determine, but what is clear is that women who had occupied positions of institutional power, most notably within FEDSAW, moved to positions of power and influence within the ANC in exile.

¹⁸ Pamela E. Brooks, *Boycotts, Buses, And Passes: Black Women’s Resistance in the U.S. South and South Africa* (Amherst MA: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 234.

¹⁹ “Florence Mophosho,” South African History Online (SAHO), <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/florence-mophosho>

²⁰ Frances Baard and Barbie Schreiner, *My Spirit Is Not Banned* (Harare, Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Pub. House, 1986); Brooks, *Boycotts, Buses, And Passes*; Cheryl Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (London: Onyx Press, 1982).

²¹ Brooks, *Boycotts, Buses, And Passes*, 224.

Cheryl Walker's influential 1982 book is one of the few to explore the origins of FEDSAW in historical depth. Walker makes the intriguing suggestion, born up with convincing archival support from newspaper articles and FEDSAW's own archives, that FEDSAW was founded in part with the intention of linking with an existing Soviet-influenced international women's movement.²² Walker traces the organizational impetus for the eventual FEDSAW to the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), which at its 1941 conference had voted to establish an organization to represent working women.²³ This resolution yielded few results, however, and in 1945, developments on the international scene outstripped South African efforts when 850 women delegates from around the world met in Paris, and founded the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). As we shall see, the WIDF would become an important site for ANC women in exile. But in the early days of its founding, before ANC members left South Africa, the WIDF already had connections with the South African women's movement.

FEDSAW and the WIDF

After the WIDF was founded, South African women took an active interest in joining the organization.²⁴ Hilda Watts (Bernstein) attended the WIDF's second meeting, in Prague in 1947, and represented South African concerns there.²⁵ Some South African women were

²² Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*.

²³ *Ibid.*, 100. The CPSA was banned in 1950, and reconstituted underground as the South African Communist Party (SACP).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, citing *The Guardian*, 1945, reporting on WIDF

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

eager to form a national women's organization to affiliate to the WIDF (which did not take individual members, only national groups.) The CPSA, of which Bernstein was a member, played a significant role in mobilizing activists within the Congress movement to push for a women's organization, according to Cheryl Walker. She suggests, "the contribution of the CPSA in nurturing the idea within Congress circles during the 1940s was considerable. It produced important individual leaders, women such as Ray Alexander, Josie Palmer, Hilda Watts and Dora Tamana, and was actively encouraging political consciousness amongst township women."²⁶

The first conference of South African women eventually took place on April 17, 1954, forming what would become the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW). Ray Alexander Simons and Hilda Watts (Bernstein) were the major organizers of the conference (both at this point officially "former" CPSA activists, as CP banned in 1950 under Suppression of Communism Act). More than 140 women attended the conference – many came from unions, others came via the ANC Women's League and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC). Ida Mtwana, who was a prominent member of the ANC Women's League and also the ANC Youth League, was elected President. At this first meeting, the conference also set out its aims, which focussed on achieving equal pay for women, maternity benefits and access to childcare, access to the vote for all, protections for child welfare (for example through the provision of free education), rights to food and land, labour rights, and the building and strengthening of the national liberation movement, as well as striving for

²⁶ Ibid., 103.

peace throughout the world.²⁷ These ideas are notable for their similarity to the WIDF's stated aims, as well as their evocation of the specificity of the South African situation (such as discrimination in access to voting rights, land, and employment).

To note this similarity is not to suggest that FEDSAW was a Soviet front organization, or over-determined by remote international concerns. Testimonies of women involved with the founding of FEDSAW leave no doubt that, at the time of its founding, the women involved were passionate and motivated to form a national organizing body specifically addressing the concerns of women.²⁸ Pamela Brooks correctly observes that these commitments to peace, disarmament, and anti-imperialism, "linked [FEDSAW] ideologically to women peace activists in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Latin America."²⁹ Shortly after the founding of FEDSAW, members of the organization put this ideological connection into practice, when Dora Tamana (a former CPSA member and possibly at that point still involved with the Communist Party underground) and Lilian Ngoyi made a covert and illegal trip to Europe, the Soviet Union, and China in 1955, funded by the WIDF.³⁰ This pattern of international travel on 'solidarity tours' by women activists was to continue in exile. It's important to note also that even at this date, it was not new – numerous activists, particularly those with the Communist party, had travelled extensively prior to the 1950s. It

²⁷ Brooks, *Boycotts, Buses, And Passes*, 213; Ray Alexander Simons and Raymond Suttner, *All My Life and All My Strength* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Real African Publishers, 2004), 268–279.

²⁸ Baard and Schreiner, *My Spirit Is Not Banned*; Amina Cachalia, *When Hope and History Rhyme: An Autobiography*, 2013; Helen Joseph, *Side by Side: The Autobiography of Helen Joseph*. (New York: Morrow, 1986).

²⁹ Brooks, *Boycotts, Buses, And Passes*, 214.

³⁰ Brooks, *Buses and Boycotts*, 214; citing Helen Joseph, *Side by Side*. See also Nicholas Grant, "Black History Month: Lilian Masediba Ngoyi (1911-1980)," *Women's History Network Blog*, accessed July 20, 2014, <http://womenshistorynetwork.org/blog/?p=498>. And

is reasonable to credit these early travels, which frequently involved participation in international congresses, e.g. of socialist youth, with political inspiration.³¹

Following the founding of FEDSAW in 1954, its internationalism took a backseat over the following six years, as activists involved with the movement devoted themselves to the pressing concerns of the South African political scene: protesting pass laws, helping to organize the Congress of the People in 1955, and the Treason Trial, which began in 1956, and involved many activists from FEDSAW, as well as many of their allies, friends, and family members. In 1960, the Sharpeville massacre, and the ensuing State of Emergency transformed political life in South Africa. The leadership of the ANC was either arrested or escaped into exile; this process, in combination with the harsh state repression, put resistance movements inside the country into a state of disarray from which they would not recover for more than a decade. But as we shall see, activists affiliated with FEDSAW – who probably would also have known about the WIDF – went on to play a prominent role within the ANC in exile.

Into Exile – Mophosho and Mompati

Ruth Mompati has recalled the circumstances of her journey into exile in several interviews. After signing her house over to Alfred Nzo, as she did not wish to lose it, she fled with Flag Boshielo and Alfred Kgokong Mqotha in September 1962. They went first into Botswana, and then on to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. When she left, she expected only to be gone for one

³¹ See Monica Popescu's discussions of Jimmy and Alex LaGuma, and Alan Wieder's discussion of Ruth First and Joe Slovo's past, for example. Influential black Communist leaders Moses Kotane and JB Marks both also travelled to the Soviet Union as early as the 1930s. See Popescu, *South African Literature beyond the Cold War*; Alan Wieder, *Ruth First and Joe Slovo in the War against Apartheid* (Monthly Review Press, 2013).

year. She left her two children, aged seven and four, with her mother, telling her mother she was leaving to study abroad.³² After some months in Dar es Salaam, she went with a group of others for one year of training in the Soviet Union – they were, she reports, only the second group to go for training there. Mompoti doesn't give details about what her training included, but it's safe to assume she received the same training as her male colleagues. This would have meant training in warfare (weapons, strategy, reconnaissance, intelligence), as well as political education. Although she never served in MK actively, Ruth Mompoti would later visit other ANC women in the military camps in Tanzania, and commented that her own training helped her understand their experiences.³³ While she was in the Soviet Union, Mompoti saw news of the Rivonia arrests in 1963 – it was then that she realised her time in exile would be much longer than she had expected.

Very little information exists on Moposho's journey into exile, as she was never, it seems, interviewed about it. On exit, she went first to Lusaka, and then to Dar es Salaam. She would perhaps have met Ruth Mompoti here – the two women would almost certainly have met previously in political circles in Johannesburg. Although no account of their relationship survives, nor do any letters the two exchanged – if they did exchange any – they do mention each other occasionally in letters each wrote to Ray Simons.

II. Women's Structures in Exile, and Their Orientations

³² See South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), "Ruth Mompoti"; Diana Russell, *Lives of Courage: Women for a New South Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1989). See also detailed discussion of family and exile in Chapter Two.

³³ South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), "Ruth Mompoti."

What political structures would Mophosho and Mompati have encountered upon leaving South Africa? What did their work consist of? Inside South Africa, the ANC Women's League had been a separate body – it was affiliated to the ANC, but women members of the ANC were not automatically members of the Women's League. In exile, however, the Women's League was dissolved (probably because there were initially too few women to run a separate organization), and all ANC women automatically became members of the "Women's Secretariat." Wherever there were ANC women – whether in a military camp, an office in an African city, or in London – women were supposed to constitute a local Women's Section, which would report to the Secretariat. In practice, the existence and work of the Women's Sections was uneven, due to limited membership, limited resources, and at times, uncertainty about the nature of the work to be done. But throughout the exile period, the Secretariat had permanent staff, prepared reports, corresponded with other women's organizations worldwide, organised and participated in women's conferences and in other solidarity group meetings internationally, sought international support, both material and ideological, and conducted political education seminars for women inside the ANC. Overall numbers were, as previously noted, small – prior to 1976, there were probably only several hundred women affiliated to the ANC, and many of these would have been working full-time at "day jobs," only doing ANC work at night.

Florence Mophosho, who served in various administrative positions within the Secretariat, defined its goals in a 1973 report:

Mobilize international moral and material support, initiate and maintain relationships with International, Continental, National Organizations and individuals by prompt, friendly and formal acknowledgment of correspondence of any kind and any kind of support demonstrated ie moral, material in form of goods or money sent.

Demonstrate our solidarity with peace loving women of the world, with means at our disposal, as our struggle cannot be divorced from the international scene.³⁴

In the first decades of the ANC's exile period, then, the Women's Secretariat saw their role as seeking support for the ANC's mission – both real material aid, such as clothing and money, but also “moral support”, namely, statements of solidarity and other sympathetic press or endorsements from a variety of international organizations, from large well-known organizations to small national or sub-national women's groups. In these early years, as the ANC sought to be recognised as the legitimate representatives of the South African people, and as a legitimate organization at all, its membership sought support from all quarters. But beyond seeking support for their own cause, Mophosho's report underscored the ANC's membership and participation in a wider set of struggles – specifically, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles. These were the ANC's wider goals, but the Women's Secretariat membership took seriously their contributions to this work.

ANC women physically embodied the values of the organization with their travels, putting words into action. Mophosho's own trajectories demonstrated her commitments to promoting the ANC internationally. In 1972, she attended the All-African Women's Conference in Tanzania. She attended WIDF meetings in Cuba and Bulgaria (1972), and Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization meetings in Baghdad (1973) and Benin (via Moscow, in 1977). She also travelled to Maputo and Lusaka on ANC business, and to the Soviet Union. But Mophosho was not the only ANC women's representative travelling widely. In the 1973 Report on Women's Secretariat activities, Mophosho described the

³⁴ General Report of the ANC Women's Secretariat, For the Period 1972/1973, MCH01-Box 1, Folder 3, Mayibuye

following travels for the period of 1972/73 alone: two ANC women's representatives ventured to Mongolia for an AAPSO (Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization) conference; ANC representatives also travelled, on invitation, to Sweden, India, Iraq, the Congo, Cameroun, and Somalia. The same report also included summary descriptions of the activities of ANC women stationed in Algeria, Moscow, India, and the GDR, detailing conferences they had attended, as well as publications prepared and disseminated. The list is dizzying, underlining the whirlwind nature of most of these travels. Some women were based for long periods in certain locations (including Mophosho and Mompati in Berlin, but also Magdalena Resha in Algeria), but for the most part, women's representatives zipped rapidly in and out of these conference locations. The postcard Mophosho sent to Simons, cited at the outset, with its minimal observations about the local landscape, underscores the thin connections these travellers had to these conference sites. But it is precisely this whirlwind I want to point to here – the reason for these travels was not a particular connection with Benin, Moscow, or Mongolia, but rather, the building of community and shared action with others also only temporarily in these sites.

The meetings and tours were not without effect, though – the Secretariat was able to demonstrate that it was indeed influencing the policy of some nations. Mophosho flagged the Somalian invitation as particularly important, as it was the first “the first invitation of its kind on Governmental level” – they had, she noted, sent a “letter of gratitude ... to the Head of State and Somali women.”³⁵ Additionally, she observed that the delegation to Cameroun

³⁵ General Report of the ANC Women's Secretariat, For the Period 1972/1973, MCH01-Box 1, Folder 3, Mayibuye

led to the “the head of state [lashing] out at South Africa’s racial policies.”³⁶ Across a diversity of settings, ANC women were working to put forward the ANC’s own agenda, positioning themselves as the sole legitimate representatives of the South African liberation struggle, and working to make a strong case against apartheid.

The Women’s Secretariat situated themselves within a particular analytic framework, basically that of anti-imperialist solidarity, heavily inflected by Soviet thought. Frequently, ANC publications listed their support for various groups worldwide – such as the Vietnamese people, the North Korean fighters, Chilean women, Palestinian fighters, and more. One example of these statements of solidarity stands out. In December 1970, Florence Mophosho wrote to Angela Davis, in detention in New York City. The letter, included in a book Davis published on release, is brief and worth quoting at length, as it gives a detailed look at the Secretariat’s particular political stance. Mophosho wrote:

Dear Angela,
We have learnt through the publications of the Women's International Democratic Federation, with utter disgust the news of your arrest.

The oppressed and fighting women of South Africa, who have been, and still are victims of racial oppression perpetrated by a clique of white racists, have every thing in common with you and the just struggle of your people against racism and all the unjust deeds that go with it.

We admire your courage, self sacrifice and determination to free the lot of your oppressed and exploited population, faced with a ruthless enemy which claims to be the most developed militarily, economically, culturally and other wise, yet its own Afro Asian Citizen suffer from want of everything necessary for nature's human development. We are proud and inspired to have a young woman of your calibre.

We assure you and all peace fighters in your country, our full support for your demands, being aware that no peace can be achieved without freedom.

³⁶ General Report of the ANC Women’s Secretariat, For the Period 1972/1973, MCH01-Box 1, Folder 3, Mayibuye

We demand from those responsible for your arrest, your immediate and unconditional release, together with all your colleagues languishing in prisons, for the same ideals.
Victory in your life time.
Your sisters in the struggle
Florence Mophosho
For A.N.C. Women's Secretariat³⁷

The analysis is not framed in terms of shared identity or civil rights-style struggles; instead, the letter's language is distinctly anti-imperialist. The interesting term "Afro-Asian" underscores this, drawing a link between Davis's work and international movements such as the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, with which Mophosho was involved. Secondly, the letter draws an explicit link between the struggles faced by black Americans and black South Africans, with Mophosho noting that the women of South Africa "have everything in common with you and the just struggle of your people against racism." Thirdly, the letter articulates a particular understanding of peace, peace as triumphing over imperialism and colonialism, which cannot be achieved "without freedom." Peace, in this case, is entirely consonant with armed struggle, and indeed echoes the Secretariat's statement that they share the interests of "peace loving women everywhere." Peace cannot be achieved, Mophosho argues, without overcoming imperialism. Mophosho here positions the ANC and African-American ("Afro-Asian") activists as participating in a shared struggle against US imperialism, with not just parallel but the same goals.

Mophosho later mentioned this letter in a report to ANC Headquarters. In her account, she perhaps overstated the ANC's actual contribution to Angela Davis's freedom, when she

³⁷ Angela Y Davis, *If They Come in the Morning; Voices of Resistance* (New York: Third Press, 1971), 278–279.

wrote – “we played no small role in contributing to her release, by demonstrating our moral support with her and the entire black oppressed population in the USA guided by the activities of the WIDF. Occasionally we sent letters of protest including a signed petition to the Nixon administration and copies to her with an accompanying letter assuring her of our support.”³⁸ While the influence of the ANC on the US justice system or the Nixon administration may be less than they supposed, I would argue that this letter is nevertheless significant. The ANC Women’s Secretariat’s engagement with the plight of Angela Davis suggests that their international work, their participation in world gatherings of women, helped form their analysis of precisely the non-specificity of the South African situation. At least for Mophosho, and other women in exile, the struggle against apartheid was understood as deeply connected to broader struggles against imperialism. In this respect, participating in international solidarity work, such as supporting Angela Davis, and later, women of Vietnam and other national liberation struggles, was conceived of as central to the ANC’s work. These ANC women saw their mission as not restrained to South Africa as an isolated issue.

It’s worth noting that many commentators, including ANC members themselves, have been dismissive of these conferences. Writer ESKIA Mphahlele, who was briefly involved with the ANC in exile, categorized this activity as “Trivialities like attending conferences of one kind or another, tearing across the world, you know, and getting international money.”³⁹ His view was at times shared even by those within the ANC. At one point, ANC diplomat

³⁸ General Report of the ANC Women’s Secretariat, For the Period 1972/1973, MCH01-Box 1, Folder 3, Mayibuye

³⁹ Cited in Hugh Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia, 1963 to 1994* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana Media, 2013), 3.

Florence Mophosho, who represented the ANC at numerous conferences, bitterly wrote “Full time politicians are too busy to attend conferences” - she meant that it was ANC women who frequently attended these international events, this international “conference circuit”, while “full time politicians” – mostly male – involved in military and secret diplomatic work traced other, more difficult to follow, routes.⁴⁰ It is certainly true that not all these conferences produced tangible results. But despite these objections, I will demonstrate throughout this chapter both that women themselves took these conferences seriously – even if at times they felt frustrated with them – and that the ANC too saw value in them.

III. Mompati and Mophosho at the WIDF

What was the WIDF? At essence, the WIDF was a Soviet-influenced women’s organization, which had its origins in inter-war women’s international peace activism – organizations such as the Women’s International League of Peace and Freedom (established 1915), the World Congress of Women Against War and Fascism (Paris 1934), and the Soviet Women’s Anti-Fascist Committee provided the context for the WIDF’s establishment. In Paris in 1945, 850 delegates from 40 different countries attended an International Women’s Congress, and out of this meeting, the WIDF was born. Eugenie Cotton, a French Communist, was elected its first chair, and occupied that position until 1967.⁴¹ The WIDF’s goals were to

⁴⁰ Mophosho letter posted to *Ars Notoria* blog, No Date, arsnotoria.blogspot.ca/2011/05/letter-from-florence-mophosho-iqhawe.html

⁴¹ Melanie Ilic, Sari Autio-Saraso, and Katalin Miklóssy, “Soviet Women, Cultural Exchange, and the Women’s International Democratic Federation,” in *Reassessing Cold War Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 158–9.

defend the rights of women and promote their equality, to defend children's rights, to prevent the spread of fascism and defend national independence, and to end war and militarism. Peace was its foremost objective – because peace was considered to be the necessary prerequisite to achieving women's rights.⁴²

Scholars are only just beginning to work on the WIDF – a silence, historian Francisca de Haan argues, which stems from ongoing “Cold War paradigms.” From the outset, Western governments viewed the WIDF as a Soviet front organization. Indeed, in the United States, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), as part of their investigations into the menaces of Communism, described the WIDF's goals as follows: “to serve as a specialized arm of Soviet political warfare in the current ‘peace’ campaign to disarm and demobilize the United States and democratic nations generally, in order to render them helpless in the face of the Communist drive for world conquest.”⁴³ As Francisca de Haan observes, this attitude, and the subsequent repression of WIDF-affiliated organizations in the West, seems to have affected scholarship on international women's organizations, most of which do not mention the WIDF in any depth.⁴⁴ In addition to the texts de Haan cites, it's worth observing that recent contributions on rethinking histories of international women's movements continue to miss the very existence of the WIDF.⁴⁵

⁴² Francisca De Haan, “The Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF): History, Main Agenda, and Contributions, 1945-1991,” *Women and Social Movements, International*, No date, http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com/help/view/the_womens_international_democratic_federation_widf_history_main_agenda_and_contributions_19451991.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Francisca de Haan, “Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF),” *Women's History Review* 19, no. 4 (2010): 548.

⁴⁵ See for example, Mrinalini Sinha, Donna J. Guy, and Angela Woollacott, “Introduction: Why Feminisms and Internationalism?,” *Gender & History* 10, no. 3 (1998): 345–57. The special issue's pieces address the period up

In practice, the WIDF's activities were largely in the zone of information dissemination and the formulation of policy – the organization, financed by contributions from member organizations (women's groups worldwide), held large conferences every three years.⁴⁶ These conferences gathered hundreds of women from a wide variety of countries, and were sites of discussion and debate over issues such as national liberation, disarmament, and imperialism. In between the conferences, the WIDF distributed publications about women, and sent delegates to events to speak for “women worldwide”.⁴⁷ Their influence was not insignificant – for a number of years, they held consultative status with the United Nations, and eventually spurred the UN to celebrate first an International Women's Year (1975), and then a Decade for Women (1976-1985). It also helped initiate the UN's 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).⁴⁸ In these ways, historian Francisca de Haan has argued, the WIDF helped “mainstream” women's rights as human rights.⁴⁹ The WIDF also, distinct among international women's organizations at this time, was openly anti-colonial, and supported third world liberation movements, seeking to publicize these movements and elicit support for them.⁵⁰ While other international women's movements may have been pro-peace, they were more hesitant to support, for

to 1945, and resume again in 1995, a striking gap. Similarly, Chris J. Lee's excellent edited collection on the Bandung conference and after has no contributions that mention the WIDF, or internationalist women's organizing at all. Christopher J. Lee, ed., *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, 1st ed. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010).

⁴⁶ De Haan estimates that at times, their annual operating budget could have been as high as 400,000 euros in today's currency terms. De Haan, “The Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF): History, Main Agenda, and Contributions, 1945-1991.”

⁴⁷ Ilic, Autio-Saraso, and Miklóssy, “Soviet Women, Cultural Exchange, and the Women's International Democratic Federation,” 163.

⁴⁸ de Haan, “Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations,” 548.

⁴⁹ De Haan, “The Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF): History, Main Agenda, and Contributions, 1945-1991.”

⁵⁰ Ibid.

example, armed struggle for self-determination, something that was important for many anti-colonial movements, including the ANC.

While the support was more “moral” than “material,” the WIDF nevertheless provided an important source of legitimation for struggling movements worldwide. Katherine McGregor describes, for example, the connections between the Indonesian Women’s movement, Gerwani, and the WIDF in the years of mass repression of the left in Indonesia immediately after World War 2. In these years, Gerwani campaigned for the rights of poor women, peasants and workers, focussing on issues like equal wages, credit cooperatives, and childcare. They also articulated an anti-imperialist orientation, arguing that many problems in Indonesia were connected to ongoing colonialism in the East Asia, and the Cold War. As they faced increasing government crackdowns, Gerwani members publicized their plight through WIDF publications. They also used WIDF meetings and publications to link their struggles to wider global struggles, through an anti-imperial lens. While the two organizations eventually grew apart, McGregor convincingly demonstrates that “anti-imperialism served to unite women from diverse backgrounds for more than a decade” – and in the process, helped to draw global attention to Indonesian women’s struggles.⁵¹

On the African continent, leftist nationalist women also found common cause with the WIDF. Nigerian Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, a prominent activist for women’s rights and against colonialism, was recruited by the WIDF while she was travelling in the UK in the

⁵¹ Katherine McGregor, “The Cold War, Indonesian Women and the Global Anti-Imperialist Movement, 1945-1965,” in *De-Centering Cold War History: Local and Global Change*, ed. Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 31–51.

1950s. Shortly after joining the organization, she was elected one of its Vice-Presidents at the first WIDF World Congress of Women, in Copenhagen in 1953.⁵² In her work with the WIDF, Ransome-Kuti used its networks to promote information about Nigerian women's struggles. The message of the WIDF, historian Cheryl Johnson-Odim argues, resonated with African women's political struggles at the time. Johnson-Odim observes that, "In the international context, African women of FRK's [F. Ransome-Kuti] time also did not try to isolate their oppression as women from their oppression as colonial subjects and as black people."⁵³ In these ways, affiliation to an international women's organization that supported national independence (from colonial rule), as well as women's struggles, made sense to African women activists. Affiliation to the WIDF helped to shape the analysis of national women's groups, building solidarity between them, and facilitated these groups' representation on an international stage.

Mophosho and Mompati at the WIDF

Shortly after arriving in Dar es Salaam, in 1964, Mophosho was deployed to the WIDF's head offices, in Berlin (GDR). The circumstances of how the ANC came to send some of its members to be permanent fixtures at the WIDF are unknown, but it was a practice that continued well into the 1980s. Mophosho served there until 1969, at which point she was replaced by Kate Molale. Molale was eventually replaced by Ruth Mompati for a brief period in the late 1970s. It is interesting to consider how these women were chosen for this

⁵² Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, *For Women and the Nation: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 140. Ransome-Kuti's son Fela was to become activist and musician Fela Kuti. Members of the Nigerian military killed her in 1978 when they stormed Fela Kuti's compound and threw his mother out the window, an event Kuti commemorated in his music.

⁵³ Cheryl Johnson-Odim, "'For Their Freedoms': The Anti-Imperialist and International Feminist Activity of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria," *Women's Studies International Forum*, Special Issue on Circling the Globe: International Feminism Reconsidered, 1910 to 1975, 32, no. 1 (January 2009): 52.

position, and what it signifies. There were, particularly in the early 60s, very few women in exile, as Ruth Mompati herself points out. She observed in one interview that there were only four women, and two hundred men, at the Kongwa camp in the early 1960s, and she names only four other women that she can think of who were working in Dar es Salaam at this time.⁵⁴ However, it is nevertheless arguable that Mophosho, and later Molale and Mompati, were high-profile women to send to the WIDF (i.e. they were not the only possible women to send). Mophosho was well-connected to senior members, and had been heavily involved with a variety of political movements in the 1950s; the same can be said for Mompati. Both women also, as will be discussed below, rose to high positions within the exile leadership structures. Kate Molale herself had been a branch secretary in the ANC Women's League in Johannesburg in the 1950s.⁵⁵ That the leadership chose these women may suggest that they valued the WIDF as an important post.

In Mophosho's case, it is also possible that her affiliation with FEDSAW led to her deployment, as it was through FEDSAW that the ANC was able to be a member of the WIDF. The fact that it was through a women's organization that the ANC found itself a member of this international, and internationalist, body highlights the significance of women within the ANC for the organization's international profile. Mophosho herself emphasized the importance of the WIDF for the ANC. In a report submitted to the ANC, Mophosho described the WIDF as providing important "moral support" for the ANC's work. The organization always, she noted, publicly condemned racial discrimination, and also sent telegrams to the South African government condemning incidents of particular violence. The WIDF also, she

⁵⁴ South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), "Ruth Mompati," 308.

⁵⁵ Brooks, *Boycotts, Buses, And Passes*, 234.

noted, provided material support when possible.⁵⁶ For Mophosho, then, the WIDF was understood to serve as an important ally in the struggle for recognition of the ANC.

Both Ruth Mompati and Florence Mophosho served at the WIDF, and both women wrote to their friend Ray Simons about their experiences there. These letters provide rare and unparalleled insights into the political and personal thought of black women in the ANC. While black women constituted the main women's membership of the ANC, few sources preserve their private insights. No black woman has donated her personal papers to a private archive, whereas many white and some black men have.⁵⁷ This archival silence may point to the difficult conditions these women faced. Unlike many of the white SACP and MK members, or the higher ranking ANC figures, who had sufficient financial resources to maintain homes where they could store large collections of personal papers, black women were more likely to live in ANC residences (shared accommodation), and to travel frequently, without one stable "home base" in exile (unlike, for example, Ruth First, who maintained a home in London, as did OR Tambo, where his wife Adelaide resided). Black women's words do survive in the numerous reports, official correspondence items, and publications that these women wrote for the ANC, but these public sources differ in content and aim from the more personal communications exchanged between friends. This trove of letters to Ray Simons, then, provides unique insights. While the correspondence was

⁵⁶ General Report of the ANC Women's Secretariat, For the Period 1972/1973, MCH01-Box 1, Folder 3, Mayibuye

⁵⁷ For example, Rusty Bernstein's papers at Wits Historical Papers, Ronnie Kasrils' papers at Wits Historical Papers, Wolfie Kodesh's papers at the Mayibuye Archive, Nelson Mandela's papers at the Mandela Foundation, the OR Tambo Collection at Fort Hare, and Yusuf Dadoo's papers at Mayibuye. Some white women have also made their papers available, most notably Ruth First and Hilda Bernstein, at the Commonwealth Institute and Wits Historical Papers, respectively, as well as Ray Alexander Simons and Jack Simons' papers at the University of Cape Town. Phyllis Naidoo is the only prominent woman of colour to have donated her papers to an archive (at UKZN).

sporadic, it nevertheless spans a wide range of years, providing key information about these women's work. In the case of their writings around the WIDF, their emphasis of an internationalist, anti-imperial understanding of the South African struggle, and their anxiety around how international leftist movements perceived the ANC stand out.

Mophosho at the WIDF, 1964-1969

Although it is hard to get a detailed picture of what her daily life entailed, it seems that Mophosho's work at the WIDF consisted mainly in spreading information about the South African struggle, in WIDF publications and at public events. She was also, it seems, responsible for the "Africa desk" of the WIDF, sending their material to affiliates throughout the continent. Although she provided few personal details of her daily life in her letters to Simons, she described being very busy. She also frequently requested materials on South Africa, which she intended to publish in the WIDF media.

Mophosho also travelled extensively in this period, both in her role as WIDF member, and ANC member – in most cases, it seems probable that the WIDF funded the bill for travel. In 1968, she wrote to Ray Simons to let her know she would be travelling to Mogadishu for a German Friends of Africa Conference; she hoped she would also visit friends in Lusaka and Dar es Salaam on this trip.⁵⁸ Early in 1969, she travelled to Morogoro, Tanzania, for the ANC's Morogoro Conference (it is unclear if this was on the same trip as the November 1968 trip she anticipated). In July 1969, she travelled to Sierra Leone, again for a German

⁵⁸ Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, 9 October 1968, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

Friends of Africa conference. She also travelled within the Soviet Union and East Germany. Although I have found scant information on the content of these meetings and conferences, it seems probable that they were sites for Mophosho to communicate news of the ANC's struggles, and its particular analyses of the South African situation.

Mophosho's private letters from this period reveal anxiety about perceptions of the ANC – though whose perceptions she does not specify. In 1967, Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC, launched its first military action in exile, invading then-Rhodesia, along with Zimbabwean liberation fighters. Known as the Wankie campaign, this military effort is now widely viewed as a failure – it certainly had no direct military or strategic benefit, and indeed resulted in the deaths and arrests of a number of MK cadres.⁵⁹ At the time, however, the ANC publicized and celebrated the campaign heavily in its international publication, *Sechaba*. But Mophosho reflected a more wistful version of this celebration when she wrote to Ray Simons, “Our boys are pushing forward, very soon we’ll be respected like the heroic Viet Nameese. I wish I was younger to share in the hazards, I’d really like to get back for all that has been done to our people, I’d die a happy death.”⁶⁰ Later in the same letter, she wrote, “I know conditions are not too favourable in a foreign country, all the same we have to do the best to contribute to our struggle. The sooner we have a VietNam, the better, our patience is exhausted.” Mophosho here communicates a sense of fatigue, and need for rejuvenation for the ANC. She also underscores the international dimension of the ANC's position, explicitly comparing their struggle to that of the Vietnamese, and suggesting that the ANC needed to be respected as the Vietnamese were at this time. (Ironically, it is the

⁵⁹ Stephen Ellis, “The ANC in Exile,” *African Affairs* 90 (1991): 439–47; Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years*.

⁶⁰ Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, August 1968, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

Vietnamese who are today largely forgotten, while the ANC's struggle years are celebrated – one need only compare the attention given last year to General Vo Nguyen Giap's death, versus Nelson Mandela's death two months later).⁶¹

The same anxiety over international respect for the ANC persisted for Mophosho. Later in 1968, Mophosho wrote again to Simons, requesting further information on the Zambian commemoration of South African Women's Day (August 9). She wrote, "It's good for the world to know even in exile we are doing something to contribute to our struggle."⁶²

Mophosho continued to manage ANC attendance at WIDF conferences, and expressed concern that a diversity of women should attend. Writing to Simons in 1970, Mophosho listed several names of attendees and remarked that these choices were made as "an attempt to get new women involved, and not have the same people all the time; it gives an impression of non-existence of an organization."⁶³ In other words, she was concerned that other WIDF member organizations might perceive the ANC as being moribund and lacking in membership. Mophosho, then, seems to have viewed her work representing the ANC as significant and important – but also tenuous. The position of the ANC in a community of anti-colonial movements was not, for her, secure or proven. Both Mophosho's activities (essentially, publicizing the ANC), and her anxieties, along with her very presence at the WIDF, underline the importance that ANC leadership placed on this international work.

⁶¹ For a discussion of the centrality of the Vietnamese struggle to anti-colonial activism more broadly, see Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 1st ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁶² Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, September 11, 1968, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

⁶³ Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, September 28, 1970, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

Ruth Mompati at the WIDF, 1976-1979

Ruth Mompati, after more than a decade of international travel and other work for the ANC (which I will discuss in more depth below), herself seems to have been delegated to the WIDF from 1976-1979.⁶⁴ Although her official published biographies make little to no mention of this period, a number of her letters to her friend Ray Alexander Simons are written from Berlin, and concern WIDF work; equally, the ANC administrative archive contains several reports she wrote from the WIDF in this period. Although Mompati was delegated to the WIDF roughly seven years after Mophosho left it, her concerns echo Mophosho's to a striking degree.

Writing in December 1976 to Simons, Mompati described a recent WIDF Bureau meeting in Lisbon:

The Bureau meeting in Lisbon was good – but between and me, we (ANC) could have done better, especially that so many letters and calls had been sent to the Women's Section informing them of what to prepare. Many of our friends are doing everything to promote us and we will just have to measure up to standard. What is needed from us is today is a proper political analysis of our situation, etc. Slogans and platitudes make very little impression these days. In fact our young people seem to be doing better than us. Many of my colleagues who were present at Lisbon have had serious discussions with me in this regard. This is, however, between you and me, I will write an official letter to the committee. However, do not be too alarmed, it was not very bad. It is just because of our situation a lot is expected from us. Secondly, when women from countries like Chile, Uruguay, Vietnam give a comprehensive analysis, the same naturally is expected from us.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Her interviews give little to no information on this period, nor do brief official biographies of her on South African History Online or the ANC's own website.

⁶⁵Ruth Mompati to Ray Simons, December 8, 1976, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

Mompoti reiterates the concerns Mophosho raised previously – that the ANC, and ANC women in particular, were not measuring up in comparison to other liberation movements. As a result, they risked losing respect, and perhaps support. The ANC administrative archive also contains a potentially telling account of a particular WIDF Bureau meeting which took place in Berlin in February 1978. Although the document has no reported author, it indicates that Ruth Mompoti was present at the meeting and took notes on it, suggesting she may have written the document. After summarizing some of the main issues discussed at the meeting, which included nuclear disarmament and the arms race, the document notes that the women’s organization of the GDR had prepared a booklet on “the twofold oppression of women in South Africa”. The report then records the chairperson of the meeting, Fannie (no last name provided) intervening to emphasize the need for ANC women to mobilize within WIDF structures: “Thanking the GDR women for their endless efforts towards the struggling women of South Africa Fannie stressed that the focus is now on South Africa and that South Africa MUST WORK VERY HARD AND MUST GIVE THE LEAD IN ALL EFFORTS” (capitals in original). If this was not a typographical error (the rest of the document is very well-typed), the capitalization here suggests that the author of the report wished its (ANC) readers to take this point seriously. The document then lists the following questions which were posed to the ANC women’s representatives, and are worth considering at length:

- A request was made that the Secretariat prepares a document which gives information on conditions of our children at home reflecting education, legislation, handicapped children and orphans
- “The Secretariat [WIDF] stated that it will be highly appreciated if on receiving documents from WIDF the ANC Secretariat could comment on ij [sic] information contained
- “That when sending delegates to meetings Sec. should make sure that delegates study the documents to make it easier for them to contribute to the

meetings. Stress was laid that as the focus is now on South Africa much is expected from us and that we should try and meet this challenge”

- “Secretariat also pointed out that when making requests to WIDF we should be very precise with our needs. E.g. if we make a request for our project on the Day Care Centre, we should work out a rough estimation of how much foodstuff we need for our babies and how many dozens of items we need”
- “We discussed the question of VOW [*Voice of Women*, ANC women’s paper] which had a few points noted also by the Secretariat in Lusaka. We I [sic] explained that all the points raised had been corrected and we both agreed the last issue of VOW was well prepared”
- “We discussed the question of the report brought by two women who had gone to South Africa that in future a report dealing with women’s affairs should appear first in VOW before it goes to Sechaba. This was agreed to and a promise made that it will not happen again”⁶⁶

This lengthy set of questions, diligently recorded by whomever was present at the WIDF meeting and relayed back to the ANC, is intriguing. First of all, the WIDF’s tone comes across as corrective, or even patronizing – on numerous points, the ANC women’s delegates are called to task, and seem, in this rendering, to apologize for their errors. They seem to accept criticism for not acknowledging documents received, for not properly studying documents before attending WIDF meetings, and for making unclear requests for funds to the WIDF. But beyond these questions of ANC-WIDF relations, into which intervention seems somewhat understandable, the next two issues pertain much more directly to the ANC’s inner workings: the WIDF representative criticizes the Women’s Section first for its work on VOW (although they commend the improvements), and it also seems to complain that a report about the WIDF had appeared first in the main ANC paper, *Sechaba*, instead of in VOW.

⁶⁶ Report of the WIDF Bureau Mtg, held on 17-19 Feb 1978, Berlin GDR, MCH01-1.3, Mayibuye

After years of Mophosho and Mompati worrying about the ANC's inadequacies with regard to the WIDF, WIDF representatives here seem to be coming down firmly on the ANC women, calling them to account for their organizational weaknesses. Mompati and Mophosho's concerns, then, can be read as having a material basis: the WIDF, or these particular members of it, sees itself as having the right to engage with the ANC's work in a direct manner. It is difficult to know what to make of this. Twelve years after the ANC began sending permanent representatives to the WIDF, and more than twenty-two years after the founding of FEDSAW, which was so closely linked to the WIDF, an intimate connection seems to persist, in which the ANC Women's Section felt themselves directly accountable to the WIDF. On the one hand, as I will discuss below, the WIDF seemed to provide an important intellectual space for women of the ANC to conceptualize their position in the world, and to develop an analysis founded in solidarity. But equally, the WIDF offered the potential of "moral" and material support, of recognition at a time when the ANC was starved for such recognition, and in need of support.

IV. The Decades of international travel – for Ruth Mompati, 1963-1977; for Florence Mophosho, 1970-1981

Both Florence Mophosho and Ruth Mompati embarked on extensive international travel in the years before (in Mompati's case) and after (in Mophosho's case) their years at the WIDF. A rough periodization suggests that international travel was extremely common for these women throughout the exile period, with perhaps a degree of tapering off in the 1980s. Here, I will paint an approximate picture of their travels – rather than focussing on any one

trip, I will chart the rather chaotic travels that these women detailed in their own reports and private correspondence. In these accounts, the element that is most salient is the [heaping on] of this travel, its cumulative nature, rather than any one voyage.

In one interview, Mompati described the number of countries she visited while working for the ANC, specifically from the Dar es Salaam office. She attended, she says, conferences in Sudan, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, and Guinee Bissau, and reported travel difficulties inside Africa and Europe. Kenya and Ethiopia she recalled as particularly difficult, reminding her interviewer that they did not have passports at this time, and were travelling on a variety of forms of identification (alien travel document).⁶⁷ In correspondence to Ray Simons, she provided further brief reference to her many travels – in 1968, she wrote from Paris, where she had been on “study leave”. In 1973, she wrote of travelling from Lusaka to Dar es Salaam to Moscow, where she was delayed to illness, and visited “Moses”, probably Kotane (he was to die in Moscow five years later). In July 1976, she wrote from Berlin, and mentioned being recently in Prague, Geneva, and Iraq. In October 1976, she wrote again to Simons and mentioned travel in Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, and Kenya – there, she had been meeting with women’s organizations, and offered her appraisals to Simons; she was impressed by most of them.⁶⁸ What we see, then, is that Mompati travelled extensively from 1963 well into the 1970s. Her letters taper off in the 1980s, and it is difficult to discern if her travels did as well in the 1980s.

⁶⁷ South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), “Ruth Mompati,” 316.

⁶⁸ Ruth Mompati to Ray Simons, July, 1976, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

Florence Mophosho also travelled extensively. In 1970, Mophosho returned to Africa, specifically, to the ANC community of Morogoro, in Tanzania – up until the late 70s, only a few hundred ANC members were based here, but by 1985, there were roughly 5,000 ANC people there, residing in a community set slightly apart from the Tanzanian town.⁶⁹ Writing to Ray Simons from Berlin in May 1969 Mophosho suggested, with perhaps unintended brusqueness, “I intend going back to Africa towards the end of the year, I feel I have done my bit some body else should come and represent you people”⁷⁰. By 1970, she was settling into Morogoro, where she was to take a leading role in the ANC Women’s Section. The 1970s were a busy decade for Mophosho: she travelled extensively, representing both the Women’s Section of the ANC, and the ANC itself; by the end of the decade, she was also heavily involved in establishing childcare for the growing numbers of children being born in exile.⁷¹ At the same time, her travels continued to embody her commitments to promoting the ANC internationally. In 1972, she attended the All-African Women’s Conference in Tanzania. She attended WIDF meetings in Cuba and Bulgaria (1972), and Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organization meetings in Baghdad (1973) and Benin (via Moscow, in 1977). She also travelled to Maputo and Lusaka on ANC business, and to the Soviet Union.

All-Africa Women’s Conference, 1972 (AAWC)

In July 1972, at least four women from the ANC attended the All-Africa Women’s Conference in Dar es Salaam – Florence Mophosho, Ruth Mompati, Mary Manyosi, and

⁶⁹ The ANC’s records say 1969, but her own letters continue to come from the GDR until 1970. Source for Morogoro numbers: Sean Morrow, Brown Maaba, and Loyiso Pulumani, *Education in Exile: SOMAFCO, the African National Congress School in Tanzania, 1978-1992* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 2005).

⁷⁰ Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, July, 1976, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

⁷¹ See chapter two.

Adelaide Tambo. The first two were high-ranking women within the ANC at this time, the third, Mary Manyosi, I have seen no other reference to, and Adelaide Tambo was, of course, the wife of OR Tambo, then the President of the ANC. Magdalena Resha may have also been present – AAWC documents list her as a member of their permanent Secretariat, then based in Algeria. These ANC representatives joined a number of women from twenty-five African countries, as well as members of international organizations including the WIDF, and also participants from the United States, Portugal, and other European countries. In many respects the AAWC event seems to have been similar to other conferences ANC women delegates attended at this time – it gathered delegates and representatives from national and international organizations, and it brought members together largely for speech-making and the drafting of policies. The documents of the AAWC – the ANC has preserved more of these than it did for other conferences – paint a rich picture of a busy international(ist) world, in which women delegates traversed Africa and beyond. At this conference, then, ANC women would necessarily have been in dialogue with women activists and political figures from a wide range of African countries, as well as from US organizations and Soviet organizations.

If the WIDF has been overlooked by historians, the AAWC has been buried at the bottom of a cobwebbed oubliette. No single article focuses on the AAWC, and no books chapters are devoted to it. Instead, it shows up mostly by chance, caught up in other narratives.

American historian Erik McDuffie, for example, describes how attending the AAWC was the pinnacle of achievement for one African-American Pan-African activist, Audley “Queen

Mother” Moore.⁷² The rest of McDuffie’s article, however, focuses on Moore’s work within the United States, and provides no further details on the AAWC. Neither the AAWC nor its successor, the Pan African Women’s Organization (PAWO) merit an index entry in Aili Mari Tripp et al.’s influential *African Women’s Movements*, and the book’s chapter on historical participation by women focuses primarily on women’s groups’ cooptation within and subordination to nationalist movements.⁷³ While important, such a focus occludes women’s participation in alternative political forms – such as the AAWC.

Even the circumstances of the AAWC’s founding are unclear. Some accounts suggest that the AAWC was founded in Accra, Ghana, in 1960, as part of the Pan-African mobilization that was sweeping through Ghana at this time. Apparently Shirley Graham Du Bois, an African American activist (and wife of WEB Du Bois) who was then a close advisor to Ghanaian President Nkrumah, was present at its launch.⁷⁴ Historian Iris Berger observes that the AAWC was part of a wider series of women’s networks in Africa, dating from World War II onwards, which “predated the feminist movements of Europe and North America that emerged in the 1960s and early 1970s.”⁷⁵ In a life history interview with historian Susan Geiger, prominent Tanzanian women’s activist Bibi Titi Mohamed took credit for pushing

⁷² Erik S. McDuffie, “For Full Freedom of . . . Colored Women in Africa, Asia, and in These United States . . .”: Black Women Radicals and the Practice of a Black Women’s International,” *Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender, and the Black International* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–30.

⁷³ Aili Mari Tripp, *African Women’s Movements: Transforming Political Landscapes* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁷⁴ Abayomi Azikiwe, “Women at Forefront of Africa’s Liberation Struggles,” *Workers’ World*, August 13, 2010, http://www.workers.org/2010/world/women_africa_0819/. However, Gerald Horne’s biography of Graham Du Bois does not mention her involvement in the AAWC. See Gerald Horne, *Race Woman the Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). The Conference documentation itself suggests the AAWC was founded in 1963, not 1960.

⁷⁵ Iris Berger, “Decolonizing Women’s Activism: Africa in the Transformation of International Women’s Movements,” *Women and Social Movements, International*, Date NA, http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com/help/view/decolonizing_womens_activism_africa_in_the_transformation_of_international_womens_movements.

African women to form an “All African Women’s Conference,” to address both the suffering of women in countries that had not achieved independence, and to deal with ongoing women’s issues, including education and childcare. Mohamed recalled that the first true Women’s Conference took place in 1962, in Tanzania, because women from non-liberated countries like Nyasaland (now Malawi) could attend, whereas it would be more difficult for these women to reach Cairo, another proposed site.⁷⁶ These multiple origin stories point to the need for further research on the AAWC.

According to the AAWC’s own documents, as held by the ANC, its founding members hailed from Tanzania, Mali, Togo, Guinea, and South Africa – Adelaide Tambo is listed as a founding member.⁷⁷ Some of the women involved in the AAWC – also frequently known by its French acronym, the CFA (Conference des Femmes Africaines) – came to their political involvement by marriage, including Tambo and also Mrs. Maria Nyerere, wife of Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, and founding member of the AAWC. Others, however, such as Lucy Lameck of Tanzania and Jeanne Martin Cissé were lifelong political activists, for whom the AAWC was only one of many involvements. Lameck, for example, had been educated in the US and the UK, and served as an MP in Tanzania for a number of years, while Cissé served in a number of positions in the Guinean government, and also became the first

⁷⁶ Susan Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965* (Portsmouth, NH; Oxford; Nairobi; Dar es Salaam: Heinemann ; James Currey ; E.A.E.P. ; Mkuki Na Nyota, 1997), 164.

⁷⁷ AAWC List of Participants, No date, MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye

woman to be a part of the UN Security Council, as well as serving as the President of the Special UN Commission Against Apartheid.⁷⁸

But what did the AAWC actually do in the ten years between its inception in 1962, and its ten-year anniversary conference in 1973? As part of the conference proceedings, an authorless document describes the many activities of the AAWC in the decade since its founding. The picture that emerges is of an organization intimately linked to national-level politics in Africa, particularly Francophone Africa, but also sharing deep connections with eastern bloc countries, and not insignificant connections with the United Nations. The AAWC's work can be divided into four rough categories: attending or holding conferences or seminars on specific topics; preparing reports for other bodies; making tours and official visits; and sending delegates to events. In terms of seminars, the AAWC described holding the "first pan-African seminar on dyeing and handcrafts" in Guinée in 1964, and in 1966 in Sierra Leone, holding a conference on "the participation of women in economic development", as well as another conference on "the role and position of women in African society" in Congo-Brazzaville. Their third member assembly, held in 1968 in Algeria, gathered more than 300 women "from the four corners of Africa and around the world."⁷⁹ In addition to their own events, delegates from the AAWC (CFA) attended a remarkably wide variety of events, in terms of both geography and ideological profile. Immediately after its founding, delegates attended the Third World Congress of Women, held in Moscow and

⁷⁸ "Jeanne Martin Cissé", *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (1979), <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Jeanne+Martin+Cisse>. (Accessed July 23, 2014). See also Jeanne Martin Cissé, *La fille du Milo* (Paris: Présence africaine, 2009). For Lameck, see Geiger, *TANU Women*, 131–132.

⁷⁹ "Summary of Activities of the Conference of African Women During the 1st Decade of Existence, July 62 – July 72," MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye

organized by the WIDF. In the same year, delegates attended the Third Congress of Workers in Guinea, where they spoke to the unions about women and labour. In December of 1963, delegates from the AAWC were present in Tunisia, at protests against the French army's continued presence in the Bizerte bases. Members of the AAWC attended UN-sponsored meetings in Lomé on questions of family law and inheritance (topics that seemed to be of ongoing preoccupation for the AAWC throughout its first decade). In August 1965, the AAWC co-organized along with the WIDF a seminar in Bamako, Mali, on "health preservation for mothers and children in Africa." This event included thirty-seven delegates from sixteen member states, eight delegates from "other national and international organizations", and fifty Malian participants. Paediatric specialists from Mali, Senegal, Guinea, the USSR and Yugoslavia presented on children's diseases and infectious disease in Africa, as well as "more taboo subjects that up to that time no African women's organizations had dared to bring up in public", such as birth control.⁸⁰ Representatives from the AAWC also attended, from 1965 to 1966, at the invitation of the WIDF, meetings of solidarity with Vietnam in Berlin; the National Conference of Romanian Women in Bucharest; and a meeting in Tehran, as well as the Council of WIDF meeting in Sofia. They also attended an international conference on childhood in Sweden, organized by the WIDF. In March 1967, three members of the AAWC Secretariat General attended a symposium in Moscow – this "great symposium brought together the representatives of thirty four African countries with the FDIF [WIDF] and the Committee for Soviet Women. It discussed the role of women in society, it studied the best conditions for an improved

⁸⁰ "Summary of Activities of the Conference of African Women During the 1st Decade of Existence, July 62 – July 72," MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye

utilization of the creative activities of women.”⁸¹Even before achieving official OAU observer status in 1968, AAWC delegates attended the OAU meeting in Kinshasa, Zaire, in 1967 as well. In a slightly different vein, representatives also attended a seminar on “the role of African women’s organizations” in Addis Ababa in 1969 – this seminar was organized by the Ford Foundation, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the Christian Association of Ethiopian Women. In 1969, the Secretary General of the AAWC attended the 7th world trade union congress in Budapest, and in 1970, the Secretary General and other delegates were invited to Cameroon to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Cameroon becoming the “Federal Republic of Cameroon.” In addition, members completed tours of or made visits to Burundi, Ghana, Nigeria, rural Zaire, Tanzania and Zanzibar, and held meetings also in Gabon, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. The AAWC also prepared reports for the UN on the participation of women in various sectors of economic life, the results of which were presented in Libreville, Gabon, in 1970.⁸² This participation in a such a wide variety of settings, across so many nations and institutions, points to the existence of a network of powerful women’s groups, from Africa and beyond, engaging directly with questions of anti-colonial resistance and post-colonial national development.

In its work, according to these documents, the AAWC took an active interest in “women’s issues” – women’s participation in economic development, women’s crafts and handiwork, women’s status under the law, and maternal and child health. With reference to their Sierra Leone seminar on women’s participation in economic activities, they report “lengthy and

⁸¹ “Summary of Activities of the Conference of African Women During the 1st Decade of Existence, July 62 – July 72,” MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye

⁸² “Summary of Activities of the Conference of African Women During the 1st Decade of Existence, July 62 – July 72,” MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye

often impassioned [discussions], the subject raising so many controversies: the [pertinence?] of the women's place is the home, and only the home, clashed with those of the liberated woman, the full citizen who intended to play her role in public life without renouncing, for all that, the role of mother and wife."⁸³ Equally, they demonstrated their willingness to cooperate with decidedly liberal or western groups, such as the Ford Foundation. These aspects notwithstanding, the AAWC demonstrated a strong commitment to what Cheryl Higashida has termed "nationalist internationalism."⁸⁴ Like the WIDF – and indeed, in collaboration with the WIDF – the AAWC articulated strong support for anti-colonial struggle, as well as for women's issues. Indeed, their documents highlight as a key outcome of their 1968 member assembly that "Important resolutions were passed for the intensification of assistance to liberation movements."⁸⁵ (Although the reports provide no detail about what this assistance would in practice entail.) Other presentations at the tenth anniversary conference stressed the significance of national liberation for women's emancipation – the Tanzanian delegation's speech, for example, stated that women's "participation in the liberation of Africa from colonization and racialism is both an effect and a cause of the overall liberation of women."⁸⁶ The final words of the AAWC's report on the tenth anniversary conference make powerful common cause with liberation struggles worldwide:

To our sisters in liberation movements, we new [sic] our desires for success. Let our Arab sisters, especially in Palestine, be assured of our unwavering support. We note with emotion the importance victories that their fighters win every day over Zionism

⁸³ "Summary of Activities of the Conference of African Women During the 1st Decade of Existence, July 62 – July 72," MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye

⁸⁴ See Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945-1995* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

⁸⁵ "Summary of Activities of the Conference of African Women During the 1st Decade of Existence, July 62 – July 72," MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye

⁸⁶ "The Role of Women in the Liberation of Africa – the Political Aspects." AAWC, MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye

and international imperialism. With all our hearts we hope for the strengthening of Arab unity. There is strength in union; let us profit from this very old proverb of our ancestors. To the valiant fighters of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia go our desire for the success of the just cause they are fighting.⁸⁷

In this context of women's activism grounded in a framework of national liberation, the ANC representatives' official presentations to the conference similarly placed anti-imperialism front and centre. Adelaide Tambo's address to the conference mixed three strands of argument in a raw but interesting way, as she condemned imperialism, celebrated motherhood, and evoked the importance of religion and the church – sometimes all in the same phrase. Regarding President Nyerere, she stated:

Tanzania, Algeria and Zambia have become the seat of African Revolution. And because of this the Imperialists are threatening to strangle Tanzania and they will try very hard to remove President Nyerere as they did to President Nkrumah. But I know that you mothers of Africa will not let it happen. He is your son. You are the mothers who bear the pains. This worthy son of Africa must be protected at all cost by the whole continent.⁸⁸

Invoking religiosity alongside politics, she celebrated Guinea's offer of shelter to Kwame Nkrumah following his coup, offering thanks to Sekou Toure and proclaiming that "Guinea will be the mead of Africa that where we will go to Pray and Praise the Gods of Africa."⁸⁹

Tambo also foregrounds women's emancipation as necessary for true national emancipation, arguing that "It is absolutely necessary that we wage a resolute struggle for the immediate eradication of all the social prejudices that shackle the women as a distinct social group. Our complete liberation as a social and political force can only be to the benefit

⁸⁷ Summary of Activities of the Conference of African Women During the 1st Decade of Existence, July 62 – July 72," MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye

⁸⁸ "Message of Greeting to AAWC from Mrs Adelaide Tambo, founder member," MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye

⁸⁹ "Message of Greeting to AAWC from Mrs Adelaide Tambo, founder member," MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye.

of our respective countries.”⁹⁰ She also commends the AAWC’s support of various national liberation movements, citing in Mozambique, Angola, Guinea Bissau, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, as well as the “constitutional struggles” of the peoples of the Seychelles, Comoros Islands, and French Somaliland.⁹¹

It is notable that all the women the ANC sent to the conference were, with the possible exception of Mary Manyosi, high-ranking. Adelaide Tambo, if not always involved in the full-time political work of the ANC (she worked at this time as a nurse in London), she was nevertheless evidently close to the inner circles of power inside the organization. Equally, Mophosho was at this time the Head of the Women’s Section, while Mompati was a member of the NEC and working directly in the office of the President.⁹² These women, then, were significant figures within the ANC.

Florence Mophosho also made a speech at the conference, in her role as official ANC delegate. As such, her speech focussed in greater depth on the problems of South Africa – she spent several pages on the situation inside South Africa, including the persecution of women activists such as Winnie Mandela and Lilian Ngoyi, as well as the social and economic situation under apartheid, including forced removals, poverty, and ill health.

⁹⁰ “Message of Greeting to AAWC from Mrs Adelaide Tambo, founder member,” MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye

⁹¹ Meredith Terretta sheds further light on the politics behind Ghana’s shifting role in Pan Africanism. As Pan-Africanist actors in the early 1960s shifted their critique from colonialism to “neo-colonialism,” and began to organize against newly-independent state governments, OAU public opinion turned against Ghana’s support for Pan-Africanism, seeing it “as a place that harbored and aided political subversives.” However, this shift in OAU policy towards Pan-Africanism does not seem to have significantly compromised its support for the anti-colonial struggles of the ANC and other southern African liberation movements. See Terretta, “Cameroonian Nationalists Go Global,” 209.

⁹² African National Congress, *Further Submissions And Responses By The African National Congress To Questions Raised By The Commission For Truth And Reconciliation*, May 12, 1997, <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/submit/anc2.htm>.

Despite the South African focus, her speech ended on an internationalist note, appealing “on behalf of the mothers of South Africa” to “the women of Africa and all progressive women of the world for continued assistance for our struggle”. Equally, she pledged ANC support for the struggles of women in Angola, Mozambique, Guinee Bissau, “fighting on the side of their men against colonial domination”. She closed with the statement “We support the struggle of our sisters of Vietnam heroically defending their [word illeg] from US imperialist aggression.”⁹³

The picture that emerges from this conference is of an ANC Women’s Section with strong links to a multi-national African women’s movement, that itself shared strong connections with Soviet and Eastern bloc women’s movements.

Complaints and Frustrations

Both Mompati and Mophosho’s letters and reports frequently expressed frustration with their work and life in exile. We have already seen their anxiety over how the ANC appeared on the international stage. But beyond these worries about the ANC’s performance, both women expressed a wide range of complaints through their hard years in exile. These complaints remind us of the hardship of exile, but equally, I argue, underscore their political commitments.

⁹³ “Florence Mophosho’s Speech at AAWC,” 1972, MCH01-1.2, Mayibuye

Both were preoccupied with quotidian concerns, particularly around the ordinary dysfunctions of exile life. Complaints about lost messages, missing tickets, missing delegates, and various confusions abound in their letters and official reports, and persist throughout their years of work without much variation.

Mophosho was at her most eloquent and voluble in her annoyance. In one memorable moment, she wrote, in late 1969 –

I suppose you know Ruth is not here but in the Soviet Union. somebody phoned me from there she had given her phone number in Hospital for me to contact her, I tried the whole day it was impossible for me to get through I was very disgusted, as I really wanted to discuss some vital matters with her which I was hoping to discuss with both of you, she had written to me whilst [I was?] in Morogoro telling me that she has left you and Tiny in charge of womens affairs, and nothing more, as I know you are very efficient I was disappointed that till I got to Morogoro names of delegates to the world congress were not forwarded either to Headquarters or WIDF only when I confronted them did Nzo show me a letter from Ruth suggesting that delegates be decided by Conference, as I was the only lone Woman there I had to suggest the following, Kate Molale in Morogoro, Magdalena Resha Algeria, these are the two tickets the WIDF is providing, they will first attend a seminar in Poland from there to Finland I suppose you've got the invitations to that effect, then theres Nomava Shangase Moscow who will pay her own costs Olive Landman not confirmed yet she will pay her own. This very moment I've received a telegram of the two names, from your end. I hope Kate knows she has to go to Poland.⁹⁴

This quotation hammers down the mobility of their exile moment, as she describes her own travels (from Berlin, where she was based in 1969, to Morogoro), and the travels others must undertake – from Algeria and Tanzania to Poland and Moscow. It also captures the frustration of trying to find people, across these large distances, with inadequate communication technology and insufficient resources. Merely sending tickets or finding delegates for conferences posed endless frustrations.

⁹⁴Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, May 1969, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

For Mophosho later, during her time heading the Women's Section, the bureaucratic work weighed her down as well. She decried the reports she wrote as "empty", and lamented that "stuck to this unproductive work with no results, I some times wish I had never left home, I prefer spade work to this."⁹⁵ She felt stymied and frustrated in her work with the Women's Section, complaining of cancelled meetings and inefficiency. In 1974, she wrote to Ray Simons that, "You cannot imagine my disappointment on yet another postponement of the enlarged meeting, my plans and hope of seeing you people are shattered [sic – shattered], there is so much to discuss adding one plus one and seeing if the two won't make the Womens Section effective, not everything can be discussed through correspondence."⁹⁶ It's worth noting that the Women's Section branch in Dar es Salaam lapsed at this time, in 1974, due to lack of attendance and the inability of women to attend meetings. The branch would not be revived until significant numbers of young women and children began to arrive in Tanzania after 1976 (something I discuss in the next two chapters).⁹⁷

In addition to finding her work empty and frustrating, Mophosho was short of money, as the movement was. In 1974, she wrote to Ray Simons that "as you know we are no longer getting financial allowance but just enough for cigarettes, I am absolutely broke."⁹⁸

Mophosho's health declined as well. As early as August 1972, she complained to Ray Simons of illness and exhaustion, commenting "I am suffering from fatigue, which can cause

⁹⁵Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, 22 August 1972, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

⁹⁶Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, February 6, 1974, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

⁹⁷ "Meeting of ANC Women in East Africa on Occasion of Revival of ANC Women's Section East Africa," 23 April 1978, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye

⁹⁸ Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, February 14, 1974, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

nervous breakdown, besides the amount of work one has to do, what is really depressing is the problems facing us, political life in exile is not easy, anyway we shall overcome.”⁹⁹ A decade later, she was still ill, and had finally been diagnosed with an ulcer – she was sent to the Soviet Union for treatment.¹⁰⁰ Despite her illness, she kept working steadily. (It is presumably this illness that contributed to her eventual early death, in 1985, at age 64.)

Through these years, Mophosho found herself largely responsible for producing the publication *The Voice of Women*, commonly referred to as VOW. This publication was produced relatively erratically and sporadically from the 1970s until the late 1980s, usually from Morogoro, where Mophosho was based. The publication aimed to publicize the situation inside South Africa, as well as the work being done in exile; it also noted and celebrated women’s struggles worldwide. In her letters to her friend Ray Simons, Mophosho frequently complained about the struggles she faced in producing VOW --- in 1972, she suggested that “in fact VOW has contributed to my failing health, every time it has to be out we work against time, which means doing over work at times until the early hours of the morning and no Sunday off...”¹⁰¹ Just when the paper had begun to take off internationally, they lost personnel – according to Mophosho, workers were redeployed away from Morogoro by the ANC administration. In reports Mophosho made to the ANC headquarters during this time, she frequently detailed her frustrations with the chronic underfunding of VOW, its lack of resources even so basic as printer’s ink and typewriters, and the lack of article submissions received – although she restrained her criticisms of the

⁹⁹ Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, 22 August 1972, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

¹⁰⁰ Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, September 1982, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

¹⁰¹ Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, 22 August 1972, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

redeployment of personnel to her private correspondence with Simons. Throughout these years of struggling to produce VOW, Mophosho iterated a strong sense of the political importance of the paper, for communicating the South African women's situation to a worldwide audience, and ideally, to an audience inside South Africa as well.

Mompati's approach in her letters is different, but she nevertheless recounts frustrations and obstacles. During her time with the WIDF in Germany, she comments on her long hours and days of work. "There is so much to be done and could be done if only we applied ourselves", she wrote to Ray Simons from Berlin, "Sometimes I wish I had ten heads and hands to go with them."¹⁰² She also mentions frequent frustrations of travelling with inadequate travel documents, something she also complained of in later interviews. Bureaucratic delays around immigration papers meant she often was forced to spend several days in airport lounges while trying to clear immigration controls.¹⁰³

These complaints make clear the pains of exile, something scholars, novelists, poets, and memoirists have described in depth. But these complaints also, I argue, underscore the political commitment of these women. At multiple moments, their international work frustrated them. But they also found meaning in it.

Gaining Power in the ANC

Previous accounts of this international women's work have relegated it to the sidelines of the ANC's activities. Indeed, Mophosho herself spoke of it in rather bitter terms. In an

¹⁰²Ruth Mompati to Ray Simons, October 8, 1976, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

¹⁰³ South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), "Ruth Mompati."

undated letter, she commented sharply that “Full time politicians are too busy to attend conferences” – meaning that it was ANC women who frequently attended these international events, this international “conference circuit”, while members – mostly male – involved in military and secret diplomatic work trace other, more difficult to follow, routes.¹⁰⁴ But as a corrective, it is important to note that some of the women involved in this “conference work” were themselves significant figures, either directly part of or close to the highest centres of power within the ANC.

Mophosho may have been the only woman to attend the crucial 1969 Morogoro Conference (unless Ruth Mompati attended as well – reports clash on this point). This conference is widely recognised as a key moment in the ANC’s exile governance. It dealt with frustrations in the camps over MK’s military failures; it re-organized leadership; it allowed people other than “Africans” to become members of the ANC for the first time (although non-Africans could not hold NEC positions until the 1985 Kabwe conference); and it established new structures of leadership, including the Revolutionary Council.¹⁰⁵ Mophosho was certainly present, one of only 60 or 70 delegates, pointing to her importance within the organization. In 1975, she was coopted to the NEC (National Executive Committee), the highest governing body of the ANC; at that time, there would have been fewer than 22 people on the

¹⁰⁴ Mophosho letter posted to *Ars Notoria* blog, No Date, arsnotoria.blogspot.ca/2011/05/letter-from-florence-mophosho-iqhawe.html

¹⁰⁵ For accounts of the Morogoro Conference’s significance, see: Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London; New York: Longman, 1983); Hugh Macmillan, “After Morogoro: The Continuing Crisis in the African National Congress (of South Africa) in Zambia, 1969–1971,” *Social Dynamics* 35, no. 2 (2009): 295–311.

Committee.¹⁰⁶ In 1978, she apparently received military training alongside Ray Simons in Lusaka; both women there swore the MK oath.¹⁰⁷ In 1985, Mophosho was again elected to the NEC, shortly before her death.

Mompoti was even more highly placed than Mophosho within the ANC throughout her career, which continued well into the post-exile period. As we saw, Mompoti became involved in ANC work through personal connections to Nelson Mandela and OR Tambo, and then took very trusted positions working with JB Marks and Moses Kotane – all key figures in the ANC. These high-ranking figures managed her move into exile, and once in exile, she received relatively elite training, and continued to work in trusted positions, including in the President’s Office. She describes, in interviews, visiting the military camps in Tanzania in the early 60s, where she gave guidance to the young cadres.¹⁰⁸ In the same context, she mentions that she attended the Morogoro Conference.¹⁰⁹ Following the Conference, she was appointed to the Revolutionary Council, the group responsible for coordinating military and strategic actions inside South Africa.¹¹⁰ From 1976-1980, she was a member of the of Internal Political Reconstruction Committee, tasked with re-establishing the ANC inside South Africa in the volatile and importance years following Soweto.¹¹¹ From 1981-82, she was the ANC’s Chief Representative in the important London Office. From 1983-1985, she

¹⁰⁶ In 1969, at Morogoro, 9 NEC members were elected. This number was increased by cooption to 22 by 1985. At the Kabwe conference of 1985, 30 members were elected. – Lodge 1987, 4. See also ANC Second Submission to TRC for full lists.

¹⁰⁷ Simons and Suttner, *All My Life and All My Strength*.

¹⁰⁸ South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), “Ruth Mompoti”; Russell, *Lives of Courage*.

¹⁰⁹South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), “Ruth Mompoti.”; this may be read as contradicting Mophosho’s statement that she was “the only woman there” – but she may not have been referring to the Conference itself.

¹¹⁰African National Congress, *ANC Second Submission*.; Tom Lodge, “State of Exile: The African National Congress of South Africa, 1976-86,” *Third World Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (January 1987): 4.

¹¹¹ African National Congress, *ANC Second Submission*.

served on the Political Military Council of the ANC, and in 1985, at the Kabwe Conference, she was elected to the 30 member NEC.¹¹² In these contexts, Mompoti was working alongside a small and select number of the most powerful people within the exiled organization. The Revolutionary Council, for example, was chaired by OR Tambo and Yusuf Dadoo, and its sixteen members read as a “who’s who” of the inner circles of the ANC, SACP, and MK – they included Joe Modise, Thabo Mbeki, Jackie Sedibe, Duma Nokwe, Moses Kotane, Tennyson Makiwane, JB Marx [sic], Robert Resha, Ruth Mompoti, Joe Slovo, Andrew Masondo, Mzwai Piliso, and Reg September. Mompoti was the only woman on this Council. The Political Military Council, which comprised twenty members, and was again chaired by OR Tambo, again included Slovo, Reg September, Andrew Masondo, and Joe Modise, all very influential within MK; it also included Mac Maharaj, Jacob Zuma, and Mzwai Piliso.¹¹³ All of these figures, it’s worth mentioning, were also SACP members. Again, Mompoti was the only woman. After serving on the NEC after the 1985 conference, Mompoti was again elected to the NEC when the ANC returned to South Africa. She was among the first delegates to meet in the Groot Schuur meetings that preceded the CODESA negotiations, and went on to serve in Parliament for the ANC. She was, then, throughout these years, very much inside the inner circle of the External Mission.

The fact that both Mophosho and Mompoti were powerful figures within the ANC as a whole – not just as “women’s leaders” – points to the significance the organization accorded to the international work they did. That people of their prominence in the organization

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 72.

were expected to attend these multiple international solidarity events underlines the importance the leadership accorded to these events.

V. Conclusions

This chapter situates ANC women in an anticolonial context, and argues that participation in a leftist “black international” shaped their own analysis of their work. Contrary to other accounts, ANC women were not merely confined to welfare work in exile, and conferences were not only seen as a waste of time – although they sometimes were. But they also provided a site for meeting people understood as sharing in the struggle, and for exchanging and building an understanding of the ANC’s position in the world. We see members of the ANC understanding the movement as sharing the struggle with African-American radicals, the Vietnamese, Palestinians, and North Koreans – all left-wing movements which also privileged women’s rights alongside national self-determination.

Scholars of African American history have taken up this period in recent years. A compelling new body of work argues for understanding the real influence that Third World, anti-colonial struggles had on the black freedom movement in the United States throughout the 20th century. Robin D.G. Kelley points to a “general conspiracy of silence against the most radical elements of the black freedom movement, the movement and activists that spoke of revolution, socialism, and self-determination, and looked to the Third World for models of black liberation in the United States.”¹¹⁴ Literary scholar Sheryl Higashida makes

¹¹⁴ Robin D. G Kelley, *Freedom Dreams the Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 62.

a similar argument for the necessity of interpreting African-American struggles in the same frame as anti-colonial nationalist efforts, asserting that "Nation-based frameworks based on beliefs about US exceptionalism narrow the scope and substance of Black Freedom struggles by disconnecting them from radical, often international or transnational movements."¹¹⁵ As a result, scholars are increasingly exploring the networks of connection within the African diaspora. In his biography of Pan-Africanist Shirley Graham Du Bois, Gerald Horne observes that Graham Du Bois's choice to be in Ghana in the early 1960s didn't mean she was missing out on the Civil Rights movement in the United States – rather, she was participating in the decolonization of Africa.¹¹⁶ Historian Kevin Gaines has detailed the thought and actions of other African-Americans who travelled to Ghana around the time of its independence – for these travellers, Ghana, and the African continent, appeared as a source of inspiration and opportunity.¹¹⁷ Gaines and Horne, in their depictions of Ghana in this period, make clear that the country received visitors from around the world, notably from eastern bloc and other third world countries – a networked scene in which northern metropolises were markedly less important than the emerging networks of anti-colonial solidarity. Johnson-Odim and Mba make a similar observation in describing the world of Nigerian activist Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, who travelled extensively, including to Ghana, across West Africa, and into China and the Soviet Union. Johnson-Odim also describes a set of other West African women activists similar to Ransome-Kuti, who shared her trajectories of travel and politics.¹¹⁸ Historian Andrew Ivaska has equally pointed to the ways in which

¹¹⁵ Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism*, 6.

¹¹⁶ Horne, *Race Woman the Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois*.

¹¹⁷ Kevin Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

¹¹⁸ Johnson-Odim and Mba, *For Women and the Nation*; Johnson-Odim, "For Their Freedoms."

Tanzania became, after its independence, another site on a route of African-American and other self-identified radicals' itineraries.¹¹⁹ In all of these accounts of the 1960s and 1970s, travel is key – movement and connection across spaces brings actors into dialogue with new ideas. In Higashida's words, these figures were able to generate their particular understandings of race and justice via "the promise of pan-African and Third World solidarities generated through international conferences, trips, and expatriate living."¹²⁰

Again returning to the question of women, scholars working on black freedom movements have highlighted the key roles that women and women's organizations have played in constituting what historian Erik McDuffie calls a "black women's international." His work and others' underscore African-American women's movements from early in the twentieth century well into the 1980s.¹²¹ These African-American women, both well-known figures like journalist and political activist Claudia Jones, or playwright Lorraine Hansberry, as well as lower-profile community activists, built international networks, communicating with international women's groups like the WIDF, and with other national groups – including South African women's groups.¹²² These accounts trouble some critical readings of black nationalism, and indeed anti-colonialist struggles, which have tended to depict these

¹¹⁹ Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

¹²⁰ Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism*, 19.

¹²¹ Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Kevin Gaines, "From Center to Margin: Internationalism and the Origins of Black Feminism," in *Materializing Democracy: Towards a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, by Russ Castronovo (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism*; McDuffie, "For Full Freedom of . . . Colored Women in Africa, Asia, and in These United States . . ."; Erik S McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2011).

¹²² McDuffie describes correspondence between the Harlem-based Sojourners for Truth in the mid-twentieth century; Johnson-Odim similarly makes reference to correspondence between Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and South African women's groups around the time of the Sharpeville massacre. See McDuffie, "For Full Freedom of . . . Colored Women in Africa, Asia, and in These United States . . ."; Johnson-Odim, "For Their Freedoms."

movements as irrevocably patriarchal. Recent scholarship on gender and nationalism on the African continent has taken up this same challenge, excavating women's participation in nationalist movements, and analysing this participation within a wider framework of global networks of the 1960s and 1970s.¹²³

Here, in describing the deep connections between the ANC Women's Section, and particularly, Florence Mophosho and Ruth Mompati, and a leftist international women's movement, the aim is to examine the influences this shared political community produced, on ANC policy and on individual ANC members' political understandings. In the 1960s and 1970s, this chapter argues, prominent ANC members were wedded to an understanding of their cause, the liberation of South Africa, as being of the same order, and inseparable from, broader anti-colonial struggle. Their goal was not merely the establishment of a real democracy in South Africa – it was the overthrow of imperialism worldwide.

¹²³ Susan Geiger set an early precedent here. See Geiger, *TANU Women*. More recent work includes Susan Andrade and Meredith Terretta - Susan Z. Andrade, *The Nation Writ Small: African Fictions and Feminisms, 1958-1988* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Meredith Terretta, *Petitioning for Our Rights, Fighting for Our Nation the History of the Democratic Union of Cameroonian Women, 1949-1960* (Oxford: Langaa RPCIG, 2013).

Chapter Two: Motherhood in Exile, 1960-1980

"You can't run a revolution and run a family, that's all there is to it."
"Rubbish, a family is a base for a revolution."
"Whatever you mean by that," I said, "but the truth is you can't do both!"
"Don't you do revolution so that families flourish?"
"You are right that after the revolution families can flourish, but you can't run a revolution and a family simultaneously, that's that."¹

In an influential 1993 article, feminist scholar Anne McClintock criticized the ANC's tendency to describe women as "mothers of the nation." Although McClintock acknowledged that women have been able to "transform and infuse the ideology of motherhood with an increasingly insurrectionary cast," she emphasized the extent to which women's emancipation within the South African liberation movement was "still figured as a handmaiden of national revolution."² ANC members past and present have themselves complained about this tendency, and the deleterious effects it had on women's participation in the movement. For example, in an interview in 1992, former MK cadre Thenjiwe Mtintso complained that, even within the ANC Women's League, there were still women who "talk of 'we as wives and mothers.'"³ Scholarly studies on women in the exile period have continued this criticism – Shireen Hassim notes, for example, that women were largely made responsible for welfare services in exile.⁴ As discussed in the previous chapter, the

¹ Mongane Wally Serote, *Scatter the Ashes and Go* (Braamfontein [South Africa]: Ravan, 2002): 18.

² Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review* 44, no. 1 (July 1993): 61–80. More recently, Kim Miller has developed the same critique, in analyzing many of the same images McClintock discusses. See Kim Miller, "Moms with Guns: Women's Political Agency in Anti-Apartheid Visual Culture," *African Arts* 42, no. 2 (April 9, 2009): 68–75.

³ S. Pillay, "Women in MK: Interview with Thenjiwe Mtintso." *Works In Progress*. No. 80 (1992): 12. See also interviews cited in Jacklyn Cock, *Women and War in South Africa* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1993), and Thandi Modise and Robyn Curnow, "Thandi Modise, a Woman in War," *Agenda*, no. 43 (January 1, 2000): 36–40.

⁴ Shireen Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority* (Madison WI: Univ of Wisconsin Press, 2006): 88

early exile period saw a small but significant number of high-profile women working in international diplomacy. But as the Soweto generation flooded into exile, women in the ANC began to work increasingly on welfare provision – including, predominantly, childcare. In the next two chapters, I will provide for the first time a detailed reconstruction of the debates around childcare provision in the ANC in exile, as well as the related issues of birth control, preventing pregnancy, and dealing with pregnant women. I argue that we can read ANC women’s ongoing involvement in managing childbirth and childcare not as a continuation of a maternal ideology, but as revealing a set of different practices and beliefs. As we shall see, a great preoccupation of ANC authorities – men and women both – was to discourage pregnancy, through a variety of methods, including punishment. Additionally, when children were born, the ANC did its best to separate women from their children – a policy first endorsed and then ultimately criticized by mothers within the organization. Neither the policy of preventing childbirth, nor of raising children collectively, away from their mothers, suggest that the elevation of maternity and the figure of the “mother of the nation” were foremost in the minds of ANC authorities in exile. While it is true that ANC propaganda continued to elevate the rhetorical figure of the mother, in practice, I will argue, their policies and programming were informed by a series of conflicting ideas about women’s participation in the workplace and the nation, and by real resource constraints. I do not mean to imply that ANC gender policy was ideal (I know of nowhere on earth where this is the case), but I will argue that ANC policy, on the ground, was much more complex than a mere elevation of motherhood in the abstract.

In this chapter, I will examine first the family histories of some of the early women exiles, examining their motivations and what these personal stories tell us about life in exile. I will then turn to the significant transformation in the ANC that occurred after the arrival of the so-called Soweto generation, the thousands of young people who left South Africa in the wake of the Soweto uprising of 1976. These youth, as scholars and memoirists have observed, changed the gender balance of the ANC, and also brought with them a very different set of politics to that of the previous generation.⁵ In addition, because many of these young people came with no other means of support aside from the ANC, the ANC found itself responsible for the first time for providing a series of welfare services – education, medical care, child care, and support for pregnant women and new mothers. This transition within the ANC will be the focus of this chapter and the next. I argue that examining closely the negotiations over the provision of these welfare services, particularly childcare and pregnancy support, as well as pregnancy prevention, provides useful insights into everyday life in exile. The conversations that went on over sexuality, reproduction, discipline, and the provision of support engaged with vital questions of the reach and limits of the ANC community, and the ANC’s responsibility towards its members. The disagreements that took place also reveal some of the tensions between senior and junior ANC members, as well as between men and women within the organization. If gender equality was a foundational plank in the ANC’s self-identification in exile, as we shall see in chapter four, the question of how to deal with pregnant women and young children became

⁵ Steve Davis, “The ANC: From Freedom Radio to Radio Freedom,” in *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives*, ed. Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), 117–41; Hassim, *Women’s Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*; Ronald Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous: From Undercover Struggle to Freedom*, Rev. and further updated (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2004).

a site where the quotidian meaning of equality, and its limitations, were negotiated. Intertwined with these practical issues was the question of political membership and political identification with the ANC. This chapter will first examine the early experiences of women and children in exile, both to highlight their contrast with the later ANC policies, but also to establish the context in which the older women who chiefly administered childcare were operating. Their own experiences of motherhood in exile can be read as having shaped their approaches to other mothers. After discussing some key experiences prior to 1976, this chapter will then turn to the events of 1976 and after, analyzing who went into exile, from where, and how, and then examining the ways the ANC began responding to the new set of demands that confronted them in the late 1970s. The most significant archival contribution of this chapter is a careful examination of the establishment of the first ANC daycare centres, known as the “Charlotte Maxeke Centres.”

I. Early Exile Family Histories

It has become almost commonplace to note that men involved in the South African liberation struggle, and in the African National Congress in particular, sacrificed their family life in favour of dedication to political life. Nelson Mandela’s own autobiography, *A Long Walk to Freedom*, is frank and self-critical on this point, while most scholarly and popular biographies of the man also address this point.⁶ Other male political figures have received similar treatment. Luli Callinicos’s biography of Oliver Tambo devotes several chapters to family life in the ANC, and emphasizes the extent to which Tambo left the management of

⁶ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994). See also Tom Lodge, *Mandela: A Critical Life* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

his own family to his wife, Adelaide Tambo.⁷ And like Mandela, other prominent men have mourned the time spent apart from their families in their own autobiographies.⁸

But these accounts, many emphasizing men leaving family cares to their wives, risk underplaying the difficult choices women made around family life. In this section, I will consider the experiences of women who went into exile in the early period, from the 1960s onwards. Although there were few women in exile in these early years, particularly in comparison with the larger numbers of women who would leave South Africa following the Soweto uprisings of 1976, there nevertheless were several high-profile and high-ranking women who entered exile independently, as well as other women who came as wives but were also political activists in their own right. Examining their decisions and experiences sheds new light on women's role in exile and also reminds us of the tenuous nature of "exile" as a condition in the early years of the ANC's time outside South Africa.

Although no detailed records survive of exactly who entered exile when, the ANC's own records and personal files of members reveal that several prominent women entered exile in the early 1960s. While the previous chapter examined these women's ANC work, here I will draw attention to the personal side of their experiences. Three women of note exited South Africa in the early 1960s – Florence Mophosho, Ruth Mompati, and Thandi Rankoe. These women all left independently – they were either unmarried (Mophosho, Rankoe), or

⁷ Luli Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004).

⁸ See for example, Padraig O'Malley, *Shades of Difference Mac Maharaj and the Struggle for South Africa* (New York: Viking, 2007). Joe Slovo and Helena Dolny, *Slovo: The Unfinished Autobiography* (Randburg; London: Ravan Press ; Hodder & Stoughton, 1995). For a child's perspective, see Gillian Slovo, *Every Secret Thing: My Family, My Country* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1997).

divorced (Mompoti), and had a well-established history of involvement with the ANC. As discussed in the previous chapter, Mompoti had worked closely with Mandela and Tambo's law office, and was close to high-ranking ANC officials in Johannesburg, while Mophosho was extensively involved in local politics in Alexandra, and was close to ANC officials based there. Rankoe had been involved with the ANC Youth League when she was at Fort Hare, and had then become close to Tennyson Makiwane, her cousin, in Johannesburg. Although he would later be expelled from the ANC in disgrace, Makiwane was in the 1950s and 1960s an influential figure within the organization, and he facilitated Rankoe's departure from South Africa.

Florence Mophosho and Ruth Mompoti both left children behind, but had very different experiences of this loss. Ruth Mompoti has spoken openly about the loss of her children in interviews. Mompoti became involved in politics after she moved to Johannesburg and got married – for her, becoming a mother coincided with her increasing political involvement, and these two priorities pulled her in different directions. Recalling this period, she told interviewer Charles Villa-Vicencio that “I was a mother and wanted to be with my children, but could not turn away from the political demands.”⁹ She dated her own children's birth by political events, describing her son as having been “born in the year of the Freedom Charter (1955).”¹⁰ Given Mompoti's intensive involvement in preparations for the Congress of the People in 1955, she presumably undertook all this work while pregnant, including door-

⁹ Mompoti interview in Charles Villa-Vicencio, *The Spirit of Freedom South African Leaders on Religion and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 215.

¹⁰ South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), “Ruth Mompoti,” in *The Road to Democracy -South Africans Telling Their Stories*, vol. 1 (Houghton [South Africa]: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust, 2008), 313.

knocking across the country to elicit support for the Congress of the People gathering.¹¹ Eventually, in an event she seldom refers to, her political commitments led to the breakup of her marriage. In 1962, Mompati left South Africa, intending only to undertake a short period of military and political training in the USSR. She expected just to receive military training for one year, then return – she left her children with her mother, promising she’d soon be back. But when she was in the USSR, the arrests at Rivonia were made just at the end of her one year’s training, effectively shattering the ANC underground in South Africa, meaning she could not return. Describing her reaction to this news, Mompati told an interviewer, “Do you know how I felt? That was the worst thing to ever befall me. What was I going to say to my mother? How was I going to get my children? It was a tragedy for me.”¹²

Mompoti was ultimately separated from her children for ten years. While those years were difficult, Mompoti told interviewer Diane Russell that meeting her children again after ten years was, if anything, more painful. For Mompoti,

I can *never* explain the emotional suffering of this meeting. It is extremely painful for a mother to miss her children’s childhood years. I died so many deaths. I felt, “Good God, the South African regime *owes* me something, and that is the childhood of my children!”¹³

At the time of their reunion, her children were sixteen and twelve. Though Mompoti had effectively missed their entire childhood, she nevertheless saw herself as lucky, because she eventually was reunited with her children, while other women were not.

¹¹ Another activist involved in the Congress of the People, Amina Cachalia, who never entered exile, recalled the challenges and stresses of doing political work while pregnant. See Amina Cachalia, *When Hope and History Rhyme: An Autobiography*, 2013.

¹² South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), “Ruth Mompoti,” 315.

¹³ Diana Russell, *Lives of Courage: Women for a New South Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 113.

Florence Mophosho was one such woman who never found her child again. Unlike Mompoti, Mophosho left behind few comments on the daughter she left inside South Africa when she entered exile. Indeed, we only have a very thin picture of Mophosho's life, as described in Chapter One. We know her as a forceful political figure, involved with FEDSAW and the Alexandra Bus Boycott Committee. But we know almost nothing about her personal life. No stories survive about her husband, if she had one, or about her early life with her child. None of her official biographies mention that she had a child.¹⁴ Effectively, Mophosho is not remembered as a mother. But she did in fact have a daughter, whom she left behind when she entered exile. In many of her early private letters to her friend Ray Alexander, Mophosho described her efforts to get in touch with her daughter, although she includes neither the name nor the age of the child in these letters. In 1966, when she was based in East Berlin, Mophosho wrote to Ray Simons asking for advice, explaining that her friend:

Sonia wrote to Oliver in Dar asking him to do something about bringing my daughter out, he replied to say they are trying, so I suppose I'll wait and see what happens. And even if they get the passport, they won't have money for the ticket, give me advice on what to do.¹⁵

The Oliver mentioned here is Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC. Mophosho's friends were appealing to this highest authority, trying to get him to help Mophosho's daughter escape South Africa (by legal means, it seems).¹⁶ But by 1968, no progress had been made, and Mophosho complained her daughter had not written to her. She wrote to Simons, "I cannot understand why she [my sister] does not tell the child to write personally to me... she's only

¹⁴ See "Florence Mophosho," ANC website, <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/pebble.asp?relid=7932>; see also *Sechaba* obituary, "Obituary: Florence Mophosho, 1921-1985." November 1985, p.31.

¹⁵ Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, 21 November 1966, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

¹⁶ As Macmillan notes, it was relatively easy in the early years for ANC members and their families to slip out of the country. Hugh Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia, 1963 to 1994* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana Media, 2013): 7

written me one letter you know.”¹⁷ A few months later, she seems to have given up hope – in August of 1968, she included a postscript in a letter to Simons, saying “I have not heard from my sister neither daughter. It’s one of those things, I’ll see them in a free SA.” Although the documentary record is silent on the topic of her daughter after this date, the silence seems to suggest that Mophosho never did succeed in bringing her daughter into exile. Mophosho died in 1985, before ever having the chance to return to South Africa for that awaited reunion in a “free South Africa.”

Both of these women’s experiences reveal the contingency of exile. For Mompati, she had entered “exile” thinking of it not as “exile” but as a temporary training expedition. The Rivonia arrests inside South Africa transformed her personal trajectory, irrevocably altering the meaning of her choice and separating her unexpectedly from her children for a decade. Mophosho similarly had expected to be able to be reunited with her daughter soon after departing, and her expressed intention to “see them [her sister and daughter] in a free South Africa” revealed that she expected “exile” to be not a state of life, but a temporary sojourn. At the same time, each of these women’s choice was to pursue political life over family life, at least in the short term (and they described the choice as such). As we shall see, the choice between family life and political commitment became more complex as the ANC’s time in exile dragged on.

Thandi Rankoe pursued a different route with regards to children. As she recounts in her autobiography, her political commitments motivated her to enter exile with the ANC, with

¹⁷ Florence Mophosho to Ray Simons, 13 June 1968 and 21 August 1968, Jack and Ray Simons Collection, BC1081-P34.3, UCT

the goal of pursuing military training, in December 1961.¹⁸ Her autobiography provides an unusual amount of detail on her journey out of South Africa. On departure, she remembers being “promised” that she would be able to return to the country after five years.¹⁹

Although she herself was single at the time she left South Africa, Rankoe decided at the last minute to take with her two of her cousin’s children, named Vuyani and Thandi. She had been helping her aunt take care of the children after her cousin’s untimely death, and did not want her aunt to be burdened by them after her departure. At the same time, she recounts feeling guilty about the decision to take these children from her aunt.²⁰ Rankoe recalled an anxious train journey out of South Africa, into Bechuanaland (Botswana) and then to Zambia. They then almost immediately proceeded overland to Tanzania, first to Mbeya and then to Dar es Salaam, where Rankoe was reunited with friends from the ANC, including her cousin Tennyson Makiwane. After some months in exile, however, the children’s mother (the deceased cousin’s wife), who was by then based in London, demanded the children, and Rankoe was compelled to send them away.

Without the children, Rankoe described intense loneliness. Despite this emotion, she did not want to marry, recalling that “My life was totally committed to the liberation struggle, and I knew that it would not be easy for me to become committed to a family in the way a marriage union demands.”²¹ But her desire not to be married did not preclude her from having a child, and in 1963 she “set out to have a child with a companion to whom I made

¹⁸ Thandi Lujabe-Rankoe, *A Dream Fulfilled: Memoirs of an African Diplomat* (Houghton [Johannesburg, South Africa]: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust, 2006). Please note that the page numbers are irregular in this volume – I was only able to access it as a poorly-formatted e-book. Therefore, the number provided refer to “kindle image numbers” rather than page numbers. Image: 43

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 448.

²¹ Ibid., 541.

my intentions clear.” Her child was born Christmas Eve in 1963, and although he was born out of wedlock, she notes that her parents were nevertheless happy. Rankoe provides few details about the childcare she was able to obtain for her son, but she does note that she spent several years working for the Zambian Parliament as a transcriber, because it was helpful for the ANC to have its members receiving paid employment at this time. In 1967, though, the ANC was ready to deploy her to its offices in Cairo. At this moment, though, her son’s father kidnapped the child. Her son was, she recounted, her “closest friend, around whom my whole life was centred.”²² With the help of two fellow ANC guerrillas, she kidnapped her son back, and they were able to go to Cairo together. Some years later, her son tragically died in a medical circumcision accident in his early teens, when Rankoe was based in Nigeria.²³

Rankoe devotes a fair amount of attention to her family life in the rest of her memoir, describing her reluctant marriage to a Nigerian man, Philip, and the birth of her second child, a daughter, in 1972. She also participated in raising Philip’s three children from a previous marriage. While her daughter, Tshedi, “continues to be [her] inspiration and the central focus of [her] life,” Rankoe eventually ended her marriage to Philip. Throughout her book, Rankoe emphasizes her love for children, her own and others, but also her reluctance to participate in marriage.

It is difficult to know if one can generalize from this experience, but it is worth noting that for Mophosho and Mompati as well, the male partners in their lives did not figure

²² Ibid., 573.

²³ Ibid., 671.

prominently. Mompati only briefly mentioned her divorce in the interviews she gave, and Mophosho never mentioned the father of her child. For all of these women, their bond with their children trumped any relationship with a male partner, it appears. In their writings, these women make no invocation of a notion of ‘new left’ sexual emancipation. Although these events take place in the 1960s, these women offer no reflection on any “sexual revolution.” Indeed, they are silent on sexual desire entirely. This is perhaps not surprising, given that neither their letters nor, in the case of Rankoe, their autobiographies, were particularly private spaces of expression.²⁴ But it nevertheless merits comment that these women were not making a statement about sexual freedom, or articulating a politics around personal liberation. Instead, their reproductive choices, whether to leave their children behind or have children outside of usual family structures, seemed to articulate a suspension of norms, not a new ideal. They did not see themselves as living out a new ideal, but as living through a temporary state of exception, brought about by the exigencies of circumstance: a political struggle that took them away from family.

But it was not only single women who left their children behind, nor only black women. When Ray Alexander Simons and Jack Simons left South Africa for Zambia, under duress, they left their children behind, although their children were admittedly almost grown, and their younger son did accompany them for some of the time.²⁵ Equally, Eleanor Kasrils, a white woman involved with the Congress of Democrats and later MK, left a daughter, Brigid,

²⁴ ANC memoirs more broadly are notable for their silence on physical and intimate domains. Even when they discuss great emotion, they tend to omit discussions of the sensual or bodily aspects of life. A striking exception is Albie Sachs’ memoir about his recovery following a car bomb attack on him. While not sexual, it is a profoundly sensory, and sensual, work. Albie Sachs, *The Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000).

²⁵ Ray Alexander Simons and Raymond Suttner, *All My Life and All My Strength* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Real African Publishers, 2004).

behind when she entered exile. She had separated from her daughter's father, and neither the father nor her own parents would allow her daughter to be reunited with her. She told Hilda Bernstein, "I never saw her from when she was seven to seventeen ... so I had a very unhappy period of my life where I had no access to Brigid." They were finally reunited – although at this reunion, at Heathrow in London, she could not at first recognise her own daughter – she told Bernstein, "I remember rushing up to the wrong person at Heathrow, and it wasn't her."²⁶ In these accounts, we see women not foregrounding their maternity, but deferring it. Their choice, as they describe it, was not an easy one, but it reflected their political convictions as they understood them at the time.

At the same time, however, many women political activists framed their involvement in politics through their own investment in maternity. Women who discussed their private lives in interviews or publications tended to frame their political choices in the context of their maternal sentiment. This includes both women who left South Africa early and women who left in the 1970s and 1980s. Ruth Mompati, for example, noted that her early work as a schoolteacher in the 1940s and 1950s shaped her critical analysis of the society she inhabited. She told an interviewer,

As a schoolteacher I watched kids dying of the measles, whooping cough, the flu and other curable diseases. It was not necessary to be instructed in politics to know something was wrong. I have never been able to cope very well with the suffering of children. My protective instinct comes immediately to the fore.²⁷

In this framing, Mompati received a political education that was obvious or immediate, requiring no additional argument: the bodies of ill and dying children were the argument,

²⁶ Hilda Bernstein, *The Rift: The Exile Experience of South Africans* (J. Cape, 1994), 92–93. See also Ronald Kasrils, *The Unlikely Secret Agent* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012).

²⁷ Villa-Vicencio, *The Spirit of Freedom South African Leaders on Religion and Politics*, 204.

and she understood the message. Her mothering instinct, as she tells it, pushed her into politics – and ironically, away from her own children. Several years later, she was married and a mother, but working in the busy law offices of Mandela and Tambo, where she received her more formal political training. Of these years, she comments,

Those were my politically formative years. They were times of enormous pressure which prepared me for what was to come. I was a mother and wanted to be with my children, but I could not turn away from political demands.²⁸

Women who left South Africa after these early years faced similar choices, and elaborated similar framings for their politics. Some fifteen years after Mompati faced this choice, Baleka Kgositsile made a similar decision. Kgositsile, a young Black Consciousness activist who left South Africa in 1978, also left her children behind. In an article in the ANC's *Voice of Women*, Kgositsile, like Mompati, posed her political commitment as shaped by her maternity. Although she had to abandon her own children, she did so for the sake of the many black South African children, "our life, our future, mowed down by bullets from the guns of the Boers."²⁹ Like Mompati's discussions with interviewers, Kgositsile posed her own motherhood and mothering desire as pushing her away from her own children and into politics. Also like Mompati, Kgositsile described how her work as a teacher pushed her into anti-apartheid work, because of the futility of "Bantu education." More overtly than Mompati's interviews, given its placement in a politically-motivated journal, Kgositsile's piece presented a political argument, insisting that women in South Africa should sacrifice their own immediate maternity for the good of all South African children, posed as the prime victims of apartheid, and the potential citizens of a future and liberated nation.

²⁸ Ibid., 205.

²⁹ *Voice of Women*, 1978, issue 3, p.6. Baleka Kgositsile is now known as Baleka Mbete.

Similarly, in an interview given in the late 1980s, Thandi Modise, a prominent MK woman, stated that “I am a guerrilla because I am a mother.”³⁰

For these women, their experiences as mothers formed their political sensibilities. Their articulations of these political arguments – about the duty to care for children, and oppose a state that did violence to children – echo wider arguments that the anti-apartheid movement vigorously took up. As Monica Patterson has cogently demonstrated, the figure of “the child” became key to the anti-apartheid struggle both inside and outside South Africa. The violence the apartheid state did to children, whether immediate military violence or longer-term structural violence, became a powerful tool for opponents to delegitimize the regime.³¹

Much ink has been spilled on these topics, and it is certainly the case that these women all made these statements with specific political intent, with the aim of analysing and motivating commitment to the ANC. At the same time, there is no reason to deduce immediately from their motivations any dishonesty on the part of the women, or to assume that their discussions were misrepresentations. Rather than seeing their discussions of their relations to motherhood merely as “deployments” of various maternal politics, we could also take them at face value, and believe that these women regarded their love for their children as one motivating factor for entering politics. But as the ensuing debates over childcare reveal, the primacy of children as motivation by no means meant it would be easy

³⁰ Cited in Jacklyn Cock, *Women and War in South Africa* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1993).

³¹ Monica Patterson, “Constructions of Childhood in Apartheid’s Last Decades” (Doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, 2009).

to reconcile maternity with political participation. As much as these older women highlighted children's rights as a key motivating force in their political commitment, their own choices make clear the challenges of reconciling actual maternity with actual political work, in the day to day. This older generation of women had dealt with this difficult reconciliation, or irreconcilability, by leaving their children behind, or relying on ad hoc support systems in exile, such as friends and family. But as thousands of new members joined the ANC, many bringing children with them, or arriving pregnant, neither of these past options seemed to work anymore. With the arrival of the Soweto generation, the ANC as a whole found itself confronting very material questions of maternity.

II. The Soweto Generation

In 1976, the Soweto uprisings inside South Africa led to a mass exodus of youth out of South Africa, a trend that continued during the turbulent 1980s. These new members left South Africa in a variety of ways. Some would have had prior contacts with ANC underground members, who arranged covert routes out of the country for them. Often, this involved climbing over the border fences into Swaziland – the most common routes were through Natal and into Swaziland, or north into Botswana. If people came out under the ANC's guidance, other ANC members usually met them on arrival, whether in Botswana or Swaziland. But others made their own way out, sometimes climbing border fences, or finding legitimate excuses, or ways to trick border guards, to get into neighbouring countries. Once in these countries, these new political exiles would usually go to refugee offices, typically the UNHCR's, or church-based organizations. These organizations would

then put them in touch with the ANC.³² Of course, not all new exiles joined the ANC. Some joined the PAC. Others tried, briefly, to establish their own organizations, Teboho “Tsietsi” Mashinini being the most notable example. Mashinini was a charismatic leader of the Soweto students, serving as the President of the SSRC (Soweto Students Representative Council) in its most active months, around the June 16, 1976 uprising. Mashinini fled to Botswana shortly after, and from there travelled to West African countries and the UK. He refused to join the ANC, and briefly tried to establish an alternative exiled political formation. He died under suspicious circumstances in Guinea in 1990, shortly before he was supposed to return to South Africa.³³ The ANC, therefore, did not absorb all new exiles – but it did absorb many of them.

The ANC executive sent the majority of new arrivals to Morogoro, Tanzania. Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere had granted this tract of land to the ANC in 1977, and in 1979, the ANC commenced construction of its school, SOMAFCO.³⁴ Prior to this point, Dar es Salaam had served as the ANC’s main base, until they moved their organizational headquarters to Lusaka, Zambia, in 1967. Initially a very small community, beside the larger Tanzanian town, by the mid-1980s, the ANC population of Morogoro had grown to approximately

³² See accounts in K M N Fish Keitseng, Barry Morton, and Jeff Ramsay, *Comrade Fish: Memories of a Motswana in the ANC Underground* (Gaborone, Botswana: Pula Press, 1999); Nadja Manghezi, *The Maputo Connection: The ANC in the World of Frelimo* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2009). The film *To Catch a Fire*, made with the involvement of Joe Slovo’s daughters, also depicts a fictional but relatively realistic flight into exile.

³³ See “Teboho Mashinini”, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/teboho-tsietsi-macdonald-mashinini> (accessed July 12, 2014); Lynda Schuster, *A Burning Hunger One Family’s Struggle against Apartheid* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10156433>. Unverifiable rumors blame the ANC for Mashini’s death.

³⁴ S. Morrow, B. Maaba, and L. Pulamani, *Education in Exile: SOMAFCO, the African National Congress School in Tanzania, 1978-1992*, (Pretoria, HSRC Press, 2005), p.13

5,000 members, including students and non-students.³⁵ Because so many of the new arrivals were sent here, the ANC authorities in the region, including the Women's Section, the SOMAFCO directorate, the Medical Committee, and the Regional Political Council (RPC) found themselves primarily responsible for the daily needs of the membership in Morogoro and the relatively proximate Dar es Salaam. The significance of these structures grew as the ANC sent more and more of its members to the area – Morogoro became the site where pregnant women from the military camps and some other regions were sent, where injured *Umkhonto we Sizwe* members were sent, and where a variety of training courses were provided. As such, Morogoro became the site where debates about the role and responsibility of the ANC to its members, and members' responsibilities towards the ANC, were staged.

But many of these “events” play out in letters, in discussions interrupted and delayed by innumerable frustrations of communication, as personnel based in Zambia, the UK, Mozambique, Angola, and Tanzania sought to communicate with, and indeed, administrate thousands of people over these large and poorly-connected spaces. Thus, part of the story is precisely the distance and the disruption, and part of my intent here is to argue that ethnography of the ANC in exile needs to take into account the significance that other locales played in most events in particular places. Children and ANC staff based in Morogoro were subject, organizationally speaking, to decisions made in Lusaka, but also in Dar es Salaam and London; women were occasionally sent to give birth in Morogoro from Mozambique and Angola; visitors from across the ANC regions were common; ANC staff

³⁵ S. Morrow, B. Maaba, and L. Pulamani, *Education in Exile*

were frequently shifted from office to office, country to country, on orders of headquarters; and apartheid assassins acted in multiple locations.³⁶ It is a truism to say that locales are affected by other places, but in the case of the ANC in exile, it is worth emphasizing that no place seems to have felt very secure, and no place was defined by its internal dynamics alone. Equally, at times, the challenges of communication meant that decisions were made in a locally specific way, without reference to organization-wide policy.

III. The Emergence of Pregnancy as a Problem, 1978-1979

The influx of new post-Soweto members re-energized the ANC – but it also generated friction between new and senior members, as both memoirists and historians have remarked.³⁷ Ronnie Kasrils, a senior ANC, SACP, and MK member who played a large role in providing military training to these new arrivals who joined MK, took pains, in his memoirs, to minimize the stress these new members caused, emphasizing instead the energy and debate they brought. Others have commented more openly on the stresses these new members produced. Linzi Manicom, who worked with the ANC in Tanzania in the early 1980s, recalls this period as a vibrant and challenging “time of intellectual ferment,” writing that

³⁶ During the years this study covers, the SADF carried out its historic raids at Matola, Maseru, and Gaborone, and Ruth First and Jeanette Schoon and her daughter were assassinated.

³⁷ L. Callinicos, “Oliver Tambo and the Dilemma of the Camp Mutinies in Angola in the Eighties”, *South African Historical Journal*, 64, 3 (2012); S. Davis, “The ANC: From Freedom Radio to Radio Freedom”, in H. Sapiro and C. Saunders (eds), *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional, and Global Perspectives* (Cape Town, UCT Press, 2013); H. Macmillan, “Shishita: A Crisis in the ANC in Exile in Zambia, 1980-81”, in A. Lissoni, J. Soske, N. Erlank, N. Nieftagodien, and O. Badsha (eds), *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today* (Johannesburg/Cape Town, Wits University Press/SAHO, 2012). See also Kasrils’ memoir, R. Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous: From Undercover Struggle to Freedom* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball Press, 2004), and Thandi Modise and Robyn Curnow, “Thandi Modise, a Woman in War”, *Agenda*, No.43, 2000, p.36-40.

The young South African refugees in Tanzania and Angola were vibrant with ideas, vigorous in their analysis and freshly imbued with "struggle" experience. They pushed all of us who were outside of that political moment to take account of what today would be spoken about in terms of identity politics and racialized subjectivity.³⁸

Manicom cites Joe Slovo, another high-ranking MK and SACP figure, as rather unique in his openness to these new recruits; she observes that some "fellow party members" were "dismissive or actively hostile to these new political-theoretical currents (and to those espousing them)."³⁹ The debates that eventually unfurled over sexuality and pregnancy, I argue, reveal the contours of power struggles between these younger people, schooled in different political formations, and the old guard of the ANC, with its roots very much in petition and mass movement, and Old Left Soviet politics.

If in the military camps in Angola, tensions arose over differential access to resources and education,⁴⁰ in eastern Africa, it was sexuality and reproduction that generated discontent. New ANC members who were not sent immediately to the military camps in Angola were sent to the ANC communities in Tanzania. As young women arrived in Tanzania, some began to get pregnant – and quickly, established ANC members labelled these pregnancies as problematic, and took measures to address them. From the outset, tensions over the presence and behaviour of the new members took center stage.

³⁸ L. Manicom, "Joe Slovo: Ode to a Mensch," *Southern Africa Report Archive* vol 10, no 3, 1995 <http://www.africafiles.org/article.asp?ID=3957> Accessed June 11, 2014

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See Davis, "The ANC: From Freedom Radio to Radio Freedom."

In April 1978, approximately 50 women met in Dar es Salaam to re-activate the ANC Women's Section there.⁴¹ Although technically all locations where the ANC had members were to have a Women's Section, the Dar es Salaam Women's Section (Women's Section-East Africa, henceforth WSEA) had become defunct in 1973, as there were not enough women actively attending meetings or conducting other activities.⁴² This reactivation, and the large number of women at the meeting, pointed to the revitalization that the post-Soweto arrivals were providing to the ANC in Dar es Salaam. But despite their numbers, older women, most long established in exile, dominated the meeting. Kate Molale was unanimously elected chair of the meeting, while Mitta Seperepere gave the main address. Both women had entered exile in the 1960s, after extensive involvement in ANC work in the 1950s. Violet Weinberg, who was to play a major role in the WSEA, also addressed the meeting. Weinberg had only entered exile recently, but like Molale, she had been heavily involved in political organizing (in trade unions, the underground Communist Party, and the women's movement) in the 1950s.

These older women seem to have shaped the agenda of the meeting – Seperepere's address detailed the history of the women's movement inside South Africa in the 1950s, and can be read as an effort at educating the young women of the Soweto generation about previous women's struggles. Even at this early date, there was tension between the older and younger women, with the minutes recording that

⁴¹"Meeting of ANC Women in East Africa on Occasion of Revival of ANC Women's Section East Africa," 23 April 1978, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye

⁴² General Report of the ANC Women's Secretariat, For the Period 1972/1973, MCH01-Box 1, Folder 3, Mayibuye

“We want the young women to understand what the struggle means. The young women must be serious and not play around. The older women will not tolerate their frivolous attitude.”⁴³ This tension continued within the WSEA in years to come.

It is difficult to pinpoint the precise identity of many of these newly-arrived youth – indeed, neither memoirists nor historians who have written on their presence in the External Mission post-1976 have detailed their precise social origins. It seems reasonable to speculate that most came from Natal or the Johannesburg region.⁴⁴ Historians and social scientists have intensively researched the tense and dynamic youth politics of South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s.⁴⁵ These studies have tended to focus on young men, and thus, less is known about the gender politics or young women of this period.⁴⁶ However, it is possible

⁴³ “Meeting of ANC Women in East Africa on Occasion of Revival of ANC Women’s Section East Africa,” 23 April 1978, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye.

⁴⁴ Natal was proximate to Swaziland, and underground activists were facilitating escapes across the border from the late 70s onwards. The townships of Johannesburg were important sites of militancy, and there again, underground ANC activists were able to deliver people over the border, either into Swaziland or Lesotho.

⁴⁵ The literature is extensive. On the townships of Johannesburg specifically, see Hirson, Baruch, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash: The Soweto Revolt, Roots of a Revolution?* Africa Series (London, Zed Press, 1979), H.Pohlandt-McCormick, *“I saw a nightmare-”: doing violence to memory : the Soweto uprising, June 16, 1976* (New York, Columbia U Press, 2006), C. Glaser, *Bo-tsotsi: the youth gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000); S. Ndlovu. *The Soweto Uprisings: Counter-Memories of June 1976*. (Randburg, Ravan Press, 1998). There is less work on Natal that focuses on youth in this period. See Julian Brown for close reading of Pro-FRELIMO rallies in 1973. J. Brown, “An Experiment in Confrontation: The Pro-Frelimo Rallies of 1974”, *JSAS* 38, 1 (2012). For youth in rural areas, see A. Mager, “Youth Organisations and the Construction of Masculine Identities in the Ciskei and Transkei, 1945– 1960”, *JSAS*, 24, 4 (December 1998), pp. 653–67, and Mager *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan*. Terry Bell and Dumisa Ntsebeza’s *Unfinished Business* provides vivid insights into youth activism in the Ciskei and the Transkei in the 1980s. More generally, see C. Bundy, “Street Sociology and Pavement Politics: Aspects of Youth and Student Resistance in Cape Town, 1985”, *JSAS* 13, 3 (1987), T. Lodge and B. Nasson, *All Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (New York, Ford Foundation, 1991); M. Marks, *Young Warriors: Youth Politics, Identity and Violence in South Africa*. (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 2001), Pamela Reynolds et al, *War in Worcester: Youth and the Apartheid State* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2012).

⁴⁶ Meghan Healy-Clancy’s recent work on women’s education discusses this time period - Meghan Healy-Clancy, *A World of Their Own: A History of South African Women’s Education* (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013). A growing body of work also explores masculinity, including masculinity and youth. See B. Carton, *Blood from Your Children: the colonial origins of generational conflict in South Africa* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 2000); B. Carton and R. Morrell, “Zulu Masculinities, Warrior Culture and Stick Fighting: Reassessing Male Violence and Virtue in South Africa”, *JSAS* 38, 1 (2012);

to speculate, based on the evidence we have. Most of the young people entering exile in the 1970s were in their teens or early twenties, meaning they had been children during the ANC's mass resistance of the 1950s, and the harsh crackdowns of the 1960s. As we shall see, some within the ANC would later denounce this new generation as unruly youth, lacking the organizational structure the ANC had prior to exile. But in fact, many of the young people were deeply involved with organized politics. The 1970s had seen the rise of Black Consciousness movement, under the intellectual guidance of Steve Biko. Based largely in black universities, Black Consciousness adherents broke with white liberal students, and worked on 'consciousness-raising' and community development. Although Biko and his colleagues were not directly linked to the (high school aged) student uprisings of Soweto 1976, the influence of Biko's thought and the revival of protest in the country clearly played a role in stimulating rebellion.⁴⁷ Many of the young people, including women, arriving in exile had extensive political experience.⁴⁸

Many of these women were also survivors of torture (as were many of the young men who entered exile). In a lengthy interview with journalist June Goodwin, Thenjiwe Mtintso recounted the excruciating details of her multiple and prolonged periods of detention, where she was kept in solitary confinement, beaten, undernourished, and denied contact

Suttner, "Masculinities and Femininities within the ANC-Led Liberation Movement," in T. Shefer (ed), *From boys to men: social constructions of masculinity in contemporary society* (Lansdowne, UCT Press, 2007).

⁴⁷ J. Brown, "SASO's Reluctant Embrace of Public Forms of Protest, 1968–1972", *South African Historical Journal* 62:4, 2010; B. Hirson, *Year of fire, year of ash: the Soweto revolt, roots of a revolution?* London: Zed Press, 1979; Barney Pityana, *Bounds of possibility: the legacy of Steve Biko & Black consciousness* London: Zed Books, 1991; H. Pohlandt-McCormick, *"I saw a nightmare-- " doing violence to memory: the Soweto uprising, June 16, 1976.* New York: Columbia UP, 2006. See also D. Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1968–1977.* Athens: Ohio UP, 2010.

⁴⁸ For example, Thenjiwe Mtintso worked closely with Steve Biko. See Mtintso interview, in June Goodwin, *Cry Amandla!: South African Women and the Question of Power* (New York: Africana Pub. Co., 1984), 20–25.

with legal representatives or family.⁴⁹ Other women wrote testimonies in the ANC women's newspaper, *Voice of Women*, recounting their experiences of being beaten by police, and being arrested and forcibly separated from their children.⁵⁰ Many other women would later testify at South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission about their experience of detention and torture during this period.⁵¹

But it is difficult to get a sense of the gender expectations these young women would have brought with them, and how these would have intersected with the expectations of the senior exiled men and women. Although historical work on Black Consciousness and the youth rebellions of the 1970s and 1980s abounds, very little of it addresses gender directly.⁵² Some sources have suggested that, by the 1970s and 1980s, women occupied a more public role in political activities, and were less constrained to the 'private sphere.'⁵³ Speaking in interviews in 1979 and 1980 before entering exile Mtintso described Black Consciousness founder Steve Biko's attitudes towards women, saying, "To Steve, a woman was a woman. ...There was no discrimination."⁵⁴ But Mtintso also admitted that, outside of

⁴⁹ See Goodwin, *Cry Amandla!*. Mtintso also described such incidents in a speech to the TRC. Thenjiwe Mtintso, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Human Rights Violation - Women's Hearing* (Johannesburg, 1997), <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/special/women/masote.htm>.

⁵⁰ See for example – Baleka Kgositsile, *Voice of Women*, 1978, issue 3, p.6.

⁵¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1998, especially Volume 4, Chap 10; also Volume 3 testimonies; See also Fiona C Ross, *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa* (London; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2003).

⁵² Important exceptions include L. Hadfield, "Challenging The Status Quo: Young Women And Men In Black Consciousness Community Work, 1970s South Africa" *The Journal of African History*, 54: 02, 2013; M. Ramphela, "The Dynamics of Gender Within Black Consciousness Organizations: A Personal View", in B. Pityana (ed) *The Bounds of Possibility*; M. Ramphela, *Across boundaries: the journey of a South African woman leader*, New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1996; J. Seekings, "Gender Ideology and Township Politics in the 1980s," *Agenda* no 10 (1991), p77-88. Seekings noted the lack of gender focus in existing work in his 1991 article, and since his own correctives, not much further work has been done on gender in the 1980s.

⁵³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1998, Volume4, Chap 10

⁵⁴ Goodwin, *Cry Amandla!*, p. 21

political discussions, women tended to be relegated to more traditional roles, such as cooking and cleaning. Mamphela Ramphele, one of the most famous Black Consciousness activists, still a powerful figure in South Africa today, presented a similar image of gender relations in this period in her published recollections. Women in the Black Consciousness movement could, she recalled, come to be accepted as “honorary men” – but they had to struggle for intellectual space, and to be allowed to partake in typically male activities like sharing meat.⁵⁵ As was the case in ANC politics at this time, women’s equality took a back seat to the more immediate question of black liberation. But nevertheless, the young women of the Black Consciousness movement were perhaps more prepared to resist male authority than the older generation of women in exile.

The discussions in this material are dense and rich, but for the purposes of situating these youth who arrived in exile, I will highlight three characteristics. The majority of these youth were men, but there were more women than was previously the case in the ANC in exile. Many had some degree of education, but had not completed high school – this was in contrast to the majority of the existing leadership of the External Mission, most of whom had received higher education prior to or while in exile. And finally, the majority of the young arrivals did not have strong links to the ANC before arriving in exile, and came informed by a different set of politics and organizational practices, more closely linked to ‘new left’ and black consciousness thought than the ANC tradition.

⁵⁵ Mamphela Ramphele, “The Dynamics of Gender within Black Consciousness Organization,” in *Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko & Black Consciousness*, ed. N. Barney Pityana (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991).

This first meeting of the WSEA cited political education of women and support of the ANC's mission as the goals of the Women's Section in Dar – and indeed, publicity and education had constituted the main body of women's work in exile prior to this point. But the changing ANC population soon altered the work of the Women's Section. By October 1978, only six months after the reopening of the Section, its members were corresponding with the Women's Secretariat in Lusaka (the coordinating body for all the regional Women's Sections) about childcare. Women affiliated with the ANC in the area were getting pregnant, or already had young children, and members of the WSEA were anxious to provide for these women and their infants.

From the outset, we must note that it is very difficult to get a sense of precisely how many pregnancies were occurring. While the growing exchange of letters between the WSEA and the Lusaka Women's Secretariat communicates the anxiety the women in Dar felt about the situation, their letters provide little statistical information. The ANC did not, at this time, keep detailed membership lists.⁵⁶ In response to urgent questioning from the Secretariat about exact numbers, the best estimate that the WSEA was able to provide in 1978 was an estimated total of 35 infants born to ANC mothers. But they indicated that this number was incomplete, and that there were many more, as well as babies born of ANC fathers to Tanzanian women.⁵⁷ As we shall see, questions persisted in years to come about whether or

⁵⁶ If these lists do exist, I was unable to access them.

⁵⁷ See Arianna Lissoni and Maria Suriano, "Married to the ANC: Tanzanian Women's Entanglement in South Africa's Liberation Struggle," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, no. 1 (2014): 129–50. See also "Florence Mophosho to Christine Mokene," November 2, 1978, MCH02-4.1, Mayibuye. The Secretariat at this time approached funders for childcare facilities – and these prospective funders also requested more specific information from the Secretariat about the numbers of children involved, suggesting there was a large amount of uncertainty about the issue. (E.g. "Letter to Florence Mophosho from Congress of Canadian Women,"

not the ANC owed support to this category of child. Numbers continued to be small in the years to come. But despite these relatively small numbers, both the Women's Secretariat in Lusaka and the WSEA felt there was a problem.

In part, and at first, this was a logistical problem. New recruits to the ANC who arrived in Dar es Salaam were accommodated initially in ANC-owned or -rented 'safe houses' in the city. Baleka Kgositsile described her experience of living in one of these houses in a suburb of Dar in relatively positive terms. It was, she noted, "good to be in a house in which we lived like a large family of about twenty people. There were separate bedrooms for females and males and everybody took turns to cook breakfast and dinner, guided by a roster, and to clean shared spaces."⁵⁸ These houses seem to have varied in size and degree of crowding, as some former exiles' accounts describe them as less comfortable or salubrious.⁵⁹ Certainly the early letters from the WSEA to the Secretariat emphasize overcrowding as a serious problem, particularly in early 1979. It is also reasonable to assume they were intended for relatively mobile and self-sufficient people – women who were pregnant or had newborn infants had a different set of needs.

December 1978, MCH01-2.2, Mayibuye; and "Minutes of Meeting of Committee of Women's Section, EA," January 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye).

⁵⁸Baleka Mbete, "In for the Long Haul," in *Prodigal Daughters: Stories of South African Women in Exile*, ed. Lauretta Ngcobo (Durban: University of Kwazulu Natal Press, 2012), 78. Several exiles' accounts describe arriving in Tanzania, and provide a sense of the type of accommodation available. See accounts in Ngcobo, *Prodigal Daughters*. Also Mwezi Twala's critical account provides rich detail of the relative chaos of ANC accommodation at this time. See M. Twala with E. Benard, *Mbokodo: inside MK: Mwezi Twala: a soldier's story* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1994).

⁵⁹ See for example Mwezi Twala, *Mbokodo* and L. Schuster, *A burning hunger: one family's struggle against apartheid* (Athens, Ohio U Press, 2006).

But the WSEA also emphasized discipline as a concern. One of the earliest letters regarding childcare that the Lusaka Secretariat sent to the WSEA, in November 1978, assured them that senior ANC women would be sent from Swaziland to Tanzania to “act as supervisors to our young mothers.” The letter from the Secretariat further suggested that the WSEA ensure that the young mothers understood that these women were being sent to “maintain discipline backed by the organization.”⁶⁰ Less than two weeks after the Secretariat sent this letter, Kgositsile, then Regional Secretary for the WSEA, wrote to the Secretariat urgently asking for information about these women from Swaziland. “We are anxious to know,” she wrote, “if there is any progress in connection with the Swaziland comrades. We desperately need someone elderly to stay with [the young mothers in Dar].”⁶¹ It seems these senior women did eventually arrive. In her memoir, Kgositsile describes the supervisory work one woman from Swaziland undertook, observing that

Sometimes a young mother would wander off and spend a couple of hours at a bar with the baby. Mme Meisie [Mntambo] put her foot down and insisted that the babies be fetched. If it was not for her farsightedness and deep love, many of those kids would not have survived.⁶²

IV. Childcare Provision, 1979-1980

As these anxieties about both accommodation and discipline grew, ANC members based in Tanzania began, by late 1978, to formulate a plan for a ‘residential childcare centre.’ The goal shifted from sending older women to assist with childcare, to building an organized crèche for all the children in the region and beyond. In December 1978, Florence Mophosho, head of the Secretariat, wrote to UNESCO offices in Dar es Salaam, requesting

⁶⁰ “Florence Mophosho to Christine Mokene,” November 2, 1978, MCH02-4.1, Mayibuye.

⁶¹ “Letter from B Kgositsile, Regional Secretary, Women’s Section, E Africa, to Secretariat, Lusaka,” November 14, 1978, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye

⁶² Mbete, “In for the Long Haul,” 79.; Ma-Mercy Mntambo was interviewed by Hilda Bernstein and recounts her journey from Swaziland to Mazimbu to establish the Charlottes. See *The Rift*, p125-128.

funding for an ANC childcare centre. She explained that the number of ANC babies was “increasing rapidly.” As a result, the organization needed:

...A properly run child care centre, to enable young mothers to pursue their careers, and give the innocent children more security by improving their conditions as the future generation of our country.⁶³

In this request, Mophosho emphasized both the need to provide care for the children, and also the desire to liberate mothers from their children, in order for them to be able to return to full-time work for the ANC. This emphasis on the liberation of women from motherhood formed an ideological backbone for the early arguments about providing large-scale ANC childcare, as an undated report on the childcare centre indicates:

Many of the mothers are themselves young, who have hardly had time to develop their own identities and role in the struggle. Even those who are married and have planned the child do not necessarily want to go forego further work for the movement, even if only for a few years. This is a neglect of woman power and there is a simple solution that would be of benefit to all.⁶⁴

The simple solution this report and others proposed was residential childcare: Women from all over the African ANC regions (but not London) would be sent to a childcare centre, named the Charlotte Maxeke Childcare Centre, frequently shortened to “the Charlottes”, to give birth. They would then stay there with their baby, residing in the Charlottes, for a certain period of time (the length of mothers’ stay was, as we shall see, the subject of debate and contention). After this period, initially proposed to be one year, the women would leave their children behind to reside at the centre, and return to work for the ANC, usually in another ANC region, such as Lusaka or Angola. After the children were old enough, they would enter the primary school, and stay in the school accommodations. These facilities

⁶³ “Florence Mophosho to UNESCO, Dar es Salaam,” December 5, 1978, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye

⁶⁴ “Project – the Programme for Child and Baby Care”, No date, MCH01-2.4, Mayibuye.

were considered to be particularly useful for women based in the Angolan military camps; these “MK mothers” needed a residential facility for their children, as they could not bring the children with them to the camps. But in her funding request to UNESCO, Mophosho highlighted that even ANC women working full-time in Lusaka should be able to leave their babies in the childcare centre, so that they would be able to “contribute [to ANC work] with no hindrance, convinced their children are under good care.”⁶⁵ Additionally, women based in Mazimbu, including students at SOMAFCO, would leave their babies in the centre and go back to reside in the school hostels after the requisite length of time. Because women would leave their children there for long periods, the centres in some respects would resemble orphanages, planners at the time noted.⁶⁶ They would be staffed by full-time childcare professionals. One salutary report from early in 1979 suggested that these Charlottes would “completely free [the ANC’s] female cadres for the fulfillment of their revolutionary role.”⁶⁷ Women would be emancipated from motherhood, to do political work.

It is clear that members of the Communist party (SACP) played an active role in developing the first ideas for the Charlottes. Spencer Hodgson, who was involved in the early establishment of the Charlottes, and wrote a long and detailed report on the political potential of the centres, was raised in an SACP household, with both his parents Jack and Rica Hodgson active in the Party.⁶⁸ Whether or not he himself was a member I cannot confirm, but his language in the early report suggests a commitment to ideals that would

⁶⁵ “Letter from F Mophosho to Women’s Section East Africa,” November 2 1978, MCH02-4.1, Mayibuye

⁶⁶ “Spencer Hodgson’s Report on Creche,” 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye

⁶⁷ “Spencer Hodgson’s Report on Creche,” 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye

⁶⁸ See biography of his father, Jack Hodgson: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/jack-hodgson> (Accessed July 8, 2014)

have been shared by many within the Party. He demonstrates interest in the daycare systems used in socialist countries, and condemns the neglect of childcare in the West, noting that the resultant isolation of mothers has negative effects on society. He wrote, “The loss of women’s earnings coupled with her lonely existence and often the chauvinistic attitude of her partner result in unhappiness and often social problems, such as child battery, shoplifting, etc.”⁶⁹ Equally, Violet Weinberg, very much involved in the initial development of the Charlottes, was a staunch Party member. Weinberg indeed emphasized the influence of eastern bloc practice on her own ideas about childcare. For example, in criticizing the Charlottes’ policy of separating mothers and babies, Weinberg described the visit of several “East German comrades”, who were “older and more mature”, and found it terrible that the ANC was separating mothers and babies in this way, having long since abandoned the practice in their home country.⁷⁰ Florence Mophosho, who wrote funding applications for the Charlottes, and actively intervened, in their early years, to help smooth over problems in the homes, had extensive experience in eastern bloc areas. It’s not clear if she herself was a member of the Party. Certainly her close friends Ray Alexander Simons and Ruth Mompoti were. Mophosho also spent a number of years in East Germany, as detailed in chapter one. It is very probable that she would have been witness to that state’s efforts to address childcare and women’s participation in the workforce, particularly given her participation in the WIDF. It is also unclear if Gertrude Shope, who continued to play a significant administrative role in the Charlottes, although mostly from Lusaka, was a Party member, but it’s possible she was. Her involvement with FEDSAW inside South Africa prior to exile, and her friendship with committed Party member Bram Fischer, suggest she may

⁶⁹ “Spencer Hodgson’s Report on Creche,” 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye

⁷⁰ “Report to Secretariat, V Weinberg,” August 13 1979, MCH01-1.7.8, Mayibuye

have been.⁷¹ In any case, more important here than official Party membership is the sharing of ideas, and it seems clear that Shope, along with many other figures involved in the establishment of childcare programming for the ANC, had extensive contacts with people who would have promoted women's full employment, with the support of state childcare. Such ideas indeed were prominent in early liberation movements, as historian Kathleen Sheldon has noted in the case of Mozambique.⁷²

But to point to the influence that socialist countries' theory and practice had on some of the Charlottes' founders is not to suggest a "Communist plot," or to imply that SACP members had some investment in controlling the daycares. Rather, what emerges from the letters and reports of these founders, is an interested response to a problem perceived by many in the ANC – a response shaped by their past experiences and political commitments. But these SACP members were not the only ones involved in the Charlottes. Women and men who had left South Africa in the 1970s were also part of organizing the Charlottes – Baleka Kgositsile played the biggest role here, but others took part as well. These more recent exiles would, for the most part, have shared a Black Consciousness political background – and it is reasonable to assume that the theory and practice of Black Consciousness would also have informed the Charlottes. Recent scholarship has emphasized the practical orientation of much BC work, highlighting BC activists' eager participation in popular

⁷¹ See biography, "Gertude Shope," : <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/gertrude-shope> (accessed July 8, 2014).

⁷² Kathleen Sheldon, "Creches, Titias, and Mothers: Working Women and Childcare in Mozambique," in *African Encounters with Domesticity*, ed. Karen Tranberg Hansen (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 291–309.

education and the establishment of basic social services, including health care centers.⁷³

Creches, or daycares, could be a reasonable extension of such community practice. The development of the Charlottes and early childcare planning can be seen as a unique site of sharing of ideas, and putting theory into practice within the ANC.

Between January and May of 1979, the women leading the WSEA felt that accommodation for pregnant women was reaching crisis levels. During these months, they sent urgent letters to the Secretariat, begging them to buy homes in Morogoro to use for incoming pregnant women.⁷⁴ In June 1979, the Secretariat and the WSEA sought to solve the problem by opening what was to be a temporary crèche, in Morogoro. This first Charlotte was, like the previous accommodation for women, a pre-existing house, converted to house fifteen mothers and their babies. To the ire of Violet Weinberg, a rough, hand-painted sign, on which Charlotte Maxeke's name was mis-spelled ("Sharlotte"), was erected outside the (supposedly) temporary crèche – the sign perhaps a signifier of the gap between the hoped-for facility and its limited actualization.⁷⁵ As the years went by, the ANC continued to buy and convert existing houses, rather than build from scratch. By 1982, the Charlottes, then consisting of several houses scattered through Morogoro, were not much larger – they then housed 32 mothers, 32 children, and 18 unaccompanied babies.⁷⁶

⁷³ L. Hadfield provides the most depth here – see Leslie Hadfield, "Challenging The Status Quo: Young Women And Men In Black Consciousness Community Work, 1970s South Africa," *The Journal of African History* 54, no. 02 (2013): 247–67; Leslie Hadfield, "Biko, Black Consciousness, and 'the System' eZinyoka: Oral History and Black Consciousness in Practice in a Rural Ciskei Village," *South African Historical Journal* 62, no. 1 (2010): 78–99.

⁷⁴ "Minutes of Meeting of Committee of Women's Section, EA," 16 January 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye; "Letter from B. Kgositsile to Women's Secretariat," 15 May 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye.

⁷⁵ "V. Weinberg letter to Women's Secretariat," July 12 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye.

⁷⁶ Cited in Tsampiras, "Sex in a Time of Exile", p.652

Until the early 1980s, both the Lusaka Secretariat and the WSEA continued to issue reports and funding requests based on the idea of an eventual, custom-built residential centre, which would provide professional childcare and enable women's participation in the workforce. But this centre would never be built. Throughout the 1980s, childcare would be provided in a limited and relatively ad-hoc manner. The gap between the initial, utopian plan, and the eventual stopgap solutions, is, I will argue, significant. Undoubtedly, resource constraints, namely lack of funding and staffing, were major contributing factors to the failure to build the custom-designed facility. But closer attention to a disagreement that broke out immediately after the "temporary Charlotte" opened, and to later disputes over sexuality, suggest that disagreement over the fundamental role of childcare facilities was another reason the ideal-type crèche was never built. In the years to come, as members debated the place of sexuality in the movement, both women who were sent there and authorities within the ANC began to view the Charlottes as a site of punishment, rather than liberation.

V. The Charlottes in Practice, 1979: Obligation versus Liberation

What was life like in these Charlottes, and who lived in them? Although accounts are sparse, a rough picture can be sketched. The Charlottes were ordinary houses in Morogoro, probably relatively close to other ANC residences and SOMAFCO. The fifteen young women who lived in the first house were either single, or did not have a partner who could provide for them. Baleka Kgositsile's experience sheds light on the Charlottes' constituency. Although Kgositsile entered exile in the same time period as these young women, she was slightly older (she would have been 28 at this time), and she soon established a stable

relationship with Willie Kgositsile. Kgositsile had one young child (born in June 1978) during the period she was assisting in planning the Charlottes, and delivered a second child in June 1979, within a week of the Charlottes' opening. But there was no suggestion that she would reside there herself. Instead, she and her husband lived in accommodation at the University of Dar es Salaam, where he taught. Indeed, in her memoir Kgositsile specifically states that the Charlottes were for students and soldiers, not all women – despite the efforts of the Women's Section and Secretariat in the late 1970s to secure funding for a childcare centre for all women.⁷⁷ The women who did live in the Charlottes, then, were unattached or otherwise dependent on the ANC, and during the time they lived in the Charlottes, were directly supervised by a matron, a 'senior ANC woman'. In these respects, the Charlottes seemed modelled in practice on 'hostel'-type accommodation, much like university or school dormitories (as existed at the neighbouring SOMAFSCO).

It is difficult to find accounts by women who resided in the Charlottes. Their voices seldom appear in the ANC archive, except when read "against the grain", as resistant figures made into objects of discipline or sanction (i.e. when the senior women make complaints about them).⁷⁸ I want to suggest that the archival silence can itself tell us something about the Charlottes. The fact that no women in the administrative hierarchy of the ANC resided in the Charlottes (except as matrons), and the fact that no women who resided in the Charlottes have published memoirs in any form, reinforces the fact that the Charlottes were, from the outset, not for all women. A number of women in the ANC had children during the

⁷⁷ Mbetse, "In for the long haul", 79

⁷⁸ Although I was able to find and interview women who had worked or been otherwise present in Morogoro, I did not locate any women who had resided in the Charlottes. Equally, I am aware of no published memoir by a woman who spent time in the Charlottes.

1980s, but did not do so at the Charlottes – Baleka Kgositsile is one, but one could think also of Zarina Maharaj.⁷⁹ These absences suggest that the Charlottes were ultimately primarily for non-elite women within the ANC, women without other options or protection. The idealized vision, of the Charlottes as a facility to liberate all ANC women from the obligations of motherhood, did not materialize. Instead, they began to serve as homes for women without other means of support – and increasingly, women who were understood to have done wrong.

In these early days of the first Charlotte, evidence suggests that the women residing there were eager to leave the centre as soon as possible. Mabel Choabi, an older South African exile living in London, had come to Morogoro at the invitation of the Secretariat to open the Charlottes. She quickly adopted a policy to encourage women to breastfeed – if they breastfed, they could leave after six months. If they did not, they would stay for nine months. Posing early departure as an incentive revealed Choabi’s interpretation of the situation – she believed that women would be so eager to leave that this policy would encourage them to breastfeed.⁸⁰ Other evidence suggests that the young women did indeed hope to return to work as soon as possible. In one meeting, the WSEA attempted to impose a rule that would have prohibited women from working in the first three months after delivering a baby. But when the rule was put to vote, the “young mothers” voted it down – these young women were eager to return to their ANC work, and didn’t want the older

⁷⁹ It is also worth noting that the majority of women whose stories are included in L. Ngcobo (ed), *Prodigal Daughters*, are older.

⁸⁰ “V. Weinberg letter to Women’s Secretariat,” July 12 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye.

women limiting their right to work.⁸¹ Equally, the young women were eager to sleep separately from their babies at night. Writing to the Secretariat on the topic, Weinberg recounted that she had spoken to “one advanced young mother... who said she thought it wise to prepare the baby so that the [eventual] separation would be less painful.”⁸² It seems that this woman, preparing to leave her baby in order to return to military work, wanted to accustom her child to her absence. As refracted as these accounts are, they provide a tentative picture of women trying to negotiate motherhood alongside their motivated commitments to ANC work. As young women were giving birth in exile, they were no longer able to leave their children behind with family or friends inside South Africa, as the older generation had done. Instead, they and the organization found themselves confronting the question of how to manage children inside a political community.

Violet Weinberg complained vigorously about Mabel Choabi and the young mothers in the early months of the Charlottes’ operation, writing frequently to Florence Mophosho, a senior leadership figure based at the Secretariat, about the issues at the Charlottes.

Weinberg argued that the young women were neglecting their maternal duties in favour of ANC work. They were, she suggested, “carried away by romantic revolutionary feeling.”⁸³ In particular, Weinberg demanded that the women stay in the Charlottes for at least one year, for the sake of their infants’ health, and appealed to the Secretariat to enforce this. Florence Mophosho disagreed with Weinberg, reminding her that that the very purpose of the

⁸¹ “V. Weinberg letter to Women’s Secretariat,” July 12 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye.

⁸² “Report to Secretariat, V Weinberg,” August 13 1979, MCH01-1.7, Mayibuye.

⁸³ “Report to Secretariat, V Weinberg,” August 13 1979, MCH01-1.7, Mayibuye

Charlottes was to “release the women.”⁸⁴ Mophosho continued to emphasize the initial plan for the Charlottes, a centre for all ANC mothers, meant to allow them to leave their children and return to work. But Mophosho’s optimistic support of the Charlottes as a site of liberation was not to carry the day. Instead, both Choabi’s assumption that women wouldn’t want to be there, and Weinberg’s frustration over indiscipline and bad mothering seem in retrospect prescient. In years to come, the Charlottes became an undesirable location.

In November 1979, the highest governing body of the ANC in exile, the NEC, weighed in on the debate – apparently someone from the WSEA had written to them for guidance on how long women should stay at the Charlottes. At this stage, the NEC deferred to medical opinion – the administrative secretary Joe Nhlanhla wrote to the WSEA and informed them that the issue should be settled by doctor’s advice.⁸⁵ But within a few years – although no records survive to explain how this decision was taken – the norm was for women to stay between one and two years at the Charlottes, not the six months Choabi had aimed for.

VI. Charlottes Emerge as Site of Punishment, 1979: Sex and Dating

In practice, the Charlottes, on opening, became a site for underprivileged women within the ANC. This factor may have contributed to the rise of negative attitudes towards them. But at the same time as the Charlottes opened, ANC members in Tanzania began to discuss how to prevent pregnancy, and how to understand pregnancies that occurred. These particular

⁸⁴ “Letter Florence Mophosho to Women’s Secretariat,” July 27, 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye

⁸⁵ “Letter Joe Nhlanhla to Women’s Section East Africa,” 9 November 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye

analyses, which posed casual sex and pregnancy as signs of poor commitment to ANC work, contributed to negative readings of the Charlottes in the community, I argue.

On June 21, 1979, just days after the opening of the first Charlotte, SOMAFCO students held a meeting entitled “Convention Held in ...the Year of the Spear On The Problem of Pregnancy Among Students.” The goal of the meeting was to establish principles to reduce the number of pregnancies at the College – although the document provides no information about how many pregnancies there were. According to these minutes, close to 100% of students attended the meeting, and “Ninety per cent of the points ...were contributions made by students in the discussions.”⁸⁶ Students, it seems, were keen to address pregnancy.

The discussion at the meeting didn’t focus on birth control, but rather, the provision, of political education. Indeed, the minutes conclude that “reliance on contraceptives could be very much reduced by a political understanding which raises the revolutionary morality to level befitting all our youth in our revolutionary situation.” The minutes recommend that an “intensive political education be immediately mounted.” This education should emphasize “the retrogressive effects of a lack of adequate self-control” and help to develop “a revolutionary morality which will make comrades resist falling into temptations which create more problems for our organization.”⁸⁷ Although the meeting apparently addressed the pragmatic problems pregnancy posed for the ANC, noting that “pregnancies [forced] the

⁸⁶ “ANC SOMAFCO – Set of Principles Established In the First [College?] Convention Held in the Form IV Classroom on June 21 In the Year of the Spear On The Problem of Pregnancy Among Students,” June 21, 1979, MCH01-8.2, Mayibuye

⁸⁷ ANC SOMAFCO – Set of Principles Established In the First [College?] Convention Held in the Form IV Classroom on June 21 In the Year of the Spear On The Problem of Pregnancy Among Students,” June 21, 1979, MCH01-8.2, Mayibuye

organization to divert part of its meagre recourses [sic] from prosecuting the struggle into maintaining mothers [sic] homes,” the question of priorities and loyalty dominated. “Comrades weak in self-control,” the minutes observed, “may be difficult to trust in revolutionary missions”, and “pregnancies during school missions particularly out of marriage [reflect] a serious diversion from the correct priorities of those involved.” The meeting also asserted that pregnancies were not merely a women’s problem – indeed, “the male comrades who impregnate their female comrades must also be made accountable for this act.”⁸⁸ Pregnancy, the conclusions of this meeting suggest, was not in itself the problem – rather, indiscriminate sex was. This approach suggests that women who became pregnant (as well as their male partners) may have been seen as letting down the ANC, and displaying poor commitment to the liberation movement more broadly. Seen from this light, women in the Charlottes, unwed and unsupported mothers, may have suffered considerable social sanction.

The discussion on political education in this context resonates with similar discussions on political education in MK, particularly in the context of the “June 16 detachment” – the unit for the first youth of the Soweto generation, the compatriots of the students at SOMAFCO. Memoirists and historians have emphasized that political education was a key component of the military training young soldiers received in the ANC’s camps. MK, commentators and participants argue, was not merely an army, but a political army, one guided by ideological

⁸⁸ Christian Williams makes reference to similar injunctions imposed on SWAPO cadres in Kongwa camp. See C. Williams, “Living in Exile: Daily Life and International Relations at SWAPO's Kongwa Camp”, *Kronos* 37 (November 2011), p. 70

principles that gave meaning to its actions.⁸⁹ Indeed, in October 1977, when OR Tambo spoke to the June 16 detachment in the military camps in Angola, on the occasion of their graduation, he told them the following - - "As political soldiers, you will be expected like others before you, like us who stand here before you, to *dedicate your entire life to the struggle for the liberation of our motherland.*"⁹⁰ ANC leadership encouraged the same spirit of dedication at SOMAFSCO – school was considered a “mission”, like a military mission, and comrades at the school were supposed to be as dedicated to the ANC as were their soldier colleagues.⁹¹ But in the school more easily than in a military camp, ordinary everyday life, including sex and dating, more readily intruded. If ANC members were to dedicate their whole lives to the mission, what place could sexuality occupy?

Also in 1979, another category of ANC members interjected their interpretation of sexual education and sexual restraint into the debate. The WSEA wrote to the Secretariat about MK cadres who were having children with Tanzanian women. These MK cadres would have been older members, who had left South Africa in the 1960s. Most of those stationed in Mazimbu would have been relatively inactive by this point, sometimes for reasons of health. In the time they spent there, many began to enter into relationships with Tanzanian

⁸⁹ See Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*; Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*; H. J Simons et al., *Comrade Jack: The Political Lectures and Diary of Jack Simons, Novo Catengue* (New Doornfontein [South Africa]; Johannesburg: STE Publishers ; African National Congress, 2001).

⁹⁰ Tambo speech to June 16 detachment, October 1977, cited in James Ngculu, *Honour to Serve*, p.237 – I got the citation from Luli Callinicos, “Oliver Tambo and the Dilemma of the Camp Mutinies in Angola in the Eighties,” *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 597.

⁹¹ Leslie Hadfield, “Biko, Black Consciousness, and ‘the System’ eZinyoka: Oral History and Black Consciousness in Practice in a Rural Ciskei Village,” *South African Historical Journal* 62, no. 1 (2010): 78–99; Leslie Hadfield, “Challenging The Status Quo: Young Women And Men In Black Consciousness Community Work, 1970s South Africa,” *The Journal of African History* 54, no. 02 (2013): 247–67.

women. As the WSEA letter complained, the ANC did not support the children of these Tanzanian women and ANC men. The WSEA objected outright to this policy, arguing

We find this view politically incorrect as it discriminates only against the children of Tanzanian women where as the children of our unmarried young women are catered for by the movement. This discriminatory practice has led to unnecessarily strained relationship amongst the comrades.⁹²

Furthermore, they observed, this policy was leading to problems with the WSEA efforts to develop family planning programs. The MK cadres, apparently, “want to know why they should be educated on family planning while their children are not maintained by the movement.”⁹³ With this statement, these men were asserting a particular relationship of belonging to the movement. If the ANC would not provide for their children, they implied, the ANC should have no right to control their sexuality. This disagreement speaks to debates over the limits of ANC community – were babies born to Tanzanian women “ANC children” (was the ANC patrilineal or matrilineal) – and the reach of ANC responsibility (to whom did it owe service, and from whom could it demand bodily restraint).

VII. Teen Pregnancies Through the Ages?

Historian Lynn Thomas has observed that schoolgirl pregnancies have been a topic of concern in many sites and moments in 20th century Africa.⁹⁴ This is, of course, true beyond Africa – worldwide, it seems, youth behaviour, and particularly, youth sexuality, have long

⁹² “Letter from Women’s Section East Africa Acting Secretary to Women’s Secretariat,” September 25 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye

⁹³ “Letter from Women’s Section East Africa Acting Secretary to Women’s Secretariat,” September 25 1979, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye

⁹⁴ Lynn Thomas, “Gendered Reproduction: Placing Schoolgirl Pregnancies in African History,” in *Africa After Gender*, ed. Catherine M Cole (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 48–62.

been topics of concern for adults, and continue to be so today.⁹⁵ Indeed, teenage, or particularly schoolgirl, pregnancy is a major topic of discussion in South Africa today. The issue has garnered media attention, as well as academic and artistic treatments.⁹⁶ Schoolgirl sexuality was also the topic of a recent film that attracted considerable attention for being banned. The film, "Of Good Report," critically depicted a schoolteacher preying on a student. Days before it was to open at the Durban International Film Festival, the South African Film and Publication Board, an institution that has seldom played a significant role since the end of apartheid, banned the film on the grounds that it contained "child pornography."⁹⁷ The banning stimulated considerable discussion, and underscored the extent to which the topic of schoolgirl pregnancy remains controversial.

Thomas, speaking historically, analyses various historical moments where schoolgirl sexuality and pregnancy became focal points for debate. Such moments, she argues, are "important because they reveal how various people - including colonial and postcolonial officials, missionaries and local church leaders, politicians, parents, elders, and youth - have viewed the regulation of fertility and sexuality as fundamental to the construction of proper

⁹⁵ For example, Canadian historian Tamara Myers provides a fascinating discussion of existing literature on the history of 'female delinquency' – all too frequently sexualized – and the corresponding historiographical silence on juvenile boys' delinquency and sexuality. See Tamara Myers, "Embodying Delinquency: Boys' Bodies, Sexuality, and Juvenile Justice History in Early-Twentieth-Century Quebec," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 4 (2007): 383–414.

⁹⁶ See for example, Robert Morrell (2013), "South Africa broods over teen pregnancies." *Mail and Guardian Online*, 12 April 2013. <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-04-12-sa-broods-over-teen-pregnancies> (accessed July 14, 2014). See also Robert Morrell, Deevia Bhana, and Tamara Shefer, *Books and Babies: Pregnancy and Young Parents in Schools* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2012). The collection includes a photo essay by Cedric Nunn on teenage mothers.

⁹⁷ Atoinette Engel, "Opening Night Film at Durban International Film Festival Banned," *AFRICA IS A COUNTRY*, accessed July 14, 2014, <http://africasacountry.com/film-banned-on-opening-night-of-durban-international-film-festival/>.

gender and generational relations and political and moral order."⁹⁸ Many scholars of South Africa have explored the violence apartheid and colonialism did to the social order, examining the ways in which household organization, male authority, and seniors' authority was disrupted by segregation, migrant labour, and unevenly gendered urbanization (particular restrictions on women's movement).⁹⁹ Under colonialism and apartheid, the regulation of family life, including reproduction, changed dramatically, and in different ways. Although the South African situation is in many ways exceptional, it's important to note that parallel dislocations, and parallel crises of authority, occurred across the world in the twentieth century.¹⁰⁰ In post-colonial Africa, scholars have explored common themes of generational tension – citing students in particular as a troublemaking group. Andrew Ivaska details, for example, how Tanzanian students, post-independence, protested when their high expectations for social advancement, and privileges they observed their seniors to have, conflicted with the work (specifically, service work for the new nation) they were obliged to do. Ivaska has also examined gender tensions within youth groups, noting that young male members of the Tanzanian ruling party, TANU, sought to enforce dress codes on women. Ivaska links these sartorial interventions to male anxiety

⁹⁸ Thomas, "Gendered Reproduction: Placing Schoolgirl Pregnancies in African History": 49

⁹⁹ See for example, Benedict Carton, *Blood from Your Children: The Colonial Origins of Generational Conflict in South Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Heinemann, 2000); Anne Kelk Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan* (Heinemann Educational Books, 1999); Mamphela Ramphela and Linda Richter, "Migrancy, Family Dissolution and Fatherhood," in *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa*, ed. Robert Morrell and Linda Richter (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006). Novelist Lewis Nkosi's *Mandela's Ego* provides a brilliant and bitter send-up of masculinity and youth sexuality in crisis under apartheid. See Lewis Nkosi, *Mandela's Ego* (Roggebaai, South Africa: Umuzi, 2006).

¹⁰⁰ Sources are numerous. The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group proposes a particularly interesting direction for research, although their focus is less on the anxiety resulting from social change than on the changing notions of self, consumption, and subjectivization precipitated by (and precipitating) the rise of global capitalism and commodity culture. Their work stands out for tracing the simultaneous emergence of a 'type', the "modern girl", globally in the early 20th century. See Alys Eve Weinbaum and Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

in urbanizing Tanzania, a context where young men's economic potential was precarious. These issues, Ivaska argues, were central to struggles to define the post-independence nation's "national culture."¹⁰¹ Sexuality, masculinity, and femininity have been key sites of change, and as a result, key sites of tension.

But how does this translate into the ANC in exile? To read anxiety over schoolgirl pregnancies in exile in simple continuity with traditional patriarchal desire for control over youth and reproduction would be a misreading of the sources. It's certainly true that some within the ANC held self-identified "traditional" views, and saw schoolgirl and youth pregnancies in exile as a betrayal of custom and tradition. And it is certainly true that one of the great ironies of exile was precisely that it continued the same sorts of rupture in family life that apartheid created – as Luli Callinicos has noted,

The double irony of the ANC in exile was that the escape from dispossession and homelessness, both real and symbolic, imposed on black people by apartheid in the land of their birth, was now duplicated by the anguish and predicament of the exile experienced by Tambo and many others committed to the national liberation movement.¹⁰²

As we recall, many of the women formulating policy around childcare in exile had themselves left children behind. Although many read sexuality and pregnancy as disruptions to the political commitments exiles had made, not everyone in exile believed young women and men should restrain their sexuality out of deference to custom. As we shall see in the next chapter, these priorities changed over the years of exile, and the

¹⁰¹ Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Andrew M. Ivaska, "Anti-Mini Militants Meet Modern Misses': Urban Style, Gender and the Politics of 'National Culture' in 1960s Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania," *Gender & History* 14, no. 3 (2002): 584–607.

¹⁰² Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*: 410.

meaning of reproduction and childbirth continued to be debated from many perspectives. But it seems clear from the outset that, while exiles' "pre-exile" experiences shaped their attitudes towards pregnancy once outside South Africa, membership in the ANC, and self-identified 'political commitment' also contributed to changing their attitudes towards sexuality and childbirth.

In these early days, fresh from Soweto, and the incipient rebellion burning inside SA, the young recruits likely believed they would be back inside SA soon, carrying out violent struggle. In this context, pregnancy did not make sense, and childrearing could be seen as a burden. But in the years that followed, as it became clear to these new arrivals that exile was of a longer duration than they had expected, their attitudes towards pregnancy and childcare changed. At the same time, the administration continued to try to regulate pregnancy across multiple and very different ANC sites.

VIII. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that the majority of women who entered exile, particularly in the earlier period, prior to the post-1976 exodus, left their children behind. These women, in narrating their decision, tended to pose their decision to leave their children as one embedded in politics: that their political conviction, which included the well-being of their own and others' children, forced them to make the difficult choice of leaving their own children. In this respect, many of their experiences may have been quite similar to those of male leaders, whose loss of family has been more widely acknowledged. But as exile dragged on, and as more young women entered exile, this situation changed. Baleka

Kgositsile's situation is a useful example here: while she left children behind when she entered exile, a decision she posed as a political necessity, within a few years, she entered a new relationship and had children in exile. Many other women joined her in this. And while some of the pregnancies that occurred in exile were accidental or undesirable, it's clear that in many cases, women were pursuing relationships and having children out of their own volition. As we shall see in the next chapter, as the possibilities of return became more remote, young people in the ANC began to realise that they would not be returning to South Africa within a matter of months to pursue guerrilla struggle. Instead, they found themselves working in ANC offices, or at ANC-administered factories and farms, or studying in ANC's SOMAFCO school or overseas. Some waited for long periods in military camps. In all of these settings, immediate participation in "the struggle" may have begun to seem rather remote. We have seen in this chapter the apparent eagerness of the new recruits to avoid pregnancy and fully participate in various 'revolutionary missions' – revealed by young women's eagerness to leave the Charlottes, and by the students' meeting's condemnation of pregnancy. In the years to come, as we shall see in the next chapter, youth attitudes towards pregnancy and marriage shifted. At the same time, the administration, composed of youthful members and older, more established ANC figures, continued to be preoccupied with youth discipline. Their concern is perhaps unsurprising, as the early years of the 1980s were some of the most difficult years for the ANC in exile.

Chapter Three: Governing the Charlottes, 1980-1985

"I feel terrible!"

"Why?"

"Pregnant, me? Pregnant?"

"You are a woman"

"I know, but I don't want to be pregnant."

"Why?"

"Why?"

"Yes, why?" I insisted

"This is not a place to be pregnant, and, I am a soldier and we are at war."

"But now you are pregnant, and will not be a soldier for one or two years, and then after that you can decide," I said. She gave me a cruel look and said nothing. I thought we must get her out of here soonest. We did.¹

In July 1980, one year after the opening of the first official, if supposedly temporary, "Charlotte," the situation in Morogoro remained relatively unchanged. By this time, there were fourteen mothers, thirteen of whom were unmarried, residing in the Charlottes, and fourteen children.² They were accompanied by four paid staff, of whom three were mothers resident in the center. It's worth also noting that these resident women were aged 19 to 30, indicating that the center was not just a home for teenage mothers. The center was still a residential house, converted to accommodate them. And it was still unclear how long the women were to stay – a report sent to the Secretariat in 1980 details the situation in the house, but also asks, "we would like to know from HQ how long should a mother stay while nursing her child."³ This question was never fully answered in the ensuing years, or rather, it received multiple and conflicting answers. Throughout the 1980s, the Charlottes were plagued by administrative problems – the questions of how long women should stay, who

¹ Mongane Wally Serote, *Scatter the Ashes and Go* (Braamfontein [South Africa]: Ravan, 2002), 61–62.

² "Report on Charlotte M Childcare Centre," July 1980, MCH01-1.7, Mayibuye

³ "Report on Charlotte M Childcare Centre," July 1980, MCH01-1.7, Mayibuye

should be sent to them, what the women should do while they were at the centers, and who exactly was responsible for the centers were never satisfactorily answered, and were the subject of multiple letters, reports, and even official commissions of inquiry between 1980 and 1985. At the heart of these questions, I will argue, lay the unresolved question of what pregnancy meant within the ANC in exile, and consequently, what the Charlottes were – a site of release, or a site of punishment. As the Youth Section demanded in 1984, “First of all we would like to be clear whether this [staying at the Charlottes] is taken as punishment or not.”⁴

Many people who resided in exile and saw the Charlottes firsthand have since criticized them. Memoirs and oral histories since the ANC’s return to South Africa have expressed the sentiment that the ANC should have done better at dealing with pregnant women.⁵

Historians who have discussed this topic have shared this critical assessment. Shireen Hassim emphasizes that many women were dissatisfied with their treatment on becoming pregnant.⁶ Hassim situates her analysis of the Charlottes within a wider discussion on women in exile – drawing attention to multiple instances of discrimination and violence against women – and on women’s efforts to mobilize autonomously within the ANC. Brown Maaba and Sean Morrow, who also discuss the Charlottes in some depth, do so in the context of a detailed history of the ANC school in Tanzania, SOMAFCO (the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College). Maaba and Morrow highlight the disagreements over the role

⁴ “Meeting at the Charlottes” (Inquest into the Problems at the Charlotte Maxeke Centre), April 1984, Director-88.88.4, UFH

⁵ B. La Guma, *In the Dark with My Dress on Fire*; Interviews with Louise Asmal, Cape Town, July 4, 2012 and T. and B. Bell, Cape Town, 2012; see also interviews with H. Makgothi and A. Manghezi in H. Bernstein, *The Rift: The Exile Experience of South Africans* (Cape Town, Jonathan Cape, 1994).

⁶ S. Hassim, *Women’s Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), p.89

of the Charlottes, and who should be sent there. They make the reasonable observation that disputes are normal in such a diverse community as the ANC in exile.⁷ Hassim and Morrow and Maaba are broadly correct in noting that women were dissatisfied, and also that resolving the complex questions of childcare provision and support for mothers would always be a difficult task. After all, most wealthy and well-established nation-states have been unable to resolve these questions in a satisfactory way – it should come as no surprise, then, that a small, underfunded, and geographically dispersed guerrilla military organization should not have fully met the needs of its membership. I will argue that paying close attention to the contents of the debates around the Charlottes provides useful insights into everyday life in exile, including gender tensions and tensions between junior and senior membership. Specifically, I will suggest that these debates reveal anxiety within the ANC over the reach and limits of membership and responsibility – different people held varying opinions of what the ANC owed its members, and vice versa, and of who should count as a member. They also reveal how understandings of life in exile changed as the timescale of exile changed. And lastly, they let us see how tense life was in a time period when the ANC perceived itself to be under threat from the inside, via a series of spy crises and mutinies, and from the outside, through a series of attacks on its military camps in Angola as well as raids on its civilian operations in Mozambique, Botswana, and Lesotho, not to mention shifting geopolitical alignments in the region, most devastatingly, the Nkomati Accord of 1984.

⁷ S. Morrow, B. Maaba, and L. Pulamani, *Education in Exile: SOMAFCO, the African National Congress School in Tanzania, 1978-1992*, (Pretoria, HSRC Press, 2005), p. 134

Throughout the 1980s, the Charlottes continued to function in much the same way, although at the end of 1982, they moved into a new facility, one which housed forty women and children, and also provided daycare for an additional 20 children.⁸ Both the Women's Conference of 1981 and the Youth Conference of 1982 weighed in on the Charlottes and the treatment of pregnant women; there was also an official inquest into the "problems at the Charlottes" in 1984, and in 1985, a delegation from Mazimbu was summoned to headquarters in Lusaka to discuss problems in the community, including at the Charlottes. Throughout this time, both married and unmarried women were sent from Angola, Lusaka, and Mozambique when they became pregnant, although this policy was not consistently enforced. And throughout this time, women were obliged to stay at the Charlottes with their infants for a period of one to two years. After 1985, correspondence about the Charlottes peters out, but it is difficult to discern if this is due to a decrease in problems, or merely a decline in archiving material. Several incidents that occur into the late 1980s, including a heated argument, waged through letters, over whether or not to separate a mother and her young child, and a tragic infanticide committed by a schoolgirl, reveal that pregnancy and early childcare continued to be challenges within the organization.

In this chapter, I will explore life in the Charlottes through considering a series of connected issues – first, I will examine discipline and dating; I will then turn to the ongoing question of who the Charlottes were for and why. I'll then consider the different and changing attitudes that women and men in different regional sections of the ANC held on these issues. Finally, I'll address the connected question of contraceptive provision, and what it tells us.

⁸ "Report on the CM Daycare Centre and Residential Children's Centre to the Women's Council Meeting Held in Lusaka 22-24th Feb 1983, Covering the period 31 Jan 1982- 31.1.1983", February 1983, Director 126.206, UFH

I. Discipline and the PAC

As Shireen Hassim has detailed, in 1981, young women residing in the Charlottes were punished for dating men affiliated with the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC).⁹ The PAC was a rival liberation movement to the ANC; before and during exile, relations between the two organizations were less than amiable.¹⁰ In around October 1981, and continuing as late as April 1982, ANC-affiliated women residing in the Charlottes met men affiliated with the PAC in the town of Morogoro, and either spoke with them, or perhaps entered into relationships with them. One Women's Section report states that the women brought PAC men into the Charlottes to sleep at night.¹¹ In response, members of the Regional Political Council (RPC) beat the women as punishment.

This incident incited particular consternation in the community. Barbara Bell, who was at the time a teacher in the ANC primary school, provides a scathing account of the event. The women were, she recounts, "dragged before a night-time 'court' and sentenced to a sjamboking (whipping). This was carried out by a male comrade known for his brutality to his wife and children, and was so severe that two of the women required hospital treatment."¹² In addition to this corporal punishment, this misbehaviour on the part of the women was considered so serious that Gertrude Shope and Florence Mophosho, both senior figures in the Women's Secretariat and in the ANC more broadly (both women

⁹ Hassim, *Women's Organization*, p.91

¹⁰ See Lissoni dissertation for details on the early days of this relationship. A. Lissoni, *The South African Liberation Movements in Exile, 1945-1970*, PhD Dissertation, School of Oriental and Asian Studies, 2008.

¹¹ "Report on Visit to Morogoro, by F Mophosho and G Shope," October 1981, MCH01-1.7, Mayibuye

¹² B. Bell. "An Elephant is Never Burdened by its Trunk," in L. Ngcobo (ed) *Prodigal Daughters*, p.25

served on the National Executive Committee [NEC]), visited the Charlottes to do an investigative report. In their account of their visit, they describe calling all the women together in the Charlottes house for them to collectively renounce any association with the PAC. Shope and Mophosho's report described how the matron gave a report on the women's "indiscipline." After this report, all the women attending were made to stand:

We further called upon those involved with PAC to account for their deeds, only one stood up and said she met PAC at the Morogoro Medical School. We addressed them as comrades and mothers on the importance of maintaining discipline. We were very frank on the question of their association with PAC, that this wouldn't be tolerated by the movement.¹³

As this report, and the fact of Shope and Mophosho's visit testify, senior members of the ANC took the activities of the women seriously. Authorities within the ANC viewed intimate sociality across political divisions as unacceptable and potentially dangerous – it was found to "infringe on the policy and security of the movement."¹⁴

Although women from the Secretariat actively participated in investigating the young women's activities, the Secretariat did formally condemn the corporal punishment meted out to the women. After meeting with the Women's Section of East Africa (WSEA) and the matron of the Charlottes, the Secretariat decided to write a letter of complaint to the RPC, protesting the incident.¹⁵ But it should be noted that they did not oppose punishing the women, merely punishing them corporally. Indeed, the minutes of the Secretariat note with distress that the (corporal) punishment was not effective, "because some of them have gone back to PAC men." Later, a meeting of the Women's Secretariat in April, 1982, noted that the

¹³ "Report on Visit to Morogoro, by F Mophosho and G Shope," 1981, MCH01-1.7, Mayibuye.

¹⁴ "Report on Visit to Morogoro, by F Mophosho and G Shope," 1981, MCH01-1.7, Mayibuye.

¹⁵ "Women's Secretariat Meeting," February 1, 1982, MCH-01-13.1, Mayibuye. If this letter was written, I was not able to locate a copy of it in the archive.

situation in Charlotte 3 was “worsening – there was a fight between our boys and those of the PAC.”¹⁶ The fight occurred in April, some seven months after Shope and Mophosho’s September visit to the Charlottes – suggesting ANC women were still in contact with “PAC men” at this late date. Ultimately, the administration of the Charlottes decided to provide more political education to the women – because apparently “they did not know that the difference between the ANC and PAC were [sic] of a serious nature.”¹⁷ While the reports label “ANC women” and “PAC men”, the evidence suggests that for at least some of the women, and perhaps the men too, their political label may not have been how they defined themselves. The evidence suggests a situation of quotidian sociability: young women from the ANC, living long term in Morogoro, met young men associated with the PAC, and spent time with them. But senior women in the ANC seem to have seen this fraternization as anything but innocuous.

A later meeting of the WSEA sheds further light on this situation. In June of 1982, just a few months after the problems at the Charlottes, the WSEA gathered 180 women and 20 men together for a “Seminar on the Political Participation of Women,” held at SOMAFSCO. At this meeting, participants brought up the problems of the Charlottes, and offered their opinions on the issue. They suggested that, “there should be regular political discussion at the Charlottes.” Their argument was that:

Some women arrive in exile pregnant and go straight to the Charlottes. They have no knowledge of the ANC or its policies. This lack of knowledge must be dealt with – it is

¹⁶ “Women’s Secretariat Meeting,” April 16, 1982, MCH01-13.3, Mayibuye

¹⁷ “Women’s Secretariat Meeting,” February 1, 1982, MCH-01-13.1, Mayibuye. If this letter was written, I was not able to locate a copy of it in the archive.

believed that such ignorance leads to involvements with PAC men which could lead to infiltration of the movement.¹⁸

Given the disarray of the PAC in exile, it seems highly unlikely that there was any concentrated effort to “infiltrate” the ANC, particularly not via an underfunded and marginalized women’s home. Instead, the most likely scenario on the ground seems to have been that young women residing the Charlottes, either pregnant or with young infants, had met other young South African students in the town of Morogoro, and had struck up some sort of friendship or relationship, without verifying the political affiliation of these people. We recall that, when questioned, the young women had said they did not know “differences between the ANC and PAC were of a serious nature.” This implies that these women were not versed in the long-standing animosity between the PAC and ANC, which had characterized most (but not all) of the exile and pre-exile period co-existence of these two organizations. It also implies that these women’s “ANC” identities may not have been foremost in their minds – suggesting either that they were young activists from Soweto, committed to “the struggle” broadly and in a non-partisan way, or that they were young people who felt themselves to be in danger and fled, but who were not necessarily extensively involved in formal politics. In either case, what seems clear is that the ANC administration, both locally and at Headquarters in Zambia, viewed this situation as a serious problem and possible danger.

It is instructive to situate this particular episode in the history of the Charlottes within the context of the ANC at this time. In October 1981, the ANC was in the midst of what historian

¹⁸ “Report on East Africa Women’s Section Seminar on the Political Participation of Women, held at SOMAFCO Hall,” June 20, 1982, MCH01-18.1, Mayibuye

Hugh Macmillan has termed one of the two most serious crises within the ANC's exile years. In early January 1981, ANC cadres based in Lusaka had mutinied – they had refused to be sent to the camps in Angola. Tambo attributed this situation to indiscipline, drinking, and the abuse of weapons by these cadres.¹⁹ At the end of January, the SADF's Matola raid in Mozambique killed twelve ANC members, and more attacks seemed imminent. The SADF's 'Total Onslaught' campaign was in full force.²⁰ In March 1981, a Zambian government investigation precipitated the discovery of a widespread spy ring operating within the ANC – its activities seemed to include agents in Zambia and Angola, as well as Botswana.²¹ As a result of these incidents, the anxiety level within the ANC was very high.

Some senior members directed this anxiety at the Soweto generation youth. The ANC's official Shishita report into the spy ring made direct reference to the dangers the Soweto generation posed, suggesting that "the majority of the agents appeared to have come from 'an emerging middle class within the African society, and a closely related social stratum, the lumpen proletariat.'" Hugh Macmillan explains that this term was a coded reference to the new membership.²² In an atmosphere in which danger seemed to be everywhere, the upper ranks of the ANC may have read the "indiscipline" of the women in the Charlottes as not just a problem in itself, but an index of greater problems. The Shishita report in part characterized any criticism of leadership as being signs of being an enemy agent, and specifically identified "sowing political confusion" as being a task assigned to these 'enemy

¹⁹ Macmillan, "Shishita", 237

²⁰ Callinicos *Oliver Tambo*, 589

²¹ Macmillan, "Shishita", 240

²² Macmillan, "Shishita", 246

agents.’²³ It’s possible that part of the reason for Shope and Mophosho’s visit was to investigate to what extent more sinister forces were at play in Morogoro.

II. Purpose of the Charlottes

1980-1981: To Send or Not to Send

As we saw in the previous chapter, the original idea for the Charlottes was that they should be a site for all women in the ANC to deliver their babies, and then leave their babies to be cared for by the ANC. Quickly, however, this ambitious project was abandoned, mostly due to resource constraints in East Africa. However, news of its abandonment spread unevenly through ANC regions, and it seems that a final policy of whether or not women should be sent was never arrived at.

But by August 1980, the women in East Africa, who were then running the Charlottes, were advising against sending women from other ANC regions to Tanzania to deliver. Although the Charlottes were at this point in operation, the hoped-for Childcare Centre had not yet been built, and already, there were too many children in the region to be accommodated, with numbers approaching 150. The WSEA’s August report advised that, “Therefore it is wrong to create an impression that ANC children from all centres should be sent here.

Wherever possible use should be made of facilities for mother and child care available in the respective regions, sending them to this region only as a last resort.”²⁴ In October 1980,

²³ ANC TRC Submission, “REPORT ON THE SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES OF POLICE AGENTS IN OUR MOVEMENT” Shishita Report 1981, AL3130, SAHA

²⁴ “Memo on the Care of Children in East Africa,” August 23, 1980, MCH01-1.7, Mayibuye

Baleka Kgositsile, who had been heavily involved in establishing the first Charlottes, wrote to the Secretariat and recommended that, rather than women being sent to the Charlottes, they should leave their children with relatives, as long as they had family outside of South Africa. She also called into question the plan of providing long term residential childcare – she suggested a rethinking: “It seems to us that it is high time that some of those things were reviewed in light of the experience we have gained.”²⁵ The focus instead, Kgositsile recommended, based on conversations with Education workers in Mazimbu, should be on daycare.

The move towards daycare and adoption was at first taken up by other sectors of the administration. In March of 1981, the office of the Secretary General, then Alfred Nzo, held a meeting on the topic of what to do with pregnant women and their children. (The Secretary-General was and is a top administrative position within the ANC, who effectively manages the communication and enactment of decisions taken by the ANC’s governing bodies.²⁶) It was a meeting populated with high-ranking figures, at which women were underrepresented. Florence Mophosho was supposed to have been there, but was absent, so the only Women’s Representative was “Comrade Mavis”, probably Mavis Nhlapo, a woman based in the Lusaka Secretariat, who does not seem to have been extensively involved in the Charlottes. Addressing themselves first to the question of adoption, the meeting concluded that adoption should be encouraged, even adoption of children to relatives inside South Africa (a startling change of policy, especially considering Baleka

²⁵ “Letter from Baleka Kgositsile to Women’s Secretariat,” October 6 1980, MCH01-4.1, Mayibuye

²⁶ See description, “Secretary General,” <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4174> (Accessed July 16, 2014). This position would have been much the same in the ANC’s exile years.

Kgositsile had, in her letter just a few months previous, described such an idea as “unthinkable.”). The meeting also resolved in support of the establishment of day care centers, if possible in all regions where ANC women were based. These would be ordinary non-residential daycares. Specifically, and significantly, the meeting minutes record that, “The decision reached is that children of married couples should be provided for in areas where their parents are. Day-care centres should be established in all areas to allow mothers to continue with their work after conceiving.”²⁷ This meeting, then, could be read as broadly ‘anti-Charlotte’ – rather than proposing all ANC children be sent to East Africa, the Secretary General’s Office supported instead the idea that children should live with their parents, in the parents’ region, and if that was not possible, they should be sent to relatives, including inside South Africa. But as we shall see, these recommendations were to fall by the wayside. (Although a day care center was, it seems, built in Lusaka, with funds acquired in March 1981).²⁸

In the meantime, the situation in East Africa continued to be difficult – the WSEA encountered increasing problems both inside the Charlottes, and in providing for children resident outside the Charlottes. As of July 1981, although the Childcare Center had still not been built, they had converted a residence into a Daycare center, and were providing daycare to 28 children; an additional 18 children were living full time in the center, under the supervision of “five elderly ladies and four young mothers.” At this time, there were about forty women and children residing in the Charlottes (there were now three Charlotte

²⁷ Minutes of Secretary General’s Office Meeting, 17 March 1981, MCH01-13.1, Mayibuye

²⁸ “Project Proposal: Day Care Centre, Lusaka,” March 23 1981, MCH01-1.7, Mayibuye

houses).²⁹ But outside the Charlottes, there were more than 100 children resident in Mazimbu, presumably living with their parents or other relatives, and the WSEA was having a hard time providing for them. The WSEA reported that, “Many problems particularly with clothing and food are still being experienced in connection with them. Even when the Child Care centre has been completed there will always be children not living in it, but in the region. Therefore the question of organising ways of giving them same care as those in the centre, should be taken very seriously.”³⁰ To add to the problems the WSEA faced, seven unaccompanied children had been sent to East Africa, “under the mistaken impressions that this region has fully fledged childcare centres that can handle any number of children.”³¹ As a stopgap measure, the WSEA was housing these children in a residential house in Dar es Salaam, alongside five adults; they planned to move the children to Mazimbu. The picture that emerges is of confusion around what to do with children, with East Africa assuming responsibility in the interim, despite lack of funds.

In September 1981, the ANC held the first Women’s Conference in exile, in Luanda, Angola, attended by women from all over the ANC regions, including the African countries, Europe, eastern bloc countries, and even North America. While full records of this conference do not survive, the report from the Women’s Secretariat – the leading “headquarters”, responsible for directing all the regional women’s sections – conveys how the topic of pregnancy and childcare was framed at the Conference. The Secretariat’s report was, unsurprisingly, broadly positive, focusing on the positive role the ANC was playing in caring for children. At

²⁹ Memo on the Care of Children in East Africa,” August 23, 1980, MCH01-1.7, Mayibuye *Note – this number is actually from the previous year, August 1980. I couldn’t find any numbers from 1981.*

³⁰ “ANC SA Women's Section East Africa Report July 81,” July 1981, MCH01-6.4, Mayibuye

³¹ “ANC SA Women's Section East Africa Report July 81,” July 1981, MCH01-6.4, Mayibuye

the same time, the Secretariat admitted the limitations of their work, and described policy recommendations. They also described pregnancy as a new and “natural” challenge for the ANC to encounter, writing –

The care and upbringing of children, which in the past has not been a major task facing us, needs our urgent consideration and attention. We are presently faced with a high rate of pregnancies. This is a natural development, in view of the age group that has in recent years joined the ranks of our movement after 1976, and the fact that most of those young people are beginning to establish permanent relationships.³²

Explaining they had first thought to accommodate all women and children in Mazimbu, the Secretariat then admitted this was no longer possible, giving as reasons the undesirability of separating married couples, and taking women away from work in their region. So, the conference recommended, having also consulted with the NEC, all women, except those in camps, should stay in their own region to have their children:

The National Exec. Cttee has since reviewed this matter and has endorsed the recommendation that in cases where there are no environmental prohibitions (for example in a camp), a woman should be allowed to have her baby in the same area where she will be able to continue her work and normal family life.³³

As we shall see, this recommendation was not followed. The Secretariat also drew a distinction between adult and teen pregnancies, citing pregnancies among younger members as a separate problem. Indeed, the question of the actual age of pregnant women was a topic of ongoing confusion.

³² “Report of Women’s Secretariat to First Conference of ANC Women in External Mission, Luanda, Angola September 10-14, 1981,” September 1981, MCH01-10.2, Mayibuye

³³ “Report of Women’s Secretariat to First Conference of ANC Women in External Mission, Luanda, Angola September 10-14, 1981,” September 1981, MCH01-10.2, Mayibuye

But the decision not to send all women to Morogoro did not mean the abolishment of the Charlottes. Instead, it seems the Charlottes were intended to continue to serve as a mothers' home for women from the Angolan camps, and women from SOMAFCO school as well. Although minutes of the Conference do not survive, it seems that the assembled women came to a firm determination of the length of stay of women at the Charlottes. Within a few days of the Conference ending, in late September 1981, Gertrude Shope of the Secretariat wrote to the Working Committee of the Charlottes, confirming that the Conference had decided women should stay at the Charlottes for two years. She considered this information so important that she forwarded it immediately, promising to send a more detailed report of the conference later. The resolution was framed as about leaving, rather than staying – “that parents are to leave their children when they turn the age of two for further studies or other revolutionary tasks duties.”³⁴ This resolution foreshadowed later complaints by students and young women about being separated from their children against their will.

So, by 1981, the Treasurer-General, the Women's Secretariat, and the WSEA had all established that the Charlottes could never function as a mass childcare centre for all the children in the movement. But despite this relative consensus, ANC regions continued to send women to Tanzania to give birth. In some cases, for example that of women in Angola, this decision may have been a practical response to lived circumstances. But in others, particularly women in Mozambique, the decision seemed impractical, and therefore points at a larger disciplinary question.

³⁴ “Letter from G Shope to Charlotte Maxeke Residential Child Care Centre Working Ctee + excerpt from minutes of “meeting of Women's Secretariat with Cdes Jane Dumasi and Mabel Choabi, 19 Sept 1981,”²⁵ September 1981, MCH01-5.6, Mayibuye

Despite the Women's Secretariat's recommendations that women stay in their own region to give birth, it seems that confusion continued over this issue (as it would in years to come). In October 1981, one woman wrote a lengthy letter of resignation to the ANC, sending her letter to multiple authorities within the ANC, including the Women's Secretariat. Describing herself as a dedicated cadre, one who had been involved in Soweto in the 1970s in making bombs and running weapons for the ANC, her main reason for resignation was the ANC's failure to provide support to herself and her children, as well as the disrespect ANC cadres in her region had showed her (she had been based in both Zambia and Botswana since leaving South Africa). In particular, she cited that she felt punished for not having her child in Tanzania. The authorities in her region had told her to go to Tanzania when she was pregnant (this would, presumably, have been at some point in late 1980 or 1981) – she refused, on grounds that she was already seven months pregnant, and travel would be risky. Furthermore, she was married, and her husband was also working for the ANC. Although she was granted permission to stay in her region to deliver, she alleged that after delivering her child, the ANC refused her support for that child, including the provision of basic supplies, on the grounds that she should have been in Tanzania.³⁵ Finally, pushed to the limit of stress, she felt obliged to resign. Her testimonial should be taken with a grain of salt – she describes herself as having mental trauma as a result of experiences in South Africa, and in the letter mentions spending several periods of time in mental hospitals since arriving in exile. It's clear she was in significant distress at the time of writing, and it is possible that she misunderstood communications with the ANC

³⁵ "Letter of complaint to Secretary General from V Moshanyana," October 30 1981, MCH01-5.6, Mayibuye

authorities in her region, or that she otherwise did not communicate her own needs to the ANC. Nevertheless, her account does seem to indicate that at least some regional authorities believed in 1980 and 1981 that all pregnant women should be sent to Tanzania, regardless of circumstances.

The Medical Institutional Context in Tanzania

The Tanzanian medical context would almost certainly have had some influence on the ANC's medical practice regarding childbirth, as would the international medical community. ANC representatives, including medical personnel, travelled to WHO medical conferences throughout the 1980s, and attempted to integrate their findings into the ANC's new Department of Health. Equally, international volunteers, including doctors, visited and worked in Mazimbu, again bringing their ideas about what constituted best medical practice.³⁶ Unfortunately, it's difficult to get a detailed picture of the institutional medical situation in Tanzania in the 1970s and 1980s. Most recent scholarly works on the region focus on local cultural practices, and offer only limited examinations of the actually available health care services.³⁷ It is unlikely that ANC women would have come into contact with traditional Tanzanian practices around childbirth, or have been attended by a

³⁶ For example, a team of Norwegian volunteers prepared a detailed report entitled *Health Care in an Exile Community: Report on Health Planning in the ANC*, under the sponsorship of the Norwegian Trade Union Research Centre, in 1987. Held at University of Fort Hare – Health-8.25, UFH

³⁷ See, for example, Stacey Ann Langwick, *Bodies, Politics, and African Healing the Matter of Maladies in Tanzania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), <http://public.eblib.com/EBLPublic/PublicView.do?ptiID=713708>; Mara Mabilia, *Breast feeding and sexuality: behaviour, beliefs, and taboos among the Gogo mothers in Tanzania* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005); David Urassa, Andrea Pembe, and Bruno Sunguya, "Childbirth in Tanzania: Individual, Family, Community," in *Childbirth across Cultures Ideas and Practices of Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Postpartum*, ed. Helaine Selin and Pamela Kendall Stone (Dordrecht; New York: Springer, 2009).

“traditional birth attendant”, as ANC-affiliated women tended to live in communal ANC environments, separate from Tanzanians, and as few ANC members spoke Swahili, or other Tanzanian languages. But it is likely that ANC members attended local Tanzanian hospitals and health clinics – equally, after the ANC’s Holland Hospital was built, local Tanzanians frequented the hospital in large numbers.³⁸ Locals’ use of the facility implies that the region lacked other health care facilities, unsurprising given that Morogoro was a relatively small, relatively rural town.

After its independence in 1961, Tanzania had launched a comprehensive effort to make primary health care available across the country.³⁹ This programming was part of a larger development plan, aimed at raising the socio-economic status of the country. Despite high hopes, implementing nation-wide healthcare was to prove challenging, due to lack of funding and personnel.⁴⁰ Their efforts gained further momentum after the WHO’s 1978 Alma Ata conference, which promoted the importance of primary health care (namely, locally available, basic healthcare, in small dispensaries and clinics in rural and urban areas).⁴¹ International health care bodies such as the WHO took an interest in maternal and child health in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with specific efforts devoted to reducing maternal mortality rates (something Tanzania did successfully from independence in 1961

³⁸ Morrow et al discuss the importance of the hospital. Sean Morrow, Brown Maaba, and Loyiso Pulumani, *Education in Exile: SOMAFCO, the African National Congress School in Tanzania, 1978-1992* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 2005). See also “(ANC) Department of Health – Visit to Holland Hospital,” Health-2.3, UFH

³⁹ Urassa, Pembe, and Sunguya, “Childbirth in Tanzania: Individual, Family, Community,” 222.

⁴⁰ Amon J Nsekela and Aloysius M Nhonoli, *The Development of Health Services and Society in Mainland Tanzania: (a Historical Overview--Tumetoka Mbali)* (Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1976):100-101. See also detailed discussion in chapter 6, “Development and Health Policy in Tanzania”, in Ann Beck, *Medicine, Tradition, and Development in Kenya and Tanzania, 1920-1970* (Waltham, Mass.: Crossroads Press, 1981).

⁴¹ Langwick, *Bodies, Politics, and African Healing the Matter of Maladies in Tanzania*, 124.

into the 1990s, the 1990s seeing an increase in maternal mortality.)⁴²Scholars have commented that science in the 1980s laid a particular emphasis on breastfeeding – an approach that may have influenced ANC decision-making on women’s stays in the Charlottes.⁴³

Mozambique

Throughout the years of the Charlottes, ANC women based in Mozambique posed some of the most concerted challenges to their operation – or at least, to their relevance for ANC-Mozambican women, from their early submission to the ANC Youth Conference of 1982, to their later participation in a Commission of Inquiry into the Charlottes in 1984. Throughout, women based in Maputo maintained that they should be able to stay, with their male partners, in Maputo, to raise their children.

The social and political context these women would have encountered in Mozambique may explain these attitudes. As historian Kathleen Sheldon has detailed, in the early years of FRELIMO government in liberated Mozambique, providing childcare for working women was a major cornerstone of the new state’s social programs, as part of their efforts to get women into the workforce.⁴⁴ Children and childcare in general were important focal points for government intervention. The government took an active interest in providing for

⁴² Angela E. Shija, Judith Msovela, and Leonard E. G. Mboera, “Maternal Health in Fifty Years of Tanzania Independence: Challenges and Opportunities of Reducing Maternal Mortality,” *Tanzania Journal of Health Research* 13, no. 5 (March 18, 2012).

⁴³ Mabilia, *Breast feeding and sexuality*, 2.

⁴⁴ Kathleen Sheldon, “Creches, Titias, and Mothers: Working Women and Childcare in Mozambique,” in *African Encounters with Domesticity*, ed. Karen Tranberg Hansen (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 296.

children orphaned by war – an effort championed by Josina Machel, the wife of the first President, Samora Machel, and an important political figure in her own right – as well as providing education, food, and clothing for all children. The Organization of Mozambican Women (OMM) played a large role in the provision of such services, developing childcare centres for abandoned or orphaned children, where they would participate in education, political education, cultural and sports activities, and productive activities.⁴⁵ The similarity with the ANC programmes at SOMAFSCO and its daycare centers is notable. In addition to these residential programs, the new Mozambican state pushed the provision of daycares for working women, whether in neighbourhood crèches or in workplaces. By the early 1980s, Sheldon observed that childcare provision in the small Mozambican city of Beira was superior to that in the comparably-sized American city of Hartford, Connecticut.⁴⁶

ANC women based in Maputo, then, would have seen these crèches being organized around them. They would have realised that they could integrate their own children into this childcare system – which in fact, they did – making it unnecessary for them to go to Tanzania for their children. Women, and perhaps men as well, in the ANC Mozambique Youth Section raised this issue in 1982, in a written submission to the ANC's first Youth Conference in exile, held at SOMAFSCO in August 1982. In their report, the Youth described the high rate of marriages in the Mozambican region, and requested that these couples be allowed to stay together and raise their children in Mozambique. Careful not to criticize past policy, the authors note that it was previously necessary to send women to Tanzania, as there were no childcare facilities locally. But by 1982 they pointed out, in Mozambique,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 297.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 302.

children were able to be integrated into local crèches. Therefore, the Youth representatives suggested that women should return from Morogoro, and other women should not be sent there – instead, all should stay in Mozambique, and their other home regions, and have daycares there. They wrote,

Although this could not be avoided some 2-3 years ago because of lack of facilities, the situation has however changed. In areas such as ours, in the Peoples Republic of Mozambique, the Women's Organization here has made it possible for us to have our young ones integrated into Mozambican crèches from the age of 9 months. We therefore feel that this new situation makes it possible for young women who have been at Morogoro nursing their babies, to return to their different departments or to be incorporated into new departments in this region and in other regions where it is now possible.⁴⁷

They posed the demand in terms of women's workforce participation, noting that "In this way we shall ensure that our young talented and energetic women at Morogoro are again utilized for the good of the movement and the struggle."⁴⁸

Although the Youth Secretariat raised some issues arising from their Conference with the Women's Secretariat, including the functioning of the Charlottes, as we shall see below, they do not appear to have raised the specific complaint of the Mozambique Section representatives with the Women's Secretariat or Charlotte authorities. Or if they did, their objections were not taken up, because some year and a half later, women, including married women, based in Mozambique were still being sent to the Charlottes.

In April 1984, the SOMAFSCO Directorate, the authority responsible for administering the community of Mazimbu and by this point, the Charlottes, held an official Commission of

⁴⁷ "ANC Mozambique Youth Report to Student Conference," August 1982, MCH01-8.2, Mayibuye

⁴⁸ "ANC Mozambique Youth Report to Student Conference," August 1982, MCH01-8.2, Mayibuye

Inquiry into the ongoing problems at the Charlottes. As will be discussed below, the Inquiry focused on numerous problems in the centers, including staffing, discipline and rules, and work for the women residing in them. But women from Mozambique also gave their input to this Commission – there were married women from the Maputo region residing in the Charlottes at this point, despite policy being seemingly against such a situation. These women objected to being in the Charlottes at all. These married women’s behavior suggests that they were apparently annoyed about their time in the Charlottes – one of the staff of the centers complained to the Commission of Inquiry that “we have a problem with women from Maputo they do not cooperate.”⁴⁹ Some months later, in November of the same year, the married women from Mozambique were supposed to have left the Charlottes, to be sent into other accommodation, but none had been found. A meeting held to address ongoing problems at the Charlottes (not resolved at the Commission of Inquiry) noted that the women from Mozambique were still in the Charlottes and not pleased about it: “Among those who are supposed to leave are married comrades from Maputo. It was stated that these comrades are not happy about their accommodation there because they say that when they went to the Charlottes it was per agreement that they would be there temporarily.”⁵⁰ Their presence there was itself surprising, given that in 1981 and 1982, the Women’s Conference and the Secretary General had recommended that only unmarried women be sent to the Charlottes, particularly as daycare was available in Mozambique. The same meeting minutes note that in several cases, the women’s husbands were at Dakawa. As will be discussed below, Dakawa was an ANC site near Mazimbu, primarily used as a site

⁴⁹ “Meeting at the Charlottes” (Inquest into the Problems at the Charlotte Maxeke Centre), April 1984, Director-88.88.4, UFH

⁵⁰ “Minutes: Meeting Held to Resolve the Problems of the Charlottes,” November 6 1984, Directorate 126.206, UFH

of punishment, for crimes including abortion and pregnancy, and also a site for ANC psychiatric patients.

Despite ANC policy to the contrary, and despite the presence of suitable facilities in Mozambique, ANC women based in Mozambique continued to be sent by the ANC to deliver their babies in Tanzania. This policy suggests that there was something more to the Charlottes than mere convenience – it suggests that there was indeed a disciplinary element to the centres.

Angola

Records for the Angolan region, which comprised ANC members in Luanda, as well as in the ANC's multiple military camps, are sparse, probably due to a lack of archiving at the time, and also to security concerns post-exile. (In other words, not all of the records may have been released to the public, given the sensitive nature of the work that went on there.) No historians have yet explored the ANC's work in Angola in depth, although some have addressed aspects of it.⁵¹ However, memoirs, interviews, historical accounts of other ANC regions, and novels all touch on the ANC's experience in Angola, and on the concerns of women in particular, making it possible to construct a picture of what life was like for ANC cadres in Angola. In addition, a series of letters exchanged between the Angolan ANC Women's Section and the Secretariat provide precise insights into how pregnancies in the region were dealt with.

⁵¹ In particular, S. Davis *Radio Freedom*

The ANC established operations in Angola in the mid-1970s, after the country achieved liberation from Portugal. Long-time allies of the MPLA, the ANC celebrated their victory with abundant publications in the ANC paper, *Sechaba*.⁵² They initially established military headquarters in Luanda, and until 1989, there were ANC personnel based in Luanda, both military and medical. The Angolan capital city also housed the ANC's radio staff, Freedom Radio. Outside Luanda, the ANC established, between 1976-1989, thirteen military camps.

Figure One: ANC Angolan Camps⁵³

Camp	Date of Estmt.	Date of Closure	Number Cadres
Gabela ⁵⁴	1976	1977	40
Engineering Luanda (transit)	1976	1977	200
Novo Catengue ⁵⁵	1976	1979	500
Funda (specialised)	1976	1988	100
Benguela (Transit) ⁵⁶	1977	1982	300
Quibaxe	1977	1989	200
Fazenda ⁵⁷	1978	1980/81	200
Pango	1979	1989	400
Viana Transit ⁵⁸	1979	1989	400
Caxito Training ⁵⁹	1979	1984	100

⁵² See *Sechaba* 1975 and 1976 – virtually every issue featured stories on Angola and Mozambique.

⁵³ See *Further Submissions And Responses By The African National Congress To Questions Raised By The Commission For Truth And Reconciliation*, (Second Submission to the TRC), African National Congress, 12 May 1997. <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/submit/anc2.htm> (Accessed March 2, 2012), p.87-89.

⁵⁴ Merged with Benguela in 1977

⁵⁵ Novo Catengue suffered a famous poisoning in 1978, and was destroyed by the SADF aerial bombardment in 1979. ANC intelligence had prior warning, meaning the camp had been evacuated.

⁵⁶ For cadres who had been at Engineering or Gabela, and were en route to Novo Catengue.

⁵⁷ Merged with Quibaxe 1980 or 1981

⁵⁸ Also known as 001.

⁵⁹ Closed due to malaria (in malaria area)

Hoji Ya Henda ⁶⁰	1980	1981	300-400
Caculama ⁶¹	1981	1989	400
Morris Seabelo Rehabilitation Centre/Quatro/Camp 32 ⁶²	1979	1989	N/A

This Table is based entirely on the ANC’s Second Submission to the TRC. The information is not independently verified. Although the ANC provides no census figures, by simply adding up the numbers the ANC provided, we can say there seemed to be throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, approximately 3,000 ANC cadres in Angola at any one time.

The best-known camp is Novo Catengue, mostly because of the “Black September” mass poisoning that occurred there in 1978, and its subsequent destruction by SADF aerial bombardment in 1979, but also because several well-known people spent time there. Jack Simons, a long-time ANC member, went to Novo Catengue to provide political education in 1977 and 1978 – his published and contextualized diaries provide valuable insights into the camp.⁶³ Ronnie Kasrils also spent time at Novo Catengue, and writes about it in his memoir.⁶⁴ Viana and Panga are also well known because they became sites of mutiny in 1984 (see discussion in Chapter Five). And the notorious “Quatro” detention camp has been

⁶⁰ Also known as Camalundi. After 1981, became/merged with Caculama

⁶¹ Also known as Malanje

⁶² The ANC doesn’t count this as a camp, but as a detention center. It is the ANC’s most infamous camp, where abuses against detainees occurred. In 1989, the ANC transferred the remaining detainees to a prison in Uganda.

⁶³ H. J Simons et al., *Comrade Jack: The Political Lectures and Diary of Jack Simons, Novo Catengue* (New Doornfontein [South Africa]; Johannesburg: STE Publishers ; African National Congress, 2001).

⁶⁴ See Ronald Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous: From Undercover Struggle to Freedom*, Rev. and further updated (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2004).

the subject of extensive investigation due to the abuses that occurred there.⁶⁵ But beyond these names, little specific information exists about the camps. Although many interviews describe life in the camps, few specify to which camp they are referring.

In general, however, most accounts agree that life in the camps was difficult. The camps were for the most part isolated, in bush lands, accessible only by roads that were dangerous both because they were in poor condition, and because the country was suffering a civil war between the various guerrilla forces attempting to take charge of the state (in which the USA and South Africa were intervening). Land mines and ambushes were not unknown; neither were ordinary car accidents. Inside the camps, there were food shortages and water shortages. Some camps suffered heavily from malaria. In general, there was inadequate access to medical care.⁶⁶ The cadres were subject to difficult training regimes, including weapons training, engineering, topography, and intense physical regimes. At the same time, people who were present in the camps also recall cultural events, singing and dancing, and intense feelings of solidarity and comradeship.⁶⁷

There were women present in these camps, although they were significantly outnumbered. One soldier who was part of the “Soweto Detachment,” the first training group composed out of the Soweto generation exiles, who trained at Novo Catengue between 1977 and 1979, recalled that out of 500 cadres, twenty were women.⁶⁸ Sexual relationships were permitted,

⁶⁵ See further discussion in Chapter 5. See M. Twala, and P. Trehwela, *Inside Quatro*

⁶⁶ See interviews in Simons et al., *Comrade Jack*.

⁶⁷ See Barry Gilder, *Songs and Secrets* (South Africa: Jacana Media, 2012); Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*; Simons et al., *Comrade Jack*. The latter includes several interviews with cadres who served in Novo Catengue.

⁶⁸ Interview cited in Simons et al., *Comrade Jack*, p. 13

but not between leadership and cadres. In the aftermath of exile, women and men have reflected on sexual violence in the ANC's military camps.⁶⁹ No women testified at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission directly about being raped in ANC camps. However, in its own official submissions, the ANC admitted to having executed several members for the crime of rape, indicating sexual violence did take place.⁷⁰ One woman commented at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, telling, that she found the violence of the police prior to exile easier to take than her life in the camps, because at least with the police, she knew they were supposed to be her enemies.⁷¹ Former MK commander Thenjiwe Mtintso also described one incident of rape in the camps, noting that the aggressor had mental difficulties as a result of torture he had experienced inside South Africa, and later committed suicide.⁷² Andrew Masondo, who was a Political Commissar in Angola testified to the TRC that rapes may have taken place because women were so outnumbered by men – in any given camp, there would be hundreds of men, and only a few women.⁷³ Some pregnancies, then, may have resulted from rape.

Equally, though, women entered into relationships with men, with varying degrees of coercion. Sources referring to sites across ANC regions complained of “harassment”, or abuse of power, whereby men in positions of power had relationships with more junior

⁶⁹ See more in depth discussion in chapter five.

⁷⁰ African National Congress, *Further Submissions And Responses By The African National Congress To Questions Raised By The Commission For Truth And Reconciliation*, May 12, 1997, <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/submit/anc2.htm>.

⁷¹ Cited in Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes, *Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Submission to Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, May 1996), <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/submit/gender.htm>.

⁷² Cited in Ibid.

⁷³ Andrew Masondo, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Section 29 Hearing, “in Camera”* (Johannesburg, South Africa, 1998), <http://cryptome.org/za-masondo.txt>.

women.⁷⁴ Most of the reference to such situations are vague and allusive, probably to avoid making direct accusations. But not all relationships were necessarily coercive. Women whom Manghezi spoke to, for example, recalled having boyfriends in the camps, and also talked about the hardship of being at times separated from their partners if they were stationed in different camps.⁷⁵

Both men and women recall that there was a serious effort to change behavioural norms around sexuality in the camps. Following exile, several women who were in the camps have offered critical reflections on the failures of these attempted reforms, observing that sexism and sexual harassment took place.⁷⁶ However, women and men have also reflected positively on the changes that did take place.

Comrade Che Ogara, part of the Soweto Detachment, told an interviewer about his memories of women's treatment in the camps. He recalled,

We found the women very inspiring. Those who were there, braving all the same tasks we were faced with. Of course the commissariat had to give special attention to this question of educating our comrades about women's emancipation, so that they were treated like any of us, any soldier on an equal basis, but of course bearing in mind that they still remain women. ... But I can remember very few things the men were doing in the army which women were not also doing.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ See in depth discussion in chapter 5

⁷⁵ Nadja Manghezi, *The Maputo Connection: The ANC in the World of Frelimo* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana, 2009), 41.

⁷⁶ Thandi Modise and Robyn Curnow, "Thandi Modise, a Woman in War," *Agenda*, no. 43 (January 1, 2000): 36–40; Thenjiwe Mtintso, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Human Rights Violation - Women's Hearing* (Johannesburg, 1997), <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/special/women/masote.htm>. See also interviews with Mtintso cited in Luli Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004), 439.

⁷⁷ Simons et al., *Comrade Jack*, 13.

Women also offered positive reflections on their experiences in the camps. Comrade Precious, also part of the Soweto Detachment, recalled that women self-organised in pursuit of rights. She observed,

We used to organize ourselves as sort of a women's section, having our own political discussions because we discovered the men were ahead of us. So during our spare time we used to upgrade one another.⁷⁸

Otherwise, she found that, while women faced specific challenges, they also found a great deal of equality to men.

But otherwise we were just doing everything like them, there was no difference that this is a woman, this is a man. ... Sometimes it used to be tough: there's no water in the camps and then you are menstruating. We have to share a cup of water, it's just the way it used to be. And, I mean, our menfolk used to sacrifice some water for us, they'd say: 'No, at least the women should try to bath. We are better off, we are men.'

Other interviewees have encountered similar recollections. Women Nadja Manghezi spoke to recounted that they found the information in the camps strikingly different to what they had encountered before leaving South Africa. One woman commented that,

I was scared initially because of the relationship with men that existed at home in South Africa. There people would stop you when you were coming out of your gate. It was like the jungle. A guy would come and propose to you. Some would threaten you with a knife. But there were no situations like that in the camp. If a person proposes to you, you just say, 'No, I can't, I am not available. My boyfriend is So-and-so.' They respected that very much. They would just leave because it was dangerous: we were all carrying guns and anything could happen.⁷⁹

This account underscores the quotidian violence of South Africa's townships in the 1970s, and marks the significance of the changes the ANC was attempting to implement. Women cite Chris Hani, a highly-placed MK leader, as particularly sensitive to women's needs and women's equality. One woman told interviewed Raymond Suttner that, "there was no time

⁷⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁹ Manghezi, *The Maputo Connection*, 48.

that Comrade Chris left the camps without sensitizing all of us about the gender issue and taking it up seriously, not only with the soldiers but with officers also.”⁸⁰

There were, it seems, efforts to transform gender norms held by both men and women, through practice (deploying men and women on the same tasks), and through theory, including political education, for men and women both. While many have noted that the transformation did not fully occur, and problems between men and women persisted, it is surely worth noting that new norms were promoted.

Novelist Mongane Wally Serote provides a fictional meditation on what this may have been like in his *Scatter the Ashes and Go*. His protagonist, an MK commander, describes a disagreement with a woman, a fellow soldier, whom he has been having a relationship with. He had gotten up from her bed one morning, and taken her clean uniform, leaving his dirty one, because he had not had time to clean his. The woman, Mathilda, later confronted him angrily:

"I will make myself clear," she said in a deliberate whisper. "I am an African woman who loves to respect herself; no one, no one will take me for granted. I feel you are taking me for granted. I wash your combat [uniform] out of love for you, not duty or enslavement. You must get that straight now! You took my spare clean combat without telling me, you left your filthy torn one on the floor. What am I going to wear, who must pick up your combat, from the floor?"

The narrator reflected on this:

It was not the issue of the combat which preoccupied my mind for days and weeks. It was the fact that I had come face to face with the side of Mathilda, which I did not know, which, she later said, sought fairness from me. It was much later when she

⁸⁰ Interview with Dipuo Mvelase, in Raymond Suttner, "Women in the ANC-Led Underground," in *Women in South African History: They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, ed. Nomboniso Gasa (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2007), 241.

eventually said this. I discovered, as she dealt with other people on issues of fairness that she fought with all her might for this.⁸¹

Much of the novel consists of a meditation on love between men and women, in general and in the circumstances of political struggle, in particular, in the Angolan camps of the ANC. Serote is not providing ethnographic description, although he was based in exile, eventually joining the ANC. But his work can be read as offering a reflection on topics that were important in exile – including love, changing gender roles, and sex.

Contraceptives in Angola

As early as 1980, it seems women going to Angola were offered contraceptive measures (this is earlier than sex education and contraceptives were made available in Tanzania). Nadia Manghezi, an ANC member-turned memoirist and historian, who had been based in Maputo, interviewed many women who had been in Angola as well as Mozambique; these women told her they were offered “tablets, injections, or the loop” before going to Angola. This would have meant, birth control pills, depo-provera injections, or intra-uterine devices (IUDs – “the loop”). One woman commented on how unpleasant these methods could be, saying “When you have a loop, you always feel the pain.”⁸² Several women spoke to Manghezi about painful menstruation as a result of the IUD, complaining how it impeded their ability to participate in the intense physical training. However, they were eager to access these methods, as they didn’t want to go to Tanzania – according to Manghezi’s interviewees, they feared getting malaria in Tanzania.

⁸¹ Serote, *Scatter the Ashes and Go*, 94.

⁸² Manghezi, *The Maputo Connection*, 45.

Not all women, it seems, had equal access to birth control products. In 1982, the Luanda Women's Section representative wrote to the Secretariat informing them of their concerns regarding pregnancy, and asked both for educational material and contraceptives.

Demonstrating the mixed approach that characterized many ANC approaches to sexuality, Busi Cekisane, the Women's representative in the region, based in Luanda, asked for both material on morality and for actual contraceptive information. She wrote – “Please send us whatever materials you can obtain for us on questions of revolutionary morality and modern contraception. Perhaps the World Health Organization has such material (on contraception).”⁸³ Like the Youth meeting of 1979 discussed in the previous chapter, Cekisane and the Women's Section of Luanda were interested in approaching pregnancy as an issue of “revolutionary morality” – but they were also willing to provide contraceptives. Cekisane also asked that the ANC be careful not to send women to Angola who were already pregnant – she specified,

The region feels that we should request you to arrange that all lady comrades who come to join us in the future, be checked at frontline states to find out if they are pregnant. In this way we shall avoid having to turn them back from this region after a great deal of work has been done out here, and they have already reached the camps.⁸⁴

But despite Cekisane's efforts to obtain contraceptive information and provision, and despite the ANC's intentions to provide contraceptives to women in Angola, supply continued to be an issue. In May 1984, Cekisane wrote again to the Secretariat, detailing further pregnancies and asking for more contraceptives. She wrote, “Otherwise we hope

⁸³ “Letter to Women's Secretariat from Women's Section Angola Region, Busi Cekisane,” September 22 1982, MCH01-17.2, Mayibuye

⁸⁴ “Letter to Women's Secretariat from Women's Section Angola Region, Busi Cekisane,” September 22 1982, MCH01-17.2, Mayibuye

that you are attempting to solve our problem as regards contraceptives for our regional women's section here."⁸⁵

Pregnancies in Angola

Despite the efforts at contraception, pregnancies did occur. While the ANC Women's Secretariat had by 1981 reached the conclusion that the camps were not appropriate for children, discussion persisted for several years past that date in Angola over whether or not pregnant women should go to Tanzania. It also seems that some children were born to ANC women in Angola. The sources make it difficult to determine if these women were in the camps or in Luanda.

In September 1982, the Women's Section in Luanda had written to the Lusaka Secretariat, complaining about women arriving in the region pregnant, and asking for support with birth control information and provision. Early the following year, in March of 1983, the Women's Section in Luanda again wrote to the Secretariat, this time noting that "two more women" were pregnant, and asking for supplies for them – rather than asking for their removal. Busi Cekisane, then the Secretary of the Luanda Women's Section, noted that women were also discussing setting up a daycare there.⁸⁶ Such an idea would have been in line with the Women's Conference and Treasurer General's Office's recommendations in 1981 that daycare be established in all areas – but in contradiction to general policy that women should leave Angola if pregnant. By November of 1983, apparently after discussion

⁸⁵ "Letter to Gertrude Shope, from Busi Cekisane, Angola," May 26, 1984, MCH01-17.2, Mayibuye

⁸⁶ "Letter to Gertrude Shope, from Busi Cekisane, Angola," March 17, 1983, MCH01-17.2, Mayibuye

in the region, the Women's Section of Luanda had concluded that all women who were pregnant in Angola should go to Tanzania. Cekisane wrote to Gertrude Shope at the Secretariat that "an overwhelming majority of our women feel strongly that all expectant mothers must go to the Charlottes as per the directive of the SG's Office earlier this year." She then listed the names of five pregnant women ready to go to Tanzania. But her letter also hints at possible disagreement in the region, as she notes that "as far as our nursing mothers are concerned, *the meeting made it very clear to them* that it was vital for them to go to the Charlottes particularly for the sake of their children."⁸⁷ Such an account suggests that perhaps the women with children were reluctant to go to Tanzania, although no reasons for this are given. Cekisane does note that the women also delayed departure, on the grounds that their children were too young to fly. She also asked headquarters, on behalf of the women, how often they would be allowed to go and visit their children. Cekisane's account suggests that ANC women based in Angola, whether in the camps or in Luanda, first, were conceiving children, and secondly, were willing to go to Tanzania when pregnant. But they demonstrated concern as to their children's welfare, both in terms of travel and in terms of their abilities to visit their children. And indeed, perhaps revealing further uncertainties about Tanzania, a year and a half later, in March 1985, another representative of the Women's Section in Angola wrote to the Secretariat listing three pregnant women who should go to Tanzania, but complaining that two are unwilling to go. The author requests the Secretariat to intervene and talk to the women.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ "Letter to Gertrude Shope, from Busi Cekisane, Angola," November 12, MCH01-17.2, Mayibuye, my emphasis

⁸⁸ "Letter from Regional Women's Section Luanda, to Women's Secretariat," March 3, 1985, MCH01-17.2, Mayibuye

Without direct information from these women, it's difficult to know why they may not have wanted to go to Tanzania. Manghezi offers one possible explanation, citing women telling her that they feared getting malaria there.⁸⁹ Raymond Suttner, based on interviews he did, suggests that, "Because of the difficult conditions there, this [being sent to Tanzania] may have been interpreted not only as a way of treating pregnancy, but as punitive."⁹⁰ Equally, women may have been distressed to be pregnant at all. If they were using birth control, trying to prevent pregnancy, and committed to their military training, a pregnancy, particularly one that meant being sent across the continent, away from their fellow soldiers, and away from their work, could easily have been experienced as distressing. Serote again provides a useful fictional meditation here. His narrator describes one woman becoming pregnant, writing –

Comrade Mary, she is a very beautiful woman, a great fighter, came to say she was pregnant. She was very distressed. She does not know how the loop slipped. There are no condoms here. Reports came after that we must be careful because she seemed to be suicidal. We watched carefully from a distance. I wonder whether, if she were not a soldier, would she so hate her pregnancy? I do not know. Right now, we must put her on the next truck. That is what is important. We did not say so to her though.⁹¹

Unwanted pregnancy in any context is difficult. Situations of war make it only more difficult.

But ANC women were not the only women becoming pregnant in Angola, as later letters from Women's Section representatives reveal. In May 1984, just a few months after conceding to all pregnant ANC women being sent to Tanzania to deliver, Busi Cekisane

⁸⁹ Manghezi, *The Maputo Connection*, 44.

⁹⁰ Suttner, "Women in the ANC-Led Underground," 242.

⁹¹ Serote, *Scatter the Ashes and Go*, 61.

again wrote to the Secretariat in Lusaka, this time about Angolan women who were having children with ANC men. Both Busi Cekisane and her colleague Florence Maleka wrote to the Secretariat about this issue in May of 1984, suggesting it was a salient problem for them at the time. Maleka's letter asked for a clarification of ANC policy over whether or not the ANC supported children with ANC fathers and non-ANC mothers. Her letter suggests complaint and intervention on behalf of men who had children with Angolan women – she wrote, “questions arise as to why only female cadres’ babies are looked after, and nothing is done for male cadres’ babies whose mothers are non-South African (unmarried), as they feel these are their children, and should be accorded the same treatment.”⁹² These fathers, it seemed, felt it was inappropriate that the ANC not provide for their children. Maleka requested that “the issue be looked into even as far as headquarters level, because there are many such cases existing and pending.”⁹³ It seems there were many relationships taking place between Angolan women and men affiliated to the ANC.

In her letter of the same month, Cekisane described the steps the Women's Section was taking to care for these children, specifically on the question of instilling an ANC spirit in the children. She wrote, “we intend to work with our Regional Youth Section here to get a small group of toddlers from our male comrades’ children to rehearse our songs for singing on occasions such as children's day. This will also serve to conscientise [sic] their Angolan mothers in the spirit of the African National Congress for the correct rearing of their

⁹² “Letter from Florence Maleka, Luanda, to Women's Secretariat,” May 1984, MCH01-17.2, Mayibuye

⁹³ “Letter from Florence Maleka, Luanda, to Women's Secretariat,” May 1984, MCH01-17.2, Mayibuye

children.”⁹⁴ Pragmatic concerns about welfare provision overlapped with worries about raising these children as “ANC.”

By November of the same year, 1984, the same issue of providing for Angolan-ANC children continued, with policy apparently unresolved. The Women’s Section in Luanda wrote to the Secretariat urgently requesting basic supplies, including soap and other toiletry items, but also baby supplies. More children were being born to Angolan women, with ANC fathers, and the Women’s Section was struggling to supply them. The letter’s author wrote with some urgency, noting,

The things are needed as soon as you can. Our children are increasing on this side and we are presently facing crisis of things needed for babies. We are faced with a problem of unmarried Angolan women who had kids with our male comrades. This [sic] women come to our residents [sic] and demand some necessary things for their babies. On our side we felt it necessary to assist them but on the side of the kids.⁹⁵

The urgency suggested that increasing numbers of Angolan women were having children with ANC men, and that the Women’s Section was finding itself confronted with a serious organizational question around this issue.

The Secretariat, it seems, had not offered resolution to this, or sufficient supplies, by March of 1985. Some four months after the Luanda-based women had written in consternation, they wrote again, to Gertrude Shope at the Secretariat. They wrote, “we hereby inform you about the increased rate of pregnancy in our region especially on the side of Angolans

⁹⁴ “Letter from Busi Cekisane to Gertrude Shope, Lusaka,” May 26, 1984, MCH01-17.2, Mayibuye

⁹⁵ “Letter from Regional Women’s Section, Luanda, to Gertrude Shope,” November 1, 1984, MCH01-17.2, Mayibuye

impregnated by our male comrades.”⁹⁶ The issue of who should provide for these women (the letter lists three who were to have their babies shortly) and their children was still unresolved, and the women and their husbands were requesting support from the ANC offices. “We presently have four Angolan comrades who delivered,” the Women’s Section representative explained, and “Their husbands always come to the office to ask for their baby clothes.” There was, it seems, disagreement and confusion over whether or not the ANC supported children born to Angolan women. The “Chief Rep” in the region, who would have been the chief political officer in the region, had apparently told people that the ANC did not support Angolan women during their pregnancy, and would only offer food after the women delivered, not any additional support for the infant children. His argument was, apparently, that “these women are not doing anything for the organization and the ANC is not a welfare organization.”⁹⁷ The Women’s Section, it seems from their letter, saw matters differently (and indeed, had been providing more comprehensive support to the mothers in the region) – they hoped the Secretariat would clarify matters for them. How this issue was settled, if it ever was, is not recorded.

But these letters do provide important insights into men’s relationships to their children. These accounts indicate that ANC men were actively seeking ANC support for their children, taking an active interest in the well-being of their children. This finding resonates with something Suttner observed via his interviews. Citing an interview with senior MK member

⁹⁶ “Letter from Regional Women’s Section, Luanda to G Shope, Lusaka,” March 19, 1985, MCH01-17.2, Mayibuye. The second page of this letter is, unfortunately, missing.

⁹⁷ “Letter from Regional Women’s Section, Luanda to G Shope, Lusaka,” March 19, 1985, MCH01-17.2, Mayibuye.

Faith Radebe, Suttner describes Radebe's account of male soldiers' longing to have children visit the camp in Angola.

She reports how they continually asked that Angolan women be allowed to visit with their children so that they could have children around them. ... In addition, in the same camp men objected to women who were pregnant being sent to Tanzania to have their babies. They wanted the women to give birth in the camp and facilities to be provided. They longed for elements of normality in their lives, represented in this case by the presence of babies.⁹⁸

At least some men in the camps, it seems, were interested in fatherhood and family. In general, men's perspectives were under-represented in the ANC's files, perhaps because the Women's Sections saw their remit to be exclusively "women." But these brief accounts of men seeking support for their children, or mourning the absence of children, suggest that some men took an active interest in fatherhood.

Objections and Comparisons

The ANC's policy of sending women from Angola to Tanzania has attracted some attention, particularly because some women objected to it. Shireen Hassim has observed that most women in the ANC were dissatisfied with their treatment when pregnant. Art historian Kim Miller, in a piece on MK and ANC images of female combatants, takes issue with MK's treatment of women, in particular, its prohibition on pregnancy. Miller writes, regarding one iconic image of a woman with a machine gun and a baby, "Considered against MK's marginalization of women and its treatment of mothers, this image of female agency

⁹⁸ Suttner, "Women in the ANC-Led Underground," 243.

presents a troubling contradiction to women's realities at the time."⁹⁹ It's difficult to know what Miller's grounds for objection are here. She cites women being sent to Tanzania as a problematic "exile", and bemoans the interdiction on pregnancy. But this condemnation rests on an impossible counterfactual: what should MK have done instead? Is there any situation in which pregnancy is (or should be) encouraged in a military camp? If it was sexist to send women out of camps for being pregnant, would it have been less sexist to keep them there?

It's instructive to consider, briefly, policies for other organizations. In the 1970s and 1980s, very few militaries allowed female membership at all, or if they did, did not allow women to participate in active combat. To put the ANC's policy of sending pregnant women away from Angola into perspective, it's useful to compare it with other militaries in the world. The US Army, for example, today obliges all women to be screened for pregnancy when they are to be deployed overseas. If they are found to be pregnant, their deployment is cancelled – they are considered "non deployable." If a woman becomes pregnant while deployed overseas, she will be sent back to the US.¹⁰⁰ Even women not overseas must comply with a set of restrictions on their occupational tasks – for example, they can no longer do work where dizziness or nausea could compromise their performance (such as aviation duty or working on ladders), nor can they work where they would be frequently exposed to fuels,

⁹⁹ Kim Miller, "Moms with Guns: Women's Political Agency in Anti-Apartheid Visual Culture," *African Arts* 42, no. 2 (April 9, 2009): 5.

¹⁰⁰ Department of the Army Personnel Policy Guidance for Overseas Contingency Operations. (US Military) https://www.atberburymuscatatuck.in.ng.mil/Portals/18/PageContents/Training/IRDO/PPG_21DEC2012.pdf P.89 (Accessed July 16, 2014)

or do indoor weapons training, where they might encounter lead toxicity in the air.¹⁰¹

Women are also obliged to develop a clear childcare plan post-partum, in the event they are to be sent overseas to a site where they cannot bring their child.¹⁰² All of these measures are designed, it seems, to ensure women's safety (or, more accurately, the health of the fetus). And for a brief moment during the second Iraq war, one US military official attempted to make pregnancy during active combat an offence punishable by court martial – which could have resulted in pregnant women being jailed. The order was rescinded after negative press and political pressure, but it points to the ongoing tension around the question of pregnancy.¹⁰³

While one can object to the usual elevation of fetal rights over women's rights, it seems clear that the ANC's policies of the 1970s and 1980s had much in common with the current US Military policies. Women in the Angolan camps faced clear and constant danger, from illness (particularly malaria, as well as food-borne illness), from the chronic shortages of food and water, a lack of medical care or available medical staff in the event of an emergency, and not least of all, from enemy attacks. Throughout this period, the South African military bombed ANC camps, and ANC soldiers were also involved in fighting with Angolan rebel groups. To suggest that it was simply discriminatory against women that they should be sent away from the camps for pregnancy suggests a certain lack of

¹⁰¹ "Pregnancy Profile," Womack Army Medical Center, US Army Medical Department, <http://www.wamc.amedd.army.mil/patients/deptservices/obgyn/Pages/pregprofile.aspx> (accessed July 16, 2014)

¹⁰² Army Regulation 635-200, Active Duty Enlisted Administrative Separations. http://www.apd.army.mil/pdffiles/r635_200.pdf p. 78 (Accessed July 16, 2014)

¹⁰³ "Maj. Gen. Anthony Cucolo Bans Pregnancy," *Veterans Today* online, 23 December 2009. <http://www.veteranstoday.com/2009/12/23/maj-gen-anthony-cucolo-bans-pregnancy/> (Accessed July 16, 2014)

consideration of the circumstances MK soldiers confronted. The question of how to achieve women's equality even in situations of pregnancy is a complex one, arguably still unresolved worldwide – but allowing pregnant women and new mothers to deliver and raise their babies in military camps does not seem to be an ideal solution. These fundamental questions, of guaranteeing women's equality and equal social participation even when faced with pregnancy, are real and unresolved everywhere.

III. Functioning of the Charlottes and the Meaning of Pregnancy

However, it is clear that even women who were not in danger were sent to Tanzania. We must, therefore, investigate what else lay behind the ANC's policies. The situation laid out thus far is mildly paradoxical – despite decisions against sending women who were married or could have access to childcare in their regions to the Charlottes, women were still being sent to Tanzania from other regions. Equally, other women who fit the bill for the Charlottes – namely, women in Angolan camps – did not want to go to them. What explains the ongoing insistence on sending some women against their will, and why did women not want to go to the Charlottes? The answers, I argue, lie both in the conditions at the Charlottes, and in the community perceptions of pregnancy – perceptions that fed back into creating certain conditions in the Charlottes.

Perceptions of Charlottes: Outcasts in the Community

To understand the Charlottes and the role they played inside the ANC's External Mission, it's important to get a sense of how they were perceived by ANC members, both inside and

outside the Charlottes. Over the years, public opinion, in Mazimbu but also in other regions, seems to have turned broadly against the Charlottes – frequently, it seems, women residing in them felt isolated and were indeed treated as outcasts.

This complaint was first raised in 1982, some three years after the first Charlotte opened, at the Seminar on Women’s Political Participation organized by the WSEA at SOMAFSCO. There, some of the 200 participants brought up the Charlottes, and stated that, “Women at Charlottes should not feel isolated and rejected. They should be aware of their role in the movement.”¹⁰⁴ That such a statement was needed suggests that the women at the Charlottes were already feeling isolated and rejected.

Several months later, the Youth conference, held at SOMAFSCO in August 1982, also addressed the Charlottes. As we have seen, the Youth members based in Mozambique objected to being sent to the Charlottes at all. But additionally, Youth members complained about the negative perceptions of the Charlottes and the women in them. The Conference took these complaints seriously enough that after the Conference, Youth representatives met with members of the Women’s Secretariat to address the situation. In the meeting, the Youth placed emphasis on discussing the Charlottes, and sex education. Specifically, they cited sex education as a necessity, adopting a broadly “sex positive” approach. The Women’s Secretariat minutes from the meeting note that,

The [Youth] comrades expressed the need to eradicate the concept of sex being equated [sic] to dirtiness, that is why people show reservations about it being a subject. Children should learn to respect sex, once they know they will even learn to

¹⁰⁴ “Report on East Africa Women’s Section Seminar on the Political Participation of Women, held at SOMAFSCO Hall,” June 20, 1982, MCH01-18.1, Mayibuye

chose [sic] their relation and respect it. Sex is a wide subject not what people reduce it to.¹⁰⁵

With regards to the Charlottes, the Youth representatives informed the Women's representatives that the Conference had recommended in favor of "establishing a Charlotte wherever possible," so as to ensure that women could stay in their local region. The practice of sending women to the Charlottes in Tanzania, the Youth argued, had disadvantaged women, in that "female comrades have been the victims of this decision while men are let loose and some have got married to other women and abandoned mothers of their children."¹⁰⁶ Here we see the first gendered critique of the Charlottes, as well as one of the rare instances of discussion of the male partners involved in pregnancies. Unfortunately, the files do not record the gender balance of these youth representatives.

The Women's Secretariat took the Youth reps' complaints seriously enough that a month later, in October 1982, representatives of the Secretariat met with the RPC, the main authority for the Morogoro region. Rather than proposing action to reform the Charlottes, they pressed local authorities to reform the image of the Charlottes. In the meeting, they specifically complained that negative rumors and opinions of the Charlottes were circulating in the region. They reiterated the original purpose of the Charlottes, reminding the RPC that the Charlottes were not intended as a site of punishment, but as a facility to allow women to "upgrade themselves." These homes were not, they stated, only for unmarried women, noting, "This was meant for all women, not only for young unmarried

¹⁰⁵ "Report of Meeting of Women with Youth Secretariat," September 12, 1982, MCH01-13.4, Mayibuye

¹⁰⁶ "Report of Meeting of Women with Youth Secretariat," September 12, 1982, MCH01-13.4, Mayibuye

mothers.”¹⁰⁷ Citing the original idea behind the Charlottes – a site to provide care for all ANC children while mothers returned to work – the Women’s Rep observed that “the idea of the Centre should not be that it is a place to discard unmarried mothers.” The Women’s reps then “appealed to the RPC to correct the false impression already held by some Comrades in the region, that the Centre is a dumping ground.”¹⁰⁸ The terms of this conversation suggest that, by this point, negative opinions of the Charlottes were widespread. Facilities that had been intended to enable women’s wholehearted participation in the ANC instead were being read as sites where women were “discarded and” “dumped.”

In part, this debate concerns function and intention – even if the Charlottes were intended to “liberate women,” this objective failed to consider what to do with women in the medium-term, in the time when they were raising their children in the Charlottes. It’s for this reason, in part, that the length of stay became such a crucial issue – a woman staying for the first six months of her baby’s life will have a very different relation to the Charlottes house than a woman sent there for two years, which is a substantial part of anyone’s life. In practice, then, even if the goal was “liberation”, obliging a woman to be in a residential house for two years was hardly going to be experienced as liberation. Equally, the question of who exactly should go was also crucial – the experience of living in a communal setting with other women and children would be felt very differently by young women who were not in relationships, or only in casual or youthful relationships, as opposed to women who were married or in serious, long-term relationships, who intended to raise their child

¹⁰⁷ “Minutes of Joint Women’s Section/RPC Meeting,” October 15, 1982, MCH01-13.4, Mayibuye

¹⁰⁸ “Minutes of Joint Women’s Section/RPC Meeting,” October 15, 1982, MCH01-13.4, Mayibuye

(whether or not the pregnancy was planned). For women in the latter category, being sent to such an environment, under strict supervision, and with forcible separation from their partner, could easily have felt punitive.

Indeed, the conditions in the houses may have contributed to women in them feeling like they were sites of punishment – a sentiment which may have contributed to problems with ‘discipline,’ such as the complaints noted above, for example, that the “women from Maputo” didn’t listen. By the end of 1982, with the complaints noted by the Youth and Women’s Secretariat apparently unresolved, the situation at the Charlottes was widely viewed as untenable. The Chief Matron, Regina Nzo, wrote in despair to the Secretariat in October 1982, warning them that “it does seem that my work as Chief Matron for the Charlottes is going to put me into a psychiatric ward.”¹⁰⁹ In November 1982, Nzo wrote to the SOMAFCO Directorate to complain about the total indiscipline that prevailed in the Charlottes – she described violent verbal and physical altercations between the women residents, including incidents where weapons were used.¹¹⁰

At the same time, around October and November 1982, ANC members in the SOMAFCO Directorate were conducting an investigation into the workings of the Health Team, based in Morogoro. Apparently the Women’s Conference of 1981 had originally raised the idea of

¹⁰⁹ “Letter from Regina Nzo,” October 27, 1982, MCH01-18.1, Mayibuye. The recipient is not specified, but as the letter is contained in the Women’s Secretariat files, it must have reached them. Her claim was unfortunately prescient: in January 1983, her psychiatrist wrote the ANC’s Secretary General – at that time her husband, Alfred Nzo – advising that she had “decompensated” and needed mental health leave. See “Letter to ANC Secretary General, Lusaka from Dr Hauli, Head of Psych Muhumbili Hospital,” January 17, 1982, Director-88.84.6.3, UFH. (Both Regina Nzo and her husband Alfred Nzo have since passed away.)

¹¹⁰ “Short Report to the Directorate on the Sharlotte [sic] Maxeke DC and Residential Ch Care Centres”, by R Nzo. 21 November 1982, MCH01-18.1, Mayibuye

such an investigation, but it seems it was the resignation of Regina Nzo from the Health Team in September 1982 that finally prompted the investigation.¹¹¹ (Nzo stayed on in her role of Chief Matron of the Charlottes for several months after resigning from the Health Team, before having a breakdown.) The investigation into the Health Team was a serious affair – ANC members from the SOMAFCO Directorate, the RPC, and the Women’s Section were involved, and the inquiry interviewed more than ten witnesses (some of whom were compelled to testify) between October 1982 and December 1983, when they finally completed their report. The majority of the investigation focused on the personal tensions between Regina Nzo and Manto Tshabalala, a high-ranking medical officer in the ANC, and the effects their conflicts had on the health team as a whole.¹¹² But the investigation also shed light on the conditions in the Charlottes, as several members of the health team, essentially junior medical assistants, without complete nursing or medical training, were stationed in the Charlottes. These employees painted a grim picture of health conditions in the Charlottes, noting that there was no permanent doctor attached to the Charlottes, only occasional visits, and that transport was a serious problem. Therefore, if a child or woman became ill in the night, there was no one on hand to attend to them, and it was very difficult to obtain transport to take them to the hospital. One medical assistant reported having delivered babies at the Charlottes, despite having no training to do so. Another, when asked who would be there in the event of an emergency, one attendant “put her head in her hands

¹¹¹ “Letter of resignation, Regina Nzo to Regional Secretary, East Africa Health Team,” September 8 1982, Director 88.84.6, UFH

¹¹² Manto Tshabalala would go on to be a controversial Minister of Health in Thabo Mbeki’s government post-apartheid. She gained international attention for her espousal of “traditional remedies” to combat HIV, in lieu of medical treatment.

and said, 'No one – nobody else could help in the event of an emergency.'"¹¹³ Even in non-emergency situations, it was apparently difficult to get to the clinic in Morogoro. A bus ran only once a day, and was often full before it reached the Charlottes. In addition, dangerous drugs were not properly stored (they were not locked up), and no proper inventory was kept of them. In all, the picture that emerged was of inadequate health care in the Charlottes, and indeed, general administrative breakdown.

The conditions at the Charlottes were far from ideal. The picture that emerges is of overcrowded homes, with inadequate supplies and resources. It's not surprising, then, that women were unhappy there. Indeed, a report to the SOMAFCO Directorate about the Charlottes in 1982 made clear the negative atmosphere that prevailed, and attributed it both to administrative problems and to the isolation suffered by the women, which led to them feeling punished and like prisoners.¹¹⁴ The author observed that,

The administration of such scattered centres proved difficult, mainly because of transport and isolation of the mothers from the rest of the ANC community. With these factors, the young mothers looked upon the Charlottes as places of punishment for the crime of out of wedlock childbearing. Thus frustrations were brought about.¹¹⁵

The bad conditions in the Charlottes, this report argued, made the women feel like they were being punished. In fact, it seems that the women residing in the centre felt like prisoners – the same report observes, repeating the same phrase, that “any form of disciplinary action, however mild, made the administrators, in the face of the mothers, look

¹¹³ “Commission of Enquiry on Health, Minutes of Session on 17/10/82,” October 17, 1982, Director 88.84.6, UFH.

¹¹⁴ The report was published in early 1983, but described the situation of 1982.

¹¹⁵ “Report on the CM Daycare Centre and Residential Children’s Centre to the Women’s Council Meeting Held in Lusaka 22-24th Feb 1983, Covering the period 31 Jan 1982- 31.1.1983,” February 1983, Director 126.206, UFH

like jailers for the crime of an out of wedlock pregnancy.”¹¹⁶ These dynamics negatively affected the daily workings of the centers:

Exchanges of bitter words between the matrons and the young mothers are a part of the daily routine. This affects the stability and performance of everyone concerned, mothers, and matrons alike, resulting in inefficiency in the care of the children. Needless to say, not all mothers are problematic but five or so of such problems affects the entire discipline and the administration in the long run.¹¹⁷

By the end of 1982, then, the situation at the Charlottes seemed to be one of near crisis – women were not pleased to be in the Charlottes.

At the end of the year, the long-awaited Residential Childcare Centre was finally built – it comprised one central nursery building, surrounded by three houses for mothers and their children, with each house holding twelve mothers and their children (to a total of 36 mothers and 36 children). Matrons would occupy an additional two houses.¹¹⁸ Women and children moved, on December 29, 1982, out of the three Charlottes houses and into these new facilities. Along with the move, the SOMAFCO administration – which at this point began to take over the Charlottes from the Women’s Secretariat – offered several administrative changes, aimed at improving conditions for the women, and organization in the centers. They also developed a code of conduct for the women residents. The most significant change they introduced was adult education – women would be allowed to attend courses at SOMAFCO during their two year stay at the Charlottes. These courses had

¹¹⁶ “Report on the CM Daycare Centre and Residential Children’s Centre to the Women’s Council Meeting Held in Lusaka 22-24th Feb 1983, Covering the period 31 Jan 1982- 31.1.1983,” February 1983, Director 126.206, UFH

¹¹⁷ “Report on the CM Daycare Centre and Residential Children’s Centre to the Women’s Council Meeting Held in Lusaka 22-24th Feb 1983, Covering the period 31 Jan 1982- 31.1.1983,” February 1983, Director 126.206, UFH, emphasis in original

¹¹⁸ “Meeting at Charlottes,” December 6, 1982, 1982, Director 126.206, UFH

been brought in as a Youth Secretariat initiative, in response to the problem of women's marginalization during their stay at the Charlottes.

Unfortunately, the administration of the adult education itself proved to be a problem, at least at first, as no provisions were made for childcare while the women were attending classes. Regina Nzo complained of a young woman's child being left to run around screaming, unattended, "with feces running down his legs," and the other mothers on site paying him hardly any attention, while the mother was at adult education class.¹¹⁹

Although early reports in 1983 painted the move in a very positive light, describing it as the ANC's "Great Trek," and expressing the hope that it would resolve administrative and disciplinary problems, these high hopes seem not to have panned out. Instead, quotidian conflict and dissatisfaction persisted. It seems that the problems were not satisfactorily resolved in the year that followed, leading to the calling, in February 1984, of a formal inquest into the Charlottes. This Report, which included testimony from the women resident in the Charlottes, as well as from official Youth and Student ("Working Youth" and "Learning Youth") representatives, provides the most detailed insights into the workings of the Charlottes, and different constituencies' opinions of them.

The 1984 Commission of Inquiry into the Charlottes

In February, 1984, members of the SOMAFCO Directorate met, and decided to call an inquest into the situation at the Charlottes. The letters that detail this don't provide precise

¹¹⁹ "Meeting at Charlottes," December 6, 1982, 1982, Director 126.206, UFH

details into why this decision was taken – but the investigations undertaken by the Inquest Committee as it proceeded provide some insight into the reasoning. The Committee investigated the purpose of the Charlottes, who was intended to go there, how were they to be managed, and who was to staff them. One can deduce from this that all of these questions were, by February 1984, unclear, and moreover, were points of dispute between different groups of people involved with the Charlottes. Significantly, it was a meeting of the Directorate, then headed by Mohammed Tikly, who called the inquest – not the Women’s Section. Indeed, in the first letter about the Commission of Inquiry, Tikly writing to the appointed Secretary of the Commission, Dikang Nene, noted that both the Women’s Section and the Youth Section should appoint representatives but had not yet done so, suggesting they were not at all involved in the decision-making about this issue. Additionally, a later report from a meeting of investigation held at the Charlottes notes that the RPC (Regional Political Council) was also investigating the Charlottes at this time, under orders from the NEC, who had also heard that there were serious problems at the Charlottes.¹²⁰ These dual investigations suggest confusion over who was running the Charlottes – was it the SOMAFCO directorate, an administrative body, or the RPC, the leading political body in the region?

The Committee consisted of Arthur Sidweshu,¹²¹ a member of the Directorate who had been involved in the earlier Health Committee Inquiry, Dikang Nene (Secretary, and also apparently a member of the Directorate), Rica Hodgson (who, along with her son Spencer

¹²⁰ “Meeting at the Charlottes,” undated but attached to Charlottes Inquiry files, dated February to April 1984, Director 88.88.4, UFH

¹²¹ According to Ronnie Kasrils, Sidweshu had previously served as the Commissar for Novo Catengue in Angola, before the camp’s destruction in 1979. See interview in Simons et al., *Comrade Jack*, 16.

Hodgson had been involved in Mazimbu since 1981),¹²² and two eventual representatives, from the Women's Section and the Youth Secretariat. Formed in March, it completed its eight-page report by the end of April, and submitted it to the Directorate. To compile the report, the Committee proceeded much like the earlier Health Committee Commission of Investigation – its members visited the Charlottes, and interviewed a number of people associated with the Charlottes, including women resident in them, matrons working at them, "Working" and "Learning" Youth representatives, and the Women's Section. Partial records of some of these testimonies survive, providing the richest insights into the actual workings of the Charlottes.

The meetings and interviews, and the report that came out of them, revealed two broad trends – first, there existed a general quotidian administrative crisis inside the Charlottes, with distrust between the residents and staff, and a particularly controversial Commissar, who was widely disliked and disrespected. And secondly, more profoundly, the investigation revealed disagreement and dissatisfaction over the very purpose of the Charlottes, with the Youth representatives and the Health Team weighing in both to demand clarity as to the intentions behind the Charlottes, and to demand changes in how they functioned.

On the administrative level, the Report of the Commission found that "the Women's Secretariat which summoned people to come and initiate this project had a very hazy idea

¹²² D. Makatile, "Feature: A Humble Soldier Named Rica", *The New Age*, Aug 23, 2012. http://www.thenewage.co.za/59950-1007-53-Feature_A_humble_soldier_named_Rica (Accessed June 20, 2014); "Rica Hodgson – The Order of Luthuli in Bronze," ANC Presidency, <http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/pebble.asp?relid=7936> Accessed June 20, 2014

about the whole business. ... In short there was [sic] no official documents handed to people who were supposed to run the Charlottes nor the architect who was supposed to be responsible for the drawing of the plans of the Charlotte Maxeke Centre.”¹²³ Their source for this is an interview with an elderly woman, Ma-Mercy, who had indeed been present in East Africa, supervising the women in the Charlottes since 1979 at least. Her testimonial about the uncertainty of the Charlottes’ founding – and the apparent lack of discussion of the early, bigger goals of the Charlottes – suggest that on the ground, even when the WSEA had been actively formulating policy for the Charlottes, the actual daily workings of the Charlottes had been unclear. By this time, Violet Weinberg was ill or deceased, Kate Molale was dead, Florence Mophosho was busy with other tasks, and Baleka Kgositsile had been deployed off the continent. It’s possible that the institutional memory of the earlier Women’s Section had been lost.

The current Women’s Section also weighed in on the administration of the Charlottes, and complained both about the Women’s Secretariat and the previous Women’s Section. On the Secretariat, they observed that “most unfortunately every members [sic] of the W/Secretariat at H/Q who visited this place always gives their own interpretation of how this place should be run.”¹²⁴ This is a far cry from the earlier days, in which members of the WSEA appealed for and welcomed visits from the authority figures of the Secretariat, who were called upon to enforce discipline in the region. Equally, the Women’s Section stated that, “It should be noted that when the present Women’s Section took over there were no structures set up the Charlottes for its running. The present structure is the work of the

¹²³ “Commission Report on Charlotte Maxeke,” April 1984, Director-88.88.4, UFH

¹²⁴ “Commission Report on Charlotte Maxeke,” April 1984, Director-88.88.4, UFH

local Women's Section."¹²⁵ Again, the previous work of the WSEA is here eclipsed or lost from institutional memory; it seems instead that when the current Women's Section took over, perhaps after the move to the new Charlottes at the end of 1982, they found a situation in which authority within the Charlottes was very unclear.

The new structure they had established, however, did not appear to be functioning perfectly either. It consisted of a Chief Matron, who reported to the Women's Committee (which seems to have been the same thing as the Women's Section). Under the Chief Matron worked a series of Sub-Matrons, who worked in shifts and were responsible for daily tasks, such as cleaning, and feeding the children. Below, or horizontal to them, was the Commissar, responsible for the political development of the women in the Charlottes, and below her, the Commanders, who were representatives of women residing in the Charlottes. There was also a Head of the Daycare Centre, whose position in the hierarchy was unclear. At the time of the report, there were approximately 65 children ranging from aged three months to three years – not all of these children were resident, some were only in the daycare. To care for them, there were fifteen workers, of whom three were local (Tanzanian) women. Women were supposed to enter the Charlottes in their seventh month of pregnancy, and six weeks after giving birth, they could resume light work inside the Charlottes, which consisted of teaching and playing with their children, helping to care for the children whose mothers had left, and cleaning the facilities.

¹²⁵ "Commission Report on Charlotte Maxeke," April 1984, Director-88.88.4, UFH

This rather complex hierarchy was suffering in a number of directions. According to testimony, the sub-matrons “see the situation at the Charlottes as a hopeless one. The girls do not listen and are very rude towards the sub-matrons, such that the matrons just keep quiet even when they could assist.” A picture emerges of a dysfunctional disciplinary institution, in which the women were treated as “inmates” (the term is used throughout the report), and in which they were angry at and resisted the authority of their supervisors.

The “Code of Conduct” for the Centre sheds some light on the women’s experience. Dated December 1982, corresponding with the women’s move to the new Charlottes facilities, the document presents a very different picture of the Charlottes than that first sketched out by Florence Mophosho and Gertrude Shope in 1979. The “Code of Conduct” specified several fairly ordinary procedures for group living, such as a “lights out” time of 11 p.m., and a 7 p.m. bedtime for the children. But it also placed strict limitations on women’s mobility, stating that “Young mothers are allowed to go out and visit the Mazimbu community Saturdays 14 h. to 17 h., and Sundays 11 h. to 20.h” (during which time they must make their own childcare arrangements). With permission, they were also allowed a shopping trip once a week, and to go to the cinema twice a month.¹²⁶ But aside from these delimited outings, the women, it appears, were to be confined to the house with their children, where they were expected to work from 7 h. to 15.30 h. each weekday, with a half day on Saturday, and to attend all political unit meetings. In many respects, this set-up resembles a school dormitory, or even a facility for semi-criminalized youth (in Canada, we would say a halfway house or home for troubled youth). While such a facility may have met the needs of

¹²⁶ “Rules and Regulations for the Young Mothers,” December 31, 1982, Director 126.206, UFH.

some of the women, when we recall that some of the women were in their 20s or older, some were married and had been living with their partners, and some had multiple children, the reasons for their discontent become clearer.

But in addition to these quotidian problems with the running of the Charlottes, most of those involved with them, particularly the Health Team, the Student and Working Youth, and the so-called inmates, called into question the overall purpose of the Centres. The Health Team, its representatives unnamed, weighed in sharply to say that, “we feel it is wrong to send mothers who are not yet seven months pregnant to go and vegetate in the Charlottes, they should be given light work to do, the most affected in this regard is the Young Students.” Furthermore, they added, the stay in the Charlottes should only be for three months – after this point, women should be allowed to resume light work.¹²⁷ The Health Team saw student youth as particularly disadvantaged by the Charlottes, presumably because they were forced out of school.

The Students’ representatives testified that they found the issue serious enough that they had called a general meeting to prepare for the Commission of Inquiry. The representatives brought the opinions raised at that meeting to the Commission – and the foremost issue was the question of whether or not the Charlottes were a site of punishment. They stated, “First of all we would like to be clear whether this is taken as punishment or not.” They went on to complain about the isolation young women experienced, and about women, and their male partners, missing school as a result of pregnancy. They suggested women who

¹²⁷ “Meeting at the Charlottes,” undated but attached to Charlottes Inquiry files, dated February to April 1984, Director 88.88.4, UFH.

got pregnant, and their male partners, should be allowed to sit their exams despite pregnancy.

The Students offered deeper insights into the experience of pregnant women, and community perceptions of pregnancy. They explained that, “We feel that people who fall pregnant should be accepted by the community so that the couple should not see themselves as having wronged the movement.”¹²⁸ This telling statement strongly suggests that there was strong community sanction against pregnancy, and that pregnancies were viewed as contrary to ANC policy. On a related note, they asked for clarification about abortion – many abortions, they claimed, occurred because of the negative attitudes towards pregnancy. The Students accepted the ANC policy against pregnancy, but complained it was not punished equally – non-students who became pregnant and had abortions were not, they claimed, punished in the same way students were. Students who “committed abortion”, both the female and male partners, were suspended from school and sent to Dakawa, an ANC community some distance from Mazimbu.¹²⁹ While they condoned this punishment for students, the Student representatives asserted that even in the case of abortion, students should still be allowed to sit their exams.

The Students also raised the seldom-discussed issue of male partners in pregnancy – and indeed, they specifically noted that men involved in pregnancy tended to fall through the

¹²⁸ “Meeting at the Charlottes,” undated but attached to Charlottes Inquiry files, dated February to April 1984, Director 88.88.4, UFH.

¹²⁹ Little information exists on Dakawa. It was officially an ANC “rehabilitation centre”, where people who had committed crimes were detained. It was also where people with mental health problems (for example, ex-combatants) were sent. It was supposed to function like any other ANC site, but it seems it was widely regarded as something close to a prison camp.

administrative cracks. They testified, “We would like to have some structure or body responsible for the men/boys after their period of suspension, since it is obvious that the Women’s Section takes responsibility to [sic] the girl and child.”¹³⁰ They also asked for a “clear policy on the Charlottes and on the part of Dakawa where boyfriends or the fathers are to be sent.” It seems that young men were sent to Dakawa, where they would work, as a punishment, for an indeterminate amount of time – some sources suggested three months. It was unclear, the students complained, who was in charge of this, and whether they were supposed to miss school as a result.

The Students also raised the issue of couples, and, citing the Youth Conference of 1982, agreed with the resolution from this Conference that couples should be kept together as much as possible. They then raised the question, seldom otherwise discussed, of parents’ relationship to their children. Significantly, they stated

The question of students who are back at school after suspension as to how they should relate to their children is serious. The Charlottes administration treat them as though these kids are no longer theirs. There is too much artificial restriction on how we relate to our kids. We are seriously unhappy with the present conditions imposed on us by the Charlottes administration on when and how long and what we can do with our children.¹³¹

These impressions, also noted in the final Report of the Commission, provide for the insights into the concerns of actual, prospective, and former Charlottes’ residents. And unlike in 1979, when young women proclaimed their eagerness to leave their children and return to the struggle, these young women and men by 1984 were complaining about their

¹³⁰ “Meeting at the Charlottes,” undated but attached to Charlottes Inquiry files, dated February to April 1984, Director 88.88.4, UFH

¹³¹ “Meeting at the Charlottes,” undated but attached to Charlottes Inquiry files, dated February to April 1984, Director 88.88.4, UFH

enforced separation from their children. From this, it is possible to deduce that young women and men's understanding of exile and its timescale had changed. If in 1979, women could imagine leaving their infants in the care of the ANC administration, in order so that they could receive military training, return to fight in South Africa, and perhaps see revolutionary change inside South Africa, by 1984, exile may have appeared a longer-term prospect. In a context in which young people were building lives in exile, staying together with their children may have become a different sort of priority.

The non-student Youth were less concerned with conditions in the Charlottes, noting they agreed with a two year suspension for those who became pregnant. Their main concerns were that the Charlottes should be administered better, and kept in better condition, with better food; they also professed their intention of providing more social and political activities for the "inmates", who suffered, in their diagnosis, from low political consciousness and indeed, "political deficiency."¹³²

Abortions were officially not allowed under ANC policy. Abortions were illegal in most of the countries where the ANC was operating at this time, making it impossible for the ANC to permit them, even if they had wanted to. Rumours circulated of illegal abortions being performed in Morogoro, however. Because they were illegal, no official statistics were kept. ANC members discovered to have had an abortion were punished, both the male and the female partners.

¹³² "Meeting at the Charlottes," undated but attached to Charlottes Inquiry files, dated February to April 1984, Director 88.88.4, UFH

In conclusion, the Commission made a series of findings, and twenty five recommendations. Some of their specific recommendations were that the “two year suspension” should stay – but they do not clarify what sort of suspension they mean. We must presume, from school. They also state that “male comrades from SOMAFCO should stay at least three months and develop Dakawa.” But on a less punitive note, they encouraged the idea that students should be able to continue studying, and perhaps see their teachers privately. They also found it necessary to suggest that “the community should be educated not to scorn at pregnant girls.” Finally, they made a series of vague suggestions about general improvements of the Charlottes, including more staffing, “all political organs to increase their work on the Charlottes,” the “movement” should formulate a “clear policy on abortions,” and lastly, the movement should formulate “a clear policy as to what is expected of the Charlottes.” Ultimately, the Commission had to admit, the question of what the Charlottes were for, precisely, remained unclear.

The Charlottes – for Whom and Why?

By this point, the Charlottes were neither a facility to liberate all women from the bonds of maternity, nor a home for unmarried teenager mothers, although it seems likely that the majority of women in the Charlottes were unmarried.

The ages of the women resident in the Charlottes are seldom reported in the ANC files. This lack of information makes it possible to conjecture that the women at the Secretariat, the Headquarters, were actually unaware of the precise ages of the women in the Charlottes. They may have thought the women were younger than they were. One rare report noted

the women's ages as between 19 and 30 – hardly teenage pregnancies. An exchange between Blanche La Guma, the ANC Women's Section representative in Cuba and Gertrude Shope at the Headquarters, sheds additional light on the miscommunications that prevailed across the vast distances of the ANC's exiled administration. Although the situation in Cuba was clearly very different than that in Mazimbu, the conversation between Shope and La Guma does raise the possibility of ongoing misunderstandings over women's ages.

In August 1983, Gertrude Shope wrote to Blanche La Guma on the behalf of the Secretariat, telling her the headquarters was trying to find some senior women to serve as "mother figures" for the ANC students in Cuba, for whom La Guma was at least partially responsible. La Guma wrote back a quite tart rebuttal, in which she dismissed Shope's suggestion, and made clear that Shope did not understand the ANC community in Cuba. She wrote,

The situation here in Cuba is that we no longer have any juniors. All students are now of college and university level and apart from studies, are engaged in most of the activities pertaining to adulthood. In fact there are already those who are contemplating marriage and one couple already so. None are showing any signs of needing a 'mother substitute.'¹³³

Shope, La Guma asserted, misunderstood the needs of ANC students, and if anything, belittled them. La Guma described her strategy vis-à-vis the ANC youth quite differently, explaining –

"We are all the time in contact with the ANC Student Union here, and we have had no requests for a 'mother figure' from the Union. Indeed since we realise that there are no children as such, we rather encourage the sense of responsibility and political awareness worthy of grown-up students, both male and female, are continually visiting the mission and we are able to observe their standard of development."¹³⁴

¹³³ "Letter from Blanche La Guma to G Shope Lusaka," November 3, 1983, MCH01-17.5, Mayibuye.

¹³⁴ "Letter from Blanche La Guma to G Shope Lusaka," November 3, 1983, MCH01-17.5, Mayibuye.

In her later memoir, La Guma expressed a fair amount of dissatisfaction with the SACP policies around the relationships of its young members. Her own son suffered criticism and even ostracism from the SACP for his decision to marry a woman from the Soviet Union (party members argued it wasn't right because it opposed Soviet policy). La Guma strongly objected to this treatment from the SACP, and eventually, the Soviet officials she knew assured her the marriage was fine. But she didn't appreciate the SACP's efforts to intervene in her son's life. Equally, she recounted hearing rumors that ANC-affiliated women were being raped in Lusaka.¹³⁵ It's difficult to know, though, if her apparent irritation with the ANC's misapprehension of the students' ages and needs was generalizable. Perhaps this was only a confusion for the Cuban region. But her letter does raise the possibility that the Secretariat, in general, underestimated the age and maturity of the women having children. Indeed, as Sean Morrow and Brown Maaba note in their book on SOMAFCO, "Many of the students at SOMAFCO were, after all, adults in their late teens and twenties."¹³⁶ This observation underscores the idea that many of the women in the Charlottes may have been adult women, and that the central administration may have been unaware of their real ages, taking them as teenagers.

Such an insight complicates readings of the ANC's efforts to draw a line between legitimate and illegitimate pregnancies. In July 1981, the ANC Health Department in Dar es Salaam produced a report on "Child Birth in Exile", which recommended that women should spend two years in the Charlottes, for the sake of their infant's development. But infant health was

¹³⁵ Blanche La Guma and Martin Klammer, *In the Dark with My Dress on Fire: My Life in Cape Town, London, Havana and Home Again*. (Chicago: Jacana Media, 2011). P 162 and 199

¹³⁶ Morrow, Maaba, and Pulumani, *Education in Exile*, 109.

not the only motivation of the report's (anonymous) authors – they also articulated the practice of withdrawing students who fell pregnant from school as a punishment, specifically. As an example, the authors criticized an instance where a student who had given birth sought to return to school after sending her child to stay with her parents. In their words,

Obviously the lesson here has not been learnt. The punishment was a mere interruption or an inconvenience. Most likely these two young people [who had gotten pregnant] will return to school and fall again into the same trap. What then is to be done?¹³⁷

The eight-page typed report endorsed the provision of contraceptives, to allow for 'planned families.' The report also, however, condemned "indiscipline" and "indiscriminate sexuality." Certain types of relationships, namely those with "a future" should be permitted, but casual sex was to be condemned. The distinction this document draws between good (planned) and bad (indiscriminate) pregnancies underscores the idea that women in the Charlottes were viewed in a negative light – these would be women without external support, and likely therefore to not have planned their pregnancies. This report echoed the Student Meeting of 1979, which described pregnancies as letting down the revolutionary mission of the ANC.

As we have seen, this negative view persisted until at least 1984, when the Commission of Inquiry was held. Again there, students and residents of the Charlottes complained that people who had become pregnant were viewed as letting down the movement. But this was not the only reading of pregnancy or sexuality.

¹³⁷ "Childbirth in Exile", ANC Health Department, Tanzania, 1981, MCH01-8.3, Mayibuye

Concurrent to the politicized readings of pregnancy which some membership foregrounded, the Women's Secretariat and the London Women's Section had pushed for contraceptive provision and sex education since at least 1982.¹³⁸ Both the Women's Secretariat and the Youth Secretariat actively sought to have sex education included in the SOMAFCO curriculum, against some resistance from the NEC.¹³⁹ By 1986, minutes of a Mazimbu Directorate meeting record with pride that they were providing compulsory sex education at the school¹⁴⁰; similarly, the ANC health clinic in Mazimbu was providing contraceptives, and women being sent to the military camps in Angola were, when supplies permitted, being fitted with intra-uterine devices.¹⁴¹ But this is not a simple narrative of medicalization triumphing over political analyses of sexuality; rather, it seems that multiple interpretations of sexuality persisted. Although it is clear that more sex education and birth control materials were available later in the 1980s, as a result of prolonged campaigning by some members, the political analysis of sexuality did not disappear.

Crisis in 1985

In 1985, ANC President OR Tambo summoned a delegation of representatives from Mazimbu to the Headquarters in Lusaka, because he had heard reports from the Tanzanian government that the situation in Mazimbu was 'out of control.' Pregnancies featured as an item of major concern at a meeting held between the SOMAFCO directorate and the Office of

¹³⁸ See detailed discussion in Carla Tsampiras, "Sex in a Time of Exile: An Examination of Sexual Health, AIDS, Gender, and the ANC, 1980–1990," *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 637–63.

¹³⁹ "Report of the Meeting of the Women with the Youth Secretariat Held on 23 Sept 1982," MCH01-13.4, Mayibuye.

¹⁴⁰ "Minutes of Directorate Meeting held 1 March 1986," Health-7.22, UFH.

¹⁴¹ Tsampiras, "Sex in a Time of Exile."

the President in Lusaka. Delegates at the joint meeting cited infrastructural problems, lack of funding, and food shortages – but also problems of “political morale”, which included dagga (marijuana) smoking, drinking, fighting, and pregnancies.¹⁴² When President Tambo met with the representatives of SOMAFCO in 1985, and addressed the problem of pregnancy, he did not prioritize contraceptive provision. Echoing the language of the SOMAFCO student meeting of 1979, he allowed that “If need be, contraceptives must be used” – but they should be a last resort.¹⁴³ Prior to that, the entire SOMAFCO community should engage itself in a campaign against indiscriminate sexuality. “Political consciousness about the repercussions of pregnancy must be heightened,” he argued. Tambo proposed a set of slogans for the campaigns against pregnancy, including “Save our Somafco sisters” and, notably, “Defend the honour of Mahlangu”. “Proper love relationships” could be allowed, but unattached women should not fall pregnant, particularly not with non-students. If non-student men made women pregnant, they should be sent to the ANC’s rehabilitation centre (Dakawa), while male students should be suspended. The initial mobilization, in this vision, was against indiscriminate sexuality in itself, not merely the pregnancies that would result from sexual intercourse without contraception. This five day meeting, and its conclusions, point strongly to the idea that sexuality was seen as a threat to the well-being of the ANC community. At the same time, the meeting, and Tambo’s recommendations, seem to be out of step with the actual developments on the ground. Mazimbu’s Health Clinic was by this time providing birth control, and women in Angola had been receiving contraceptives since 1980 at least.

¹⁴² “Mazimbu Delegation to Lusaka, 17-22 Jan 1985, Report 1,” Director-124.193.3, UFH.

¹⁴³ “Mazimbu Delegation to Lusaka, 17-22 Jan 1985, Report 2,” Director-124.193.3, UFH.

IV. After 1985: Stumbling Along

No grand resolution to these problems emerged. Rather, it seems they ground on, unresolved, until the end of exile. Records peter out, indicating either a decline in interest, a decline in serious problems (perhaps a status quo was reached), or a decline in record keeping. A few select incidents are captured, suggesting the question was not settled.

Between March and July 1986, for example, education and social workers at SOMAFCO exchanged a series of letters around where to place a young woman and her child, and whether or not they should be separated.¹⁴⁴ The woman, whose name I will omit here, although it is contained in the files, was living in the ANC Youth Centre in Mazimbu, with her three year old child. All the authorities consulted – the Director of SOMAFCO, Mohammed Tikly, Tim Maseko, the Chief Administrator, Sherry McLean, a social worker then working in Mazimbu, and her husband, Marius Schoon, a former MK member then working in Mazimbu as Education Director, all agreed that the child should not be residing in the Youth Centre, as it had no appropriate food for a three year old, and was generally not a healthy environment to raise a child. But they disagreed over what to do with the child, with Chief Administrator Tim Maseko proposing separating the child from the mother and placing it (the letters provide no gender for the child) in the Nursery school boarding section. But both Sherry McLean and Marius Schoon felt the child should not be separated from the mother, arguing this should be a last resort, according to ANC policy. Mohammed Tickly, for his part, agreed with them, and also argued that Maseko had not done sufficient consulting with the Women's Section (who also thought the woman should not be

¹⁴⁴ "Series of Letters RE [unnamed woman]," March 1986, MCH01-18.1, Mayibuye.

separated from her child, according to Tickly), or the SOMAFCO or Nursery school administration, as well as ignoring the social workers' reports. Again, the resolution is unknown – the file captures only the last response by the Secretary for Education, then Henry Makgothi, who told the disagreeing parties that they should work out the issue amongst themselves, according to the best interests of the child. Their inability to do so, he implied, suggested there were deeper issues at stake here – the implication was probably unresolved personal conflict in the region. It is certainly the case that there seems to be no love lost between Maseko and the other parties, and Maseko also seemed to disapprove personally of the woman, referring to her as “very problematic.”

As patchy as this story is, it provides us with some key information. It lets us know that there were Nursery and Primary boarding sections, which were full to capacity in 1986. But by this point, as Mohammed Tickly observes, these were intended for children whose parents were at SOMAFCO or working outside Mazimbu – they were not intended for children whose parents were resident in Mazimbu. That is to say, parents were not normally expected to be separated from their children. Equally, we observe that this woman was not living in the Charlottes, nor was any mention made of them. As her child was three at the time of the controversy, she could reasonably have departed from the Charlottes by this point, probably when her child turned two. But the fact that no housing had been found for her child and herself pointed to the ongoing crisis of accommodation – it's also notable that her child wasn't left behind in the Charlottes. Some children certainly were, even as recently as a year before, at least (when the Charlottes reported having children as old as ten.) Why she didn't leave her child in the Charlottes is not clear – it may

be because she was not a student or working outside Mazimbu. The issues here point to a lack of clarity in policy, as well as a lack of resources (for example, housing and boarding space).

In 1989, a further unfortunate incident pointed to the unresolved place pregnancy still occupied within the movement. A few pages of reports describe a situation where a teenage student member of the ANC, who was on a scholarship to study in a school in Luanshya, Zambia, became pregnant and delivered a baby in secret. She then killed the newborn infant (or it was stillborn). She was quickly discovered, and the school authorities reported her to the police. The local ANC RPC Chairman took statements from the other students in the school, and repaid the burial expenses that the school incurred in burying the child. But when the girl who had given birth approached the ANC for help, they refused – the Chairman wrote, “She requested help from the organization and we informed her that the ANC would find it difficult to help in such case.”¹⁴⁵ In fact, the report indicates the girl had sought help from another ANC member in the area earlier in the pregnancy and none had been forthcoming.

V. Conclusions

For the most part, scholars writing on women’s welfarist activities inside the ANC have read them in a relatively negative light, as affirming rather than challenging women’s roles inside the home, and women’s (sole) responsibility for family affairs like child-minding. This holds true both for work on the period leading up to exile (where most scholars have focused),

¹⁴⁵ “Report on Infanticide [sic] in Luanshya,” February 1989, MCH01-19.3, Mayibuye.

and on the exile period. Writing on women in exile, Shireen Hassim adds a positive note to her analysis, observing that the welfare work women did was important and considered important. She writes,

Although young militants later criticized the "apolitical, social work" role of the Women's Section, the support services that the Women's Section undertook - such as establishing child care facilities and processing donations of food and clothing - were important to ANC members in the context of exile.¹⁴⁶

But even this acknowledgment still rests on the presumption that women were restrained to welfare work – that it was not radical. It's interesting to note that South African scholars' reading of welfare work as conservative is not shared by feminist scholars elsewhere. A recent body of work in the United States re-examines the origins of struggles around welfare rights in the US, including access to daycare, and recasts these struggles as important black feminist projects.¹⁴⁷

Admittedly, the context is different – the United States during the Civil Rights and Black Power struggles differed in countless ways from what women in the ANC faced in the 1970s and 1980s in exile. Nevertheless, the willingness of critical feminist scholars to reread these welfare-oriented struggles in a more positive light should provoke reflection on the South African scene. Nomboniso Gasa, with reference to feminist work on the anti-pass law activism of women in the early 20th century, has argued that white feminist scholars have failed to understand the importance of home in the context of apartheid, and the radical

¹⁴⁶ Shireen Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority* (Madison WI: Univ of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 88.

¹⁴⁷ Dayo F Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Premilla Nadasen, *Rethinking the Welfare Rights Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

political stakes of defending home. Gasa observes that “at the heart of the earlier struggles is the fact that African women were homeless by state design. Their struggle against the pass laws, which were a tangible way of infringing their rights, was, in fact, a struggle to be in the public domain at the same time as it was a struggle for free movement.”¹⁴⁸ And indeed, white feminist scholars have responded to her critique, re-evaluating struggles around motherhood, for example, and also reconsidering women’s participation in various women’s societies and clubs, rereading these as important sites of nation-building.¹⁴⁹ Combining insights from Gasa’s perspective, and from the arguments of US feminist scholars, I wish to suggest that overly hasty critiques of ANC women’s relegation to “welfare roles” have obscured the radical projects at the heart of the ANC’s welfare programs. While, as I have illustrated, resource constraints and conflicting ideas about what these programs were for led to many failures in the programs, these failures are not the only story (although they are an important story). Instead, the fact that high-ranking ANC women, and high-ranking men in the organization were willing to agree – at least sometimes – that all women should receive free childcare, and should be helped to re-enter the workforce after giving birth, is remarkable.

At the same time, much of the evidence presented here has revealed negative attitudes towards pregnancy, and pregnant women. The tensions around pregnancy reveal, I argue, some of the fault-lines of the ANC in exile – the divergent ideas about what should be done

¹⁴⁸ Nomboniso Gasa, *Women in South African History: They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007), 109.

¹⁴⁹ See Meghan Healy-Clancy, “Women and the Problem of Family in Early African Nationalist History and Historiography,” *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 450–71.; Cherryl Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991); Cherryl Walker, “Conceptualising Motherhood in Twentieth Century South Africa,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21, no. 3 (September 1, 1995): 417–37.

with pregnant women highlight different generational and gendered expectation of women's role in the movement. They also point to the regional diversity of the movement, underscoring the way in which the "ANC in exile" was a heterogeneous organization, struggling to find common ground and define who was "in" and who was "out." Here again reproduction becomes a central question – to whom did children belong, who was responsible for them, who was allowed to have children? These questions are common questions in many political movements and nation-states; it is not surprising that the ANC confronted them. But the answers ANC members gave provide us with insights into daily life in exile. Through this chapter, I argue, we see a changing exile context, in which young soldiers, first eager to return to South Africa, gradually came to settle into exile as a longer state of being. As they accepted this new reality, particularly young people in Mozambique, where they were encountering a new state in formation, began to make further demands on the ANC, demanding better care and rights for themselves and their children. At the same time, ANC representatives on the ground in Angola attempted to negotiate between women who wanted to stay in the region, and men who wanted their children provided for, regardless of the nationality of the mother. In the meantime, the top ANC leadership in Lusaka seemed ready to read pregnancy as merely another transgression, like drinking or drug use, which could index at best weak morals, and at worst, the presence of enemy agents.

Chapter Four: “The Woman Question” in the ANC in Exile

Preamble

In 1979, Thenjiwe Mtintso, then a student militant inside South Africa, told American journalist June Goodwin that, “black women in South Africa today must say that freedom is their priority.” For Mtintso, “the woman question” was not how women might be liberated from the patriarchy (a major concern of the journalist interviewing her), but how black South Africans might overcome apartheid. And the problem with women was that too few understood that they must get involved in the struggle. Black women, Mtintso, argued, “are not yet politicized enough to realise that we are in a state of war. Unfortunately, the men have developed, but the women have been left behind.”¹

But just over a decade later, in 1992, Thenjiwe Mtintso gave an interview in which she expressed very different views. In the intervening years, she had left South Africa, joined the exiled African National Congress, and risen to a leadership position within Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the ANC. MK, she told a journalist on her return, did not have sufficient gender balance, and women in the camps “had to work three times more than a man.” Discussions of sexism in the ANC and MK were limited, she explained, because of the tendency to subsume women’s oppression under national oppression. It was, according to Mtintso, seen as “divisive and even reactionary to discuss or even imply that there was gender oppression in the camps.”² Only recently, Mtintso observed, had the ANC

¹ June Goodwin, *Cry Amandla!: South African Women and the Question of Power* (New York: Africana Pub. Co., 1984), 22. I tried to contact Thenjiwe Mtintso when I was in South Africa, in order to interview her, but she was out of the country. (She is presently South African Ambassador to Italy.)

² Devan Pillay, “Women in MK,” *Work in Progress*, No. 80, 1992, 18.

become willing to address gender oppression as a separate issue. In 1990, the ANC had issued for the first time a public statement affirming that women's oppression would not be solved by national liberation. The statement began from the premise that "The experience of other societies has shown that the emancipation of women is not a by-product of the struggle for democracy, national liberation, or socialism. It has to be addressed in its own right within our organization, the mass democratic movement, and society as a whole."³ Mtintso's changing ideas index a significant shift in ANC thought about "the woman question": women's liberation shifted from a secondary question, to be solved via national liberation, to a question that had to be addressed on its own merits.

In this chapter, I will move away from the chronological focus of the previous three chapters to a broader view, discussing ideas that were the backdrop of the actions taken around the Charlottes. I will explore the ways in which women committed to the politics of national liberation negotiated changing ideas about the place of women in the nation throughout the 1980s, as women in the ANC dealt with the pragmatic "women's issues" described in the previous two chapters. Writing in 2009, Shireen Hassim argued that women's issues were left out of the politics of national liberation movements in South Africa. She wrote, "Debates about equality in the anti-apartheid movement were grounded in maternalist and nationalist arguments for women's increased political participation. These arguments legitimated women's agency on behalf of others (their husbands, brothers, children, the nation) but rarely accommodated the idea that women were political

³ "Statement of the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress on the Emancipation of Women in South Africa May 2nd 1990", *Agenda*, No. 8 (1990), 19.

and sexual agents in their own right."⁴ Without fully disagreeing with Hassim's critique, I will in this chapter excavate the history of politics regarding women during the ANC's 1980s, to argue that women, and women's agency, were not excluded from politics, but included in complex and often inadequate ways. To accomplish this, I will offer some tentative insights into the history of thought around women in the ANC, before and during the exile period, a topic that feminist scholars have debated extensively and fruitfully. Undeniably, the feminist critiques levelled against the ANC from the 1980s into 2014 have opened important political paths, highlighted injustices and helped to explain their perpetuation, and produced rigorous analyses of failures of government on issues including sexual violence, labour rights, and health, particularly with regard to HIV/AIDS. My concern instead is to historicize – to look to the intellectual traditions and arguments that shaped thought within the ANC (acknowledging the intellectual debate and disagreement that also took place within the organization). These freighted issues, I argue, can be better understood when we situate them within the analytical world in which they took place. Memoirs and histories of exile membership in the ANC tend to agree on one point – it was a time and place rich in intellectual debate (even if some will complain that the debate featured more quantity than quality). In a context in which everything was theorized – even if theories weren't always put into practice – attending to these theorizations, as well as various efforts to realise the theories, is an important exercise.

This chapter does not provide a full intellectual history of women in the ANC, something which would require more than a chapter. In the space of this chapter, I account for some of

⁴ Shireen Hassim, "Democracy's Shadows: Sexual Rights and Gender Politics in the Rape Trial of Jacob Zuma," *African Studies* 68, no. 1 (2009): 62.

the preoccupations of the 1980s, which was, as we have seen, a time of change in the ANC's thought on women. I will first situate thought on women in the ANC prior to exile. I'll next turn to the context that informed the ANC's political thought in exile, looking in particular at third world revolutionary Marxism in southern Africa. With this context established, in the third section, I will turn to the ANC's own publications and self-representation of women during exile. Feminist scholars of this period have tended to focus on a particular set of maternally oriented images of women. Acknowledging that these representations were present, I'll also point to a broader set of discussions around women, including theorizing women's place in the ANC and in the new South Africa. In the final two sections, I'll turn to ANC practice in exile, first examining the intentions and effects of political education, and secondly, addressing how the ANC dealt with sexual and domestic violence. Political education, I will argue, had a narrow set of goals – to prepare women for their role in the revolution, echoing Mtintso's complaint that women were insufficiently informed about politics. But despite this narrow goal, I'll demonstrate that political education discussions became sites for women to assert different interpretations. However, in the zone of domestic violence and rape, it seems the ANC ran against the limits of its theorizing of "the woman question," with these issues being unable to be solved inside the framework of national liberation.

I. The ANC Entering Exile

Scholars have observed that the ANC did not accord men and women equal rights in its early days – women were not full members, but rather, auxiliary, via their husbands, until

1943. This formal exclusion has occasioned much productive debate over the significance and boundaries of women's participation in politics.⁵ In 1990, scholar and ANC member Frene Ginwala was the first to call for this kind of work, when she argued that women's formal exclusion from the ANC in its early years, prior to 1943, did not mean women were inactive or absent within the organization.⁶ Ginwala's suggestion echoed then-recent work in feminist and women's history, which made the methodological innovation of looking at and for everyday behaviours and ordinary practice, rescuing 'history' from being the stories of men in power alone.⁷ Much of the work on women in the ANC has been in this vein. Scholars of women in the South African politics have focussed on women's participation in a whole set of formal and informal activities, investigating women's influences and intellectual collaborations with well-known male political activists, women's participation in pass law demonstrations, women's clubs, social, and religious activities, women's education and professional practice, and, by the 1950s, women's participation in mass political protest.⁸ Equally, scholar Thozama April has recently called for greater attention to

⁵ Foundational texts here are Cheryl Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (London: Onyx Press, 1982); Cheryl Walker, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (New Africa Books, 1990); Julia Wells, *We Now Demand! The History of Women's Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1993).

⁶ Frene Ginwala, "Women and the African National Congress 1912-1943," *Agenda*, no. 8 (1990): 77.

⁷ See discussion in Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁸ Iris Berger, "An African American 'Mother of the Nation': Madie Hall Xuma in South Africa, 1940-1963," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 1, 2001): 547-66; Pamela E. Brooks, *Boycotts, Buses, And Passes: Black Women's Resistance in the U.S. South and South Africa* (Amherst MA: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2008); Nomboniso Gasa, *Women in South African History: They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007); Meghan Healy-Clancy, "Women and the Problem of Family in Early African Nationalist History and Historiography," *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 450-71; Meghan Healy-Clancy, *A World of Their Own: A History of South African Women's Education* (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013); Simonne Horwitz, *Baragwanath Hospital, Soweto: A History of Medical Care, 1941-1990*, 2006; Simonne Horwitz, "'Black Nurses in White': Exploring Young Women's Entry into the Nursing Profession at Baragwanath Hospital, Soweto, 1948-1980," *Social History of Medicine* 20, no. 1 (2007): 131-46; Heather Hughes, "Lives and Wives: Understanding African Nationalism in South Africa through a Biographical Approach," *History Compass* 10, no. 8 (2012): 562-73; Heather Hughes, *The First President: A Life of John L. Dube, Founding President of the ANC* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2011); Judy

be given to biographies of women, to overcome the structured erasure of women's lives in the archive, due to archives' failure to maintain personal collections on women.⁹ This work has provided vital insights into women's life under apartheid, and has enabled powerful debates into the meaning and significance of women's participation in public life, beyond the formal dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

As noted above, the debates over the meaning and significance of different forms of women's participation in the public sphere, from deputations and meetings to boycotts and protests, to clubs and ostensibly social events, are rich and deep. But broadly, scholars agree on the fact that there was an undeniable increase in women's organized political activity in the lead-up to women's eventual admission to the ANC in 1943. The Bantu Women's League, formed in 1918 by Charlotte Maxeke, facilitated deputations to government and protests by women.¹⁰ Maxeke was also an early supporter of Clements Kadalie's Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), and she indeed called upon them, in 1920, to admit women's workers as equal in the union.¹¹ Maxeke was not the only woman to have union involvement, and indeed, historians have pointed to union work as a major way women became involved in political struggle in the early 20th century. Iris Berger, for example, details women's increased participation in industrial work, and

Kimble and Elaine Unterhalter, "We Opened the Road for You, You Must Go Forward': ANC Women's Struggles, 1912-1982," *Feminist Review*, no. 12 (January 1, 1982): 11-35; Shula Marks, *Divided Sisterhood: Race, Class, and Gender in the South African Nursing Profession* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Ciraj Rassool, "The Individual, Auto/biography and History in South Africa" (Doctoral thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2004); Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*; Wells, *We Now Demand! The History of Women's Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa*.

⁹ Thozama April, "Charlotte Maxeke : A Celebrated and Neglected Figure in History," in *One Hundred Years of the ANC : Debating Liberation Histories Today* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012), 98-99.

¹⁰ Gasa, *Women in South African History*, 146.; April, "Charlotte Maxeke : A Celebrated and Neglected Figure in History," 104.

¹¹ April, "Charlotte Maxeke : A Celebrated and Neglected Figure in History," 105.

thereafter in unions, from the boom years of the 1940s onwards.¹² Berger, as well as Cherryl Walker, explicitly pose the unions, and women's work in organizing labour, making speeches, and making demands for their rights as core to precipitating women's broader political participation¹³ – and indeed, the majority of well-known women political figures of South Africa's 20th century were union women.¹⁴

This longer-term women's activism, both inside formal structures like unions and the Bantu Women's League, and more spontaneous forms of protest like the anti-pass protests, which were ongoing from 1913, helps contextualize emergence of a revitalized ANC Women's League, and the eventual formation of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) in the 1950s. As many scholars have noted, the 1950s was a dramatic decade of mass action and protest, and women were front and centre within this period – indeed, FEDSAW's Women's March of 1956 was the largest demonstration of the decade.¹⁵ Given women's growing involvement in public sphere politics over the previous decades it is perhaps unsurprising that their participation increased in the ANC, the Communist Party (then CPSA), and the unions during the radical 1940s and 1950s.¹⁶ From this background, then, of increased women's militancy and presence, the ANC entered exile, with women as officially equal, if few in number.

¹² Iris Berger, "Generations of Struggle: Trade Unions and the Roots of Feminism, 1930-1960," in N. Gasa (ed) *Women in South African History*; See also Helen Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom: The ICU in Rural South Africa, 1924-1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

¹³ See Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, ch.4

¹⁴ See for example, Frances Baard and Barbie Schreiner, *My Spirit Is Not Banned* (Harare, Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Pub. House, 1986); Emma Mashinini, *Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life: A South African Autobiography* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Ray Alexander Simons and Raymond Suttner, *All My Life and All My Strength* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Real African Publishers, 2004).

¹⁵ Brooks, *Boycotts, Buses, And Passes*; Judy Kimble and Elaine Unterhalter, "'We Opened the Road for You, You Must Go Forward': ANC Women's Struggles, 1912-1982," *Feminist Review*, no. 12 (January 1, 1982): 11-35.

¹⁶ C. Walker, *Women and Resistance*, p. 75; See also Berger, "An African American 'Mother of the Nation.'" for more discussion of new women's leadership.

But it's also worth attending to the formal dimensions, and it is significant to note that, by the time they entered exile, the ANC maintained equality between men and women as official policy. Scholars have generally concluded that, prior to the 1940s, "ANC patriarchalism reflected social realities."¹⁷ In explaining women's increased power inside the ANC by the 1940s, historians have pointed to women's own activism and organizing, particularly around pass laws, which forced the ANC's hand in accepting women's membership. These rights, Anne McClintock argues, were granted "at women's own insistence," not out of a sense of transformation on the part of male leadership.¹⁸ Indeed, with reference to the 1930s and early 1940s, Natasha Erlank has argued that for the self-consciously modernizing new African elite, "the maintenance of gender difference was central to the middle class's new domestic model."¹⁹ But by the time the ANC entered exile, equality between men and women was one of the major planks of the organization's policy, and formed an important part of its claims of moral superiority to the apartheid state.

II. Intellectual Context and Analysis

It is difficult to situate the ANC's analysis of women, because little historical work has been done on revolutionary thought on women. Most existing studies of women in revolutionary movements focus on practice. Such studies examine women's inclusion or relegation, and

¹⁷ Peter Limb, *The ANC's Early Years : Nation, Class and Place in South Africa before 1940* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010), 363.

¹⁸ Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review* 44, no. 1 (July 1993): 74.

¹⁹ Natasha Erlank, "Gender and Masculinity in South African Nationalist Discourse, 1912-1950," *Feminist Studies* 29, no. 3 (October 1, 2003): 656.

their participation in various aspects of the movements' work.²⁰ But fewer works investigate the intellectual history of women's thought, or thought on women, in self-described revolutionary political movements.

An exception has been the emergence of scholarship on 'third world women', linked with the larger field of post-colonial critique, starting in the 1980s. This work has provided many important insights to feminist theory and practice, but has tended again to emphasize discussions of praxis and action, rather than performing intellectual history.²¹ Arguably, these authors, particularly Chandra Talpade Mohanty, undertake the critical task of formulating new theories to describe new forms of women's social activism after the decline of the Soviet Union, and the rise of neoliberal hegemony. This analysis provides useful insights in the 1980s and 1990s, and also has as its aim to make interventions at the level of strategy, theorizing how women might intervene in new forms of political struggle.²² But such work, largely produced after the fall of the Soviet Union, risks obscuring the very different conditions of politics that prevailed in the 1960s and 1970s.

²⁰ See, for example, Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse?: Women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* (Avondale, Harare; Oxford: Weaver Press ; African Book Collective, the Jam Factory (distributor), 2000); Eleanor O'Gorman, *The Front Line Runs through Every Woman: Women & Local Resistance in the Zimbabwean Liberation War* (Woodbridge; Zimbabwe; Rochester, N.Y.: James Currey ; Weaver Press ; Boydell & Brewer, 2011); Tanya Lyons, *Guns and Guerilla Girls : Women in the Zimbabwean National Liberation Struggle* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004); Srila Roy, *Remembering Revolution Gender, Violence, and Subjectivity in India's Naxalbari Movement* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013). In a slightly different vein, see Erik McDuffie, on Black women communists in the USA - Erik S McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2011).

²¹ Key in this regard is Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2003). More recently, M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2005).

²² Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders*.

Moving in a different direction is the emerging body of literature that examines black radical women's thought in the early 20th century, mostly focussing on women in or connected to the US diaspora. African-American women's theorizing provided the earliest and most sustained criticism of second-wave American and British feminism. Critical scholarship calls into questions assumptions of 'universal sisterhood' and taken-for-granted female solidarity; it also points to the ongoing importance of race and class in theorizing women's struggles.²³ (These early texts resonated with and informed the critical anti-colonial scholarship noted above.) But new historical work pushes this genre of thought back in time. While many scholars have dated the emergence of critical black feminism to the 1970s, with the publication, for example, of Toni Cade Bambara's anthology *Black Woman*, and the Combahee River Collective Declaration of 1974, Kevin Gaines has recently argued that the intellectual roots of these works date to a much earlier period.²⁴ Gaines invokes the intellectual legacy of pre, inter, and post-war black women from the 'old left', who long before the 1970s elaborated analyses of the particular experiences of black women in the USA. Gaines cites particularly Claudia Jones, who wrote in 1949 the influential work, "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman." In this piece, Jones foregrounded the "special oppression" black women experienced, highlighting the disrespect for women's work, and the burden placed on women to defend their families and

²³ Foundational texts include bell Hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), <http://public.eblib.com/EBLPublic/PublicView.do?ptiID=178421>; Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought* (New York: New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton, 1995); Joy James, *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983).

²⁴ Kevin Gaines, "From Center to Margin: Internationalism and the Origins of Black Feminism," in *Materializing Democracy: Towards a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, by Russ Castronovo (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

children (a radical task in Jim Crow America, Jones argued). These ideas influenced other black women writers, Gaines and others argue, and provided important groundwork for later thought.

It is here useful to emphasize the material ways these early African American thinkers, particularly on race and gender, influenced the ANC. Two lines of connection exist. First, we know that Claudia Jones met and worked with ANC members in London before her death. Indeed, the connection was so close that high-ranking ANC member Raymond Kunene presided over Jones' London memorial service in 1965 (which also featured opening remarks from the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Algeria).²⁵ It is therefore reasonable to assume that some, at least, would have encountered her thought. Secondly, African-American theorizing arguably influenced Soviet thought on race and gender – numerous works of history and biography detail the intellectual connections between African-American communists and the USSR, particularly in the pre-WW2 period.²⁶ Equally, we know that the CPSA and later the SACP were in touch with the USSR, and that high profile South African Communist women travelled to the Soviet Union and participated in training and work there.²⁷ Again, we can assume that South African women, particularly

²⁵ Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 231.

²⁶ Kate A Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002); Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978); Gerald Horne, *Race Woman the Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945-1995* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*; Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

²⁷ See my chapter 1, plus E. Maloka, *The South African Communist Party*, N. Grant, "Black History Month: Lilian Masediba Ngoyi (1911-1980)" *Women's History Network Blog*, <http://womenshistorynetwork.org/blog/?p=498> (Accessed June 5, 2014); Alan Wieder, *Ruth First and Joe Slovo in the War against Apartheid* (Monthly Review Press, 2013).

Communist Party members, would have encountered central aspects of early African American left feminist thought – in which Claudia Jones was an important leader. It is therefore worth attending to her argument in greater depth.

But central to Jones' article was an additional argument – one that is critical for understanding later ANC thought, I argue. Jones wrote,

A developing consciousness on the woman question today, therefore, must not fail to recognise that the Negro question in the US is *prior* to and not equal to, the woman question; that only to the extent that we fight all chauvinist expressions and actions as regards the Negro people and fight for the full equality of the Negro people, can women as a whole advance their struggle for equal rights. For the progressive women's movement, the Negro woman, who combines in her status the worker, the Negro, and the woman, is the vital link to this heightened political consciousness.

Here, Jones introduces the concept of the national question, arguing for the liberation of African Americans as an oppressed nation within the United States. Cheryl Higashida, exploring the links between black feminism and internationalism, has emphasized Jones' attention to the national question. Indeed, Higashida argues that this essay of Jones should not be read separately from a piece Jones produced some three years previously, in which Jones revived debate within the CPUSA over the "black belt nation" thesis. This idea, first developed in the Soviet Union in dialogue with African-Americans, and adopted at the 6th World Congress of the Comintern in 1928, held that African-Americans were an oppressed nation within the United States, and required, in order to achieve equality, self-determination as an independent nation.²⁸ The thesis called for territorial freedom for African-Americans, meaning the creation of a black nation within the US, one that would have white people as a minority group within the nation. Quite clearly, in her piece on

²⁸ Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism*, 33.

women, Jones asserts a reading that insists upon the primacy of African-American *national* liberation, which necessarily had to precede the emancipation of women. While the “black belt nation” thesis waned in its influence in the coming years, the debates it occasioned around the broader issue of national liberation continued to influence anti-colonial thinkers.

In later years, ANC and SACP thinkers participated in these same debates, and imbibed this analysis. Genealogically, then, we can trace complex intellectual connections between early African American Communists, and later ANC members. As we shall see, Claudia Jones’ articulation of the relationship between national liberation and women’s emancipation would be taken up by the ANC in its exile years.

But African-American thought, mediated by the Soviet Union, was not the only influence shaping ANC women’s thought. Closer in space and time were the anti-colonial struggles in southern Africa.

In the early 1970s, ANC publications reacted with great excitement to the collapse of Portuguese rule in southern Africa (following Portugal’s 1974 ‘Carnation Revolution’), and the accession to power of ANC allies, the MPLA in Angola, and FRELIMO in Mozambique. The ANC published poems, speeches, and pamphlets by leaders in these movements, and all evidence points to ANC members encountering and engaging with the political thinking of these movements. Samora Machel, FRELIMO leader and first President of Mozambique, was one important figure. Indeed, his analysis of women and gender was cited by ANC

publications.²⁹ It is therefore useful to investigate his analyses – while not all in the ANC would necessarily have shared his thought, most would have encountered it, and much later ANC theorizing demonstrates its influence.³⁰

Machel's most important theoretical piece on women was "The Liberation of Women is a Fundamental Necessity for the Revolution." Three concepts, all of which would later be debated by the ANC and its critics, stand out in this piece: temporality; specificity (and fundamental contradiction); and education. FRELIMO first published these collected works of Machel's between 1970 and 1974 – as their use in the 1975 issue of *Sechaba* indicates, the ANC had early access to these pieces. They were probably printed in FRELIMO papers; they were also published as collected volumes by FRELIMO solidarity organizations in the UK and France in 1975 and 1977.³¹

The most frequent criticism that feminist thinkers have levelled against the ANC has been in the realm of temporality: critics have argued that the ANC postponed 'women's issues' as secondary issues, to be dealt with after the 'revolution', or seizure of state power, was accomplished.³² These critiques are not inaccurate – indeed, powerful women within the

²⁹ See for example *Sechaba* Vol 9, no 8/9, Aug-Sept 75

³⁰ Indeed, prominent ANC leaders are still quoting Machel today. See Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma address, "Statement by H.E. Dr. Nkosazana C. Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the Occasion of the Commemoration of the International Women's Day," 2013, <http://cpauc.au.int/en/content/statement-he-dr-nkosazana-c-dlamini-zuma-chairperson-african-union-commission-occasion-comme> (Accessed August 9, 2014)

³¹ See Samora Machel and Angola and Guiné Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, *Mozambique, Sowing the Seeds of Revolution* (London: Committee for Freedom in Mozambique [i.e. Mozambique], Angola and Guiné, 1975); Samora Machel, *Le Processus de La Révolution Démocratique Populaire Au Mozambique* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1977).

³² See McClintock, "Family Feuds." Kimble and Unterhalter provide a more thoughtful and equivocal discussion, highlighting the tensions but also points of connection between national liberation and women's emancipation. Kimble and Unterhalter, "We Opened the Road for You, You Must Go Forward."

ANC promoted, even late in the exile period, this idea as policy. Speaking in an interview in the late 1980s, ANC stalwart Ruth Mompati expressed one variant of this analysis when she said –

If we say that our first priority is the emancipation of women, we will become free as members of an oppressed community. We feel that in order to get our independence as women, the prerequisite is for us to be part of the war for national liberation. When we are free as a nation, we will have created the foundation for the emancipation of women.³³

In other words, the nation must first be freed, then women. But the hard line Mompati expressed here was not the only option, and as we shall see below, ANC publications and declarations frequently emphasized the concordance, or simultaneity, of women's liberation and broader revolution.

Samora Machel posed women's liberation as central to successful national liberation. He wrote, "The emancipation of women is not an act of charity, the result of a humanitarian or compassionate attitude. The liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for the Revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and the precondition for its victory."³⁴ He specifically addressed the possibility of 'naysayers', commenting that

There are people among us, as our Movement is well aware, who feel we should devote all our efforts to the struggle against colonialism and that the task of women's emancipation is therefore secondary because it will dissipate our forces.³⁵

Machel goes on to rebut this perspective forcefully, arguing that women's oppression was such that it could not be left unchecked if "Revolution" was to proceed. "One cannot," he contended, "only partially wipe out exploitation and oppression, one cannot tear up only

³³ Diana Russell, *Lives of Courage: Women for a New South Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 116.

³⁴ Machel and Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, *Mozambique, Sowing the Seeds of Revolution*, 24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

half the weeds without even stronger ones spreading out from the half that has survived."³⁶ Women's oppression, he argued, was a central feature of the current, undesirable situation Mozambican people were living under colonialism. The entire social situation could not be corrected without simultaneously addressing and ending the exploitation of women – for exploitation, he argued, was the cause of women's oppression.

One way to square the apparent contradiction of order – should women's emancipation come "after", or could it be accomplished concurrently – is to rethink what theorists such as Machel, or earlier, Claudia Jones, meant when they said that women's liberation was 'secondary' to national liberation. Specifically, I contend that their reading is on the level of structure, and not of historical time. Women cannot, they and others argue, be liberated in a context of national oppression; therefore, national liberation logically precedes women's emancipation. However, this structuring does not necessarily prevent or delegitimize work towards women's rights within a self-described revolutionary project. In this way, Machel's insistence on women's self-determination alongside national liberation makes sense.

This observation leads to the second key point of Machel's piece: posing his ideas specifically against western feminism (although he does not use the term, instead saying merely 'emancipation'), Machel insists that the fundamental antagonism, which lies at the root of women's oppression, is economically based, and is located between "women and society," *not* between women and men. The point is of great importance. Drawing a meaningful comparison between the lot of women and the colonised, Machel points out that

³⁶ Ibid.

the coloniser did not come to Africa to oppress people – to beat and jail them – although this is what has resulted. Rather, the coloniser came to exploit Africans – to take their material wealth.³⁷ The oppression resulted from the process of exploitation. In the same way, women are oppressed because they are economically exploited: capitalist *and* traditionalist social systems take women’s labour, and their ability to produce new labour (children). Women could not, in this reading, be liberated simply by political fiat, by declaration of equal status. Instead, the fundamental system of production had to be changed – this is what Machel means by ‘Revolution.’ These ideas, of course, are not unique to Machel – they represent widely debated ideas in Marxist theory. But it is significant that Machel disseminated these ideas and aimed to base FRELIMO’s practice on these points.

This reasoning allows Machel to resist and criticize western capitalist women’s movements’ focus on what he terms “mechanical equality.” He decries this supposedly simplistic approach, noting with condemnation that “An emancipated woman is one who drinks, smokes, wears trousers and mini-skirts, who indulges in sexual promiscuity, who refuses to have children, etc.”³⁸ The new conservatism that would emerge from such positions in decolonized African countries is well-known. Scholars have explored the ways in which new nationalist movements and post-colonial governments acted specifically against women’s practices that were perceived to violate male privilege and power or tradition – for example, bans on types of women’s apparel (such as the mini-skirt).³⁹ Indeed, some of

³⁷ Ibid., 26.

³⁸ Ibid., 30.

³⁹ See Thomas Burgess, “Cinema, Bell Bottoms, and Miniskirts: Struggles over Youth and Citizenship in Revolutionary Zanzibar,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, no. 2/3 (January 1, 2002): 287–313; Andrew M. Ivaska, “‘Anti-Mini Militants Meet Modern Misses’: Urban Style, Gender and the Politics of ‘National Culture’ in 1960s Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania,” *Gender & History* 14, no. 3 (2002): 584–607; Andrew

the attitudes towards sexuality and appropriate sexual conduct by youth in the ANC, as seen in the previous chapters, resonate here. At the same time, though, it is worth noting that the ideas he raised here are by no means resolved among contemporary feminists in the west today. One need only turn to the fierce debates around the so-called Charter of Values in Quebec, or the charged and heated debates over women's sexuality, whether as labour, performance, or personal conduct, that have played out in various media over the past years, to see that questions about women's bodies and the definition of liberation is hardly clear or settled.⁴⁰ The point here is to historicize Machel's thinking on women, not to condemn or celebrate it.⁴¹

Contrary to the assertions of some national liberation thinkers (and contrary to some interpretations of national liberation thought on women), Machel did not view women's equality as something that would result automatically from national liberation. Machel viewed women's liberation as a component part of 'Revolution', not something to be realised in the aftermath of successful transformation of the economic basis of society. Although he saw women's liberation as dependent on the defeat of capitalism, Machel did not believe that women's equality could be accomplished by 'revolution' alone. In other words, he supported the *specificity* of women's struggles. It's interesting to note that the ANC would not publish until 1990 an official statement acknowledging that women's

Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁴⁰ See for example debates around pop performers Beyonce, Rihanna, and Miley Cyrus regarding sexuality; the ongoing "pornography debates", feminist disagreement over sex work, and more. See for example, Jennifer C Nash, *The Black Body in Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography*, 2014; Nina Power, *One-Dimensional Woman* (Winchester, UK ; Washington, USA: 0 [Zero] Books, 2009).

⁴¹ In Michelle Murphy's phrasing, avoiding "slap or clap" historiography - Michelle Murphy, *Seizing the Means of Reproduction Entanglements of Feminism, Health, and Technoscience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2012), 8.

concerns should be addressed separately and on their own terms. This was something women activists within the ANC later deplored.⁴² But as Machel's arguments suggest, this idea was already in the air by the 1970s, and indeed, as we shall see, certain ANC publications advocated for specific solutions to women's problems. In this early piece, Machel argued that women must be specifically drawn into political work, which would enable them to become full participants in society. This process required specific targeting.

This point of Machel's leads to a third element, one which was to become key to the ANC – that which he termed “living by the FRELIMO line”, and which the ANC would later term “political upgrading.” For Machel, women would become emancipated via internal transformation first, not via changes in the systems that oppressed them. He wrote, “For women to emancipate themselves, there must be conscious political commitment.”⁴³ This conscious political commitment must then translate into quotidian activities – women had to involve themselves in FRELIMO's daily work, and perform tasks within the organization. According to Machel, “Their commitment to the liberation struggle will then become concrete action, leading them to take part in making decisions affecting the country's future.”⁴⁴ For women to be emancipated, Machel argued, they had to participate in decision-making, and then in scientific, cultural, and educational production. To encourage these tasks in the Mozambican context, the Organization of Mozambican Women was necessary – their task was to maintain the correct line, against colonialists and against comrades who resisted the changes of women's roles, and to induct women into political activity. This

⁴² See D. Pillay, “Women in MK,” *Works in Progress*; Ginwala in “‘Picking up the Gauntlet’: Women Discuss ANC Statement,” *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, no. 8 (January 1, 1990): 5–18.

⁴³ Machel and Committee for Freedom in Mozambique, *Mozambique, Sowing the Seeds of Revolution*, 30.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

function is distinct from 'women's organizations' in other contexts, which work to further women's interests. The goal of OMW, and other organizations modelled on it, was not only to further women's interests, but to deepen women's participation in a broader project.

Central and specific to this elaboration of "living the FRELIMO line" was the burden placed on women to transform their own subjectivity (although the term is not used) – to achieve their own liberation. Machel's analysis, and as we shall see, later ANC analyses, certainly acknowledged "male chauvinism" as a problem, and something to be combatted. But his text was addressed primarily to women, to encourage them to take up political engagement; men were encouraged, secondarily, to accept that women would be doing so. But women's emancipation was to be achieved through participation, not segregation, and not through focus on specific "women's issues." It was presumed that "women's issues" would disappear as women's political consciousness was uplifted, and their exploitation ended. As we shall see, women (and men) in the ANC came to emphasize 'political education' as a central task for Women's Sections – what this meant was educating women about Marxism, and about their own social position. At the simplest, we could say western feminism, via separatism, sought to add new institutions to society and therefore transform it, creating a new space for men and women to share, while this brand of Marxist revolutionary thought on women sought to integrate women fully into nascent institutions of revolutionary change (the cell, the discussion group, the new family), allowing them to therefore be present for and participate in the necessary revolutionary change.

It's useful here to delineate these sets of practices from other forms of feminist 'consciousness-raising', in order to highlight their specificity and origins.⁴⁵ 'Consciousness-raising' as a term recalls two particular moments – Black Consciousness practice inside South Africa in the 1970s, and feminist self-help in the USA in the 1960s and 1970s. But the "conscious political commitment" advocated by Machel, or the "political upgrading" later undertaken by the ANC, emerged from a different political and intellectual trajectory. By comparison, Black Consciousness thought in South Africa took inspiration from US-based Black Power and from Brazilian thinker Paulo Freire to argue for mental emancipation. Contrary to an apartheid line that held that black people were inferior, Black Consciousness activists called for a celebration of blackness. Central to Black Consciousness practice were a series of community uplift projects, including educational seminars, small-scale or household industry training (e.g. leather factories), and community health clinics.⁴⁶ Black Consciousness consciousness-raising practice, then, was deeply linked to self-knowledge, to uncovering ideas or truths from a space of interiority. As Daniel Magaziner explains it, "Conscientization thus was the process by which students would educate themselves to become "selves" and then, once they had achieved critical consciousness, work for societal transformation."⁴⁷

By contrast, political education in the ANC in the 1970s and 1980s derived from a much different tradition of practice – namely, Soviet and South African Communist Party

⁴⁵ Thanks to April Haynes for prompting me to think in this direction

⁴⁶ Leslie Hadfield, "Biko, Black Consciousness, and 'the System' eZinyoka: Oral History and Black Consciousness in Practice in a Rural Ciskei Village," *South African Historical Journal* 62, no. 1 (2010): 78–99; N. Barney Pitso, *Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko & Black Consciousness* (Cape Town; London; Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: D. Philip ; Zed Books, 1991).

⁴⁷ Daniel R. Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1968–1977*, New African Histories (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 129.

education. The SACP, for example, and prior to the SAPC the CPSA, had been doing political education courses both legally and underground in South Africa since at least the 1930s.⁴⁸ In exile, political education continued, and was emphasized by many participants – both in the domain of women, specifically, and in ‘politics’ writ large. An anonymous author in the ANC publication *Sechaba* summed up the ANC’s orientation effectively in 1980. Describing a summer program in Hungary that had gathered 60 ANC students from multiple locations (from Canada to southern Africa to the Soviet Union), he or she wrote:

Though many were meeting for the first time, they all spoke one language – ANC politics. This marks a remarkable success in transforming mere patriots into partisan cadres of the ANC with one common purpose (effective contribution to the achievement of the objective of) the armed seizure of political power and the fulfillment of the demands of the Freedom Charter.⁴⁹

Here, “patriots” have been transformed into “partisan cadres”, via political education. The original intentions of the “patriots” are not of interest here – no exercise in self-reflection is implied. Instead, the author emphasizes the correct instilling, or indeed installation, of the party line. What held for these students also held for women – political education was intended not to provoke self-reflection, but to school women in the correct understanding of their predicament. We can recall here Thenjiwe Mtintso’s comments in 1979, when she complained that black women were “not yet politicized enough to realise that we are in a state of war.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Eddy Maloka, *The South African Communist Party: Exile and after Apartheid*, 2013; Simons and Suttner, *All My Life and All My Strength*; Wieder, *Ruth First and Joe Slovo in the War against Apartheid*.

⁴⁹ *Sechaba*, Vol 14, November 1980, p. 27. Brackets in original.

⁵⁰ Goodwin, *Cry Amandla!*, 22.

III. The ANC Lines

Throughout its years in exile, the ANC produced a large volume of literature about the ANC itself, and about the South African struggle more generally. Its two main publications were *Sechaba* (started in 1967, and published on a sometimes quarterly and sometimes monthly basis until the end of the exile period), and *Voice of Women* (published on a more sporadic basis from 1978 to 1990). Both of these publications were aimed at multiple audiences. Both aimed to speak to current ANC members, in order to keep them motivated and informed, to incite new people to join the ANC, and to elicit international support, and legitimacy, for the ANC's struggle. Both publications attempted to play on the heartstrings of readers, evoking both the hardships experienced by South Africans inside the country, and the triumphs of the ANC in combatting apartheid. But *Sechaba* in particular also developed and disseminated the ANC's 'party line' on a wide range of topics, from international struggles (in Africa and beyond), Israel and Zionism, South African identity, apartheid South Africa's trade and military deals, apartheid policy, such as bantustans – and the role and position of women in society. These publications therefore provide a key resource for examining the ANC's official line on women.

Women are prominent throughout the 23 years of *Sechaba's* publication – nearly every issue had a story about women, or a particular woman. These stories can be divided into two rough categories: hero/victim stories celebrating or mourning South African women (what we might term the propaganda line), and analytical stories, putting forward arguments about women's experience (what we might call the internal line). Here, I'll argue

that it is useful to consider both types of stories, and consider them separately, in order to clarify ANC thought on women.

Linzi Manicom, who worked with the ANC in Tanzania in the late 1970s and then with the Canadian anti-apartheid movement, commented later that she had felt trapped between two poles of the same paradigm: women as either heroes or victims. Writing of her experience with the Canadian anti-apartheid movement, she observed "I generally felt constrained to represent 'South African women' in terms that called upon a strategic gender essentialism and a rather uncontradictory and unproblematic rendering of the political accomplishments of the courageous, militant women."⁵¹ On the flipside, she also struggled to resist the progressive image of the "downtrodden" woman. These two polarities – celebration and mourning – dominate the ANC propaganda line on women, and, as Manicom points out, serve to constrain deeper analysis of the actual, complex, conflicting experiences of women. At the same time, careful consideration of the propaganda yields several insights. First of all, the ANC was willing to celebrate women, as mothers, but also as trade unionists, political militants, and military operatives. Indeed, the celebratory depictions of women in the ANC press are notable for their lack of emphasis on stereotypically female attributes. In the 1960s and 1970s, such a perspective could hardly be guaranteed, in any organization or institutional context. Secondly, the ANC was eager to depict the apartheid state as particularly [negative deleterious] for women. Logically, then, their emphasis on apartheid's mistreatment of women meant that the ANC had some

⁵¹ Linzi Manicom, "Afastada Apprehensions : The Politics of Post-Exile Location and South Africa's Gendered Transition," in *Emigre Feminisms: Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Alena Heitlinger (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 35.

obligation to define itself in contrast to apartheid – by elaborating policies for treating women well. In both of these ways, some slippage beyond the original intentions of the propaganda may have opened some space.⁵²

ANC publications from their earliest editions celebrated South African women heroes. The August edition of *Sechaba* tended to mark South African Women's Day (August 9) with a recitation of the names and deeds of famous South African women and their deeds. The very first issue of *Sechaba*, in 1967, featured a picture of Lilian Ngoyi on the cover, and included profiles and pictures of Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Lizzie Abrahams, Mary Moodley, Frances Baard, Mollie Doyle, Dora Tamana, Ida Mtwana, Albertina Sisulu, Blanche La Guma, Florence Matomela and Bertha Mashaba. All were women who had been, or were still, active in ANC, and in some cases, trade union, politics inside South Africa. In addition to profiling these women, the issue gave detailed coverage of the history of women's struggle inside South Africa, describing the anti-pass protests of the 1950s. The profiles of the women do not rest on an idea of the women as 'mothers of the nation' – instead, they detail, for example, Frances Baard's "outstanding" work for the ANC and "prominence" in trade union and Defiance campaign organising; Lizzie Abrahams' work negotiating agreements, settling factory disputes, and organising union deputations; Lilian Ngoyi's "flair for public speaking"; and Ida Mtwana's "beautiful voice". The paper observes, "Those who know her still relate instances of that voice pouring out freedom songs as the police smashed up

⁵² It should be noted that I do not use the term propaganda to mean "incorrect". The information the ANC published on both its "heroic women", and on the violence the apartheid state did to women is accurate and well-substantiated by scholarly work. I use "propaganda" as a term to highlight the intentionality behind the publications.

meetings.”⁵³ While the issue does emphasize Mary Moodley’s maternal qualities, describing her as a “mother to all the lonely and persecuted people of Wattville,” it also notes her trade union work, membership of the Women’s Federation, and her state persecution. The *Voice of Women* published a similarly angled obituary, describing Moodley as a “highly principled heroine of the struggle.”⁵⁴ Again detailing her union and ANC work, as well as her state persecution, the obituary comments that “Mary went down fighting because she had devoted her whole life to a free South Africa.”⁵⁵ In 1981, VOW published an intriguing interview with Mittah Seperepere and Dulcie September, two high-ranking women members of the ANC, both with prominent international profiles. Asked to comment on the leadership qualities of “dedicated women” leaders, the interviewees listed a series of general leadership qualities – that a leader must be democratic and a servant to the people. Describing several examples of heroism of Helen Joseph, Frances Baard, and Florence Matomela, the interviewees commented, “Our militant women were all leaders in their own right that had firm courage, determination, reserve, and were solid as rocks. These are the examples we must follow.”⁵⁶ The picture that emerges from this early edition is not of a static and limited set of mothers of the nation. While the portraits are certainly narrowly celebratory, and do not seek to advance a complex character portrayal, this is what we might expect from a political publication. But such an action-oriented portrayal does not resonate with later feminist critiques of women in the ANC.

⁵³ *Sechaba*, Vol 1, Issue 8, 1967

⁵⁴ *Voice of Women*, 1979, 4

⁵⁵ *Voice of Women*, 1979, 4

⁵⁶ *Voice of Women*, 1981 (no issue number)

Another occasion for celebration of women was on the occasion of their deaths. When prominent women passed away, *Sechaba*, or *VOW*, or both, would publish obituaries with varying degrees of detail, and varying levels of didacticism. When Mary Moodley passed away in 1980, for example, *Sechaba* described her as a “consistent internationalist” who “struggled not only for the unity of the working peoples of our country, but strove to bring all the exploited throughout the world together.”⁵⁷ Such an account may have had more to do with the current preoccupations of the (anonymous) author than it did with Moodley’s lifework. But in the same year, another issue of *Sechaba* published a detailed profile of Charlotte Maxeke, who lived in the early part of the twentieth century. The profile painted a rich picture of Maxeke’s travels to the US, publications, public speaking engagements, pass law activism, and involvements with early unions.⁵⁸ Equally, when Florence Mophosho died in 1985, the majority of her obituary focussed on her work with the Defiance Campaign, the Congress of the People, the Alexandra Bus Boycott Committee, and then her international work in exile.⁵⁹ The piece makes no mention of her child, whom she left behind when she entered exile, nor does it evoke any maternal characteristics.

The above accounts, stripped as they are of celebration of “women as women” can be read as celebrating women who transcend womanhood. Black Consciousness activist Mamphela Ramphele, who was active in politics at this time, although not within the ANC, has pointed out that women could be accepted as ‘one of the boys.’⁶⁰ As Ramphele and later, other ANC

⁵⁷ *Sechaba* Vol 14, Jan 1980,

⁵⁸ *Sechaba* Vol 14 Aug 1980, p. 24-26

⁵⁹ *Sechaba*, November 1985, p. 31

⁶⁰ Mamphela Ramphele, “The Dynamics of Gender within Black Consciousness Organization,” in *Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko & Black Consciousness*, ed. N. Barney Pityana (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991), 218.

activists, have noted, such uneasy integration did not facilitate awareness or discussion of particular 'women's issues' and disadvantages women faced.⁶¹ But it is worth noting that these portrayals contrast sharply with many feminist critiques of the ANC. In a seminal 1993 article, Anne McClintock made a persuasive case for viewing all nationalism as gendered. She pointed to the ways women's bodies are used by nationalist discourse, made into the boundaries of the nation, for example, or its symbols, and she highlighted the way that, all too often, the national citizen is male. Her arguments have been of key importance in animating feminist scholarship of nationalism – but her 'case study' comparing Afrikaner and African nationalism leaves much to be desired. In particular, it is useful to note her silence around the ANC's exile period. While reasonable given the time period in which she was writing, when little was known about exile, the factual absence opens a theoretical gap. Resting on the presumption of a masculine nationalism that positions women as mothers of the nation, McClintock's rendering of ANC politics leaves little space for women's self-representation as active political figures. While McClintock acknowledges that African women have made malleable the identity of "mother", shaping it to have revolutionary potential, her analysis cannot account for representations of women that do not rely on motherhood as a prime metaphor. By the same token, Kim Miller's work on artistic representations of women in the struggle again rests on the ANC's intermittent promotion of artists' images of mothers carrying infants and weapons.⁶² While these images were significant mobilizing factors within the ANC, too narrow a focus on these images occludes consideration of other feminine roles, and thinking about gender, within the ANC.

⁶¹ "Picking up the Gauntlet."

⁶² Kim Miller, "Moms with Guns: Women's Political Agency in Anti-Apartheid Visual Culture," *African Arts* 42, no. 2 (April 9, 2009): 68–75.

Accounts of women's suffering inside South Africa rested more firmly on maternal imagery, frequently relying on evocations of the home and family to demonstrate the ills of apartheid. An early piece in *Sechaba* cited a Black Sash report entitled "Family Day is not for Africans," which stated that "Family life is, and always has been, the basis of society the world over. Everywhere people strive to build for themselves a warm and secure family." Under apartheid, Black Sash explained, this was denied to black South Africans, through forced relocations, and the harsh conditions in the so-called homelands.⁶³ Articles in VOW, for example, described the pains of forced relocation, noting that "due to our position as women in the apartheid system, forced removals in both urban and rural areas hit us very hard."⁶⁴ VOW also dedicated itself to discussing the practical struggles women faced, including price increases on basic foods, and rent increases, and evictions.⁶⁵ To some extent, these topics must have reflected the limited knowledge the authors of the journal could gather from South Africa. They relied mostly on press clippings, meaning their actual access to information was quite limited. (While some information came out of South Africa by rumour, or carried with people newly entering exile, or via networks of underground communication, contact with "home" was difficult. The South African Security Police frequently monitored and harassed families of known exiles, meaning that writing letters to family in South Africa could put them in danger. It was not unusual for people to go years with very minimal contact with their families. Letters that were exchanged had to go through a series of intermediaries and different addresses, for reasons of security.) At the

⁶³ *Sechaba* 2-9-1968

⁶⁴ *Voice of Women*, 1979, 4, p.3

⁶⁵ See for example VOW 1980-4, and 1981 [no issue number]

same time, though, the pragmatic focus, while underlining certain expectations of women's roles, can hardly be seen as a simple nationalist valourizing of women's role in an imagined state. Rather, the focus of VOW, at least, seemed to be on condemning the state of affairs facing black women, and encouraging those women that their publication reached to mobilize.

VOW also focussed to a large extent on children – every issue had at least one article on children, and in some cases, the entire issue was devoted to them. Partially, this must have been an effort to elicit sympathy. It can also be read as an effort to naturalize children as women's concerns – to suggest that the obvious subject of a journal on women would be children.⁶⁶

And even these emotive or exhortatory accounts elaborated a strict theoretical interpretation. For example in 1975, *Sechaba* printed an address the ANC Women's Section made to the Organization for African Unity (OAU) conference in Dar es Salaam. The address was a call to arms against nations cooperating with South Africa, and it made its arguments on the basis of women's well-being (or lack thereof). The speaker noted that, despite the wide-ranging ills of apartheid, "no group suffers greater oppression than and deprivation than the Black Women of South Africa."⁶⁷ The speaker went on to list the particular hardships suffered by women, citing the loss of family life, malnourishment of children, lack of education for children, lack of employment for children, the migratory labour system,

⁶⁶ For more discussion, see M. Patterson thesis, particularly the chapter on the "International Year of the Child" - Monica Patterson, "Constructions of Childhood in Apartheid's Last Decades" (Doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, 2009).

⁶⁷ *Sechaba*, Vol 9, No 6-7, June July 1975

and the legally subordinate status of women. The redress to these ills, the speaker is clear, is the abolition of the apartheid government. She ends with a rejoinder to her audience, urging them not to cooperate with South Africa's efforts at détente or collaboration:

To those who speak of "détente" or collaboration with the racists who have created this system of our enslavement and subjugation we say: Remember that those with whom you wish to join hands come to you smeared with our blood and tears; the "aid" with which they seek to bribe you was extracted from our sweated labour and suffering; the collaboration they offer you is only to allow the repression of 20 million people to continue in "peace."⁶⁸

The remedy for the ills women are suffering, this speaker argues, and the ANC line maintained, is the broader liberation struggle, not specific action on women. Feminist scholars have made much of this deployment of women's bodies as only a tool of argument, and it is certainly clear that in these accounts of black women's suffering, the goal is narrow.

However, the emphasis on the apartheid state's negative effects on women may have also promoted gender equality within the ANC. A major plank of ANC argument against apartheid was precisely the apartheid state's treatment of women, and the damage that state did to women and families. Writing on pre-exile periods, scholars have critiqued the ways in which patriarchal discourses of 'protecting women' from the vagaries of the state – for example, protecting women from inspection for passes – operated in a conservative way. Discourses of respectability and women's virtue were mobilized to protect women from state surveillance, but also functioned to keep women in the home, and restrain women's mobility, scholars argue.⁶⁹ But during exile, it is difficult to make the same

⁶⁸ *Sechaba*, Vol 9, No 6-7, June July 1975

⁶⁹ Jacqueline Castledine, "In a Solid Bond of Unity': Anticolonial Feminism in the Cold War Era," *Journal of Women's History* 20, no. 4 (2008): 57–81; Erlank, "Gender and Masculinity in South African Nationalist Discourse, 1912-1950."

argument. Speeches and publications on women, even those that emphasized the home or women's domesticity, also evoked women's participation in the political sphere. In defining the ANC in all ways as opposed to apartheid, ANC leadership found itself in a position of necessarily advocating rights for women – in contrast to the apartheid state's denial of these rights.

In addition to material clearly aimed at persuasion and representation, ANC publications, particularly *Sechaba*, also produced detailed analyses of women's conditions and prospective roles in a free South Africa. It would be presumptuous to assume that these statements accurately described the realities of life within the ANC – as we shall see and have seen, gendered practice was complex and uneven. But examining the internal line is nevertheless useful. First of all, the diversity of publications reveals that there was not one unified analysis – instead, there were different schools of thought within the ANC. And secondly, the arguments contained in these documents shed light on what at least some ANC members aimed for regarding women, and what claims women could make.

Beginning in 1975, *Sechaba* published several unattributed articles analysing women's place in the movement. The first, published in response to the UN Year of the Woman in 1975, provided a critical history of South African women's struggles in the context of third world and global 60s liberation movements, including Black Power struggles in the US, and student movements throughout Europe and North America. The range of material cited suggests that the author was probably based in the UK or the US, as it would have been difficult to obtain some of these texts, particularly the more recent ones, in a more remote

African (or even eastern European) location – although it would not have been impossible for someone highly placed in the ANC, or connected to a post-secondary institution in Africa or elsewhere, to have obtained them. The quality of the language indicates that the author had received post-secondary education (as many senior members in the ANC had). The article criticizes ‘traditional gender roles’, describing polygamy, for example, but also colonialism, noting that, “As individuals women could free themselves from the traditional role, but they could not, on their own, fight the restrictions imposed by a regime which placed all black people in a subordinate position.”⁷⁰ The crux of the argument is its insistence that “Black women in the third world countries have... been involved in a joint struggle with the men for full civic rights, rather than against the men for equality.” The UN’s Year of Women, the article argues, risked remaining “merely a gesture to be recorded in the UN annals unless women wholeheartedly work together towards **real liberation**.”⁷¹ Western women’s movements, the author argues, neglect the true struggle against capitalism, racism, and colonialism – without overturning these forces, the author argues, women cannot be truly liberated. This is largely a restatement of Machel’s ideas from the same time period, and indeed, it cites him. But in addition to Machel, the article cites Walter Rodney, Jack Simons, Selma James, Govan Mbeki, and Shulamith Firestone – making it probably the only piece of writing in the world to refer to all of these authors. This diversity and depth suggest that at least some women within the ANC perceived the ANC as a site for developing and promoting new thought on women.

⁷⁰ *Sechaba* Vol 9, no 8/9, Aug-Sept 75

⁷¹ *Sechaba* Vol 9, no 8/9, Aug-Sept 75, p.33. Emphasis in original.

Three years later, in 1978, *Sechaba* published another in-depth and critical article, this one entitled “The Spectre of Widowhood.” This article takes a much more narrowly Marxist line of interpretation, arguing that “the question of the women should be examined as part of the social, working-class question and should be bound firmly with the proletarian class struggle and revolution.”⁷² The article details the specific disadvantages women face, citing unequal wages, poor labour conditions and limited employment, the destruction of families and violence against women’s families, and intersecting “tribal” and common laws that disadvantage them. But it also insists that “African women suffer oppression in common with their men,” and argues that the remedy for the suffering is the overthrow of the entire apartheid system.⁷³ This article foregrounds the importance of political education. It argues, in somewhat convoluted prose, that, “The task that faces every progressive-minded person is *to make our women aware of the fact* that there is an unbreakable connection between women’s human and social positions and private means of the ownership of production.”⁷⁴ Equally, it insists that, “the victory of our struggle will depend on the mobilization of the female masses of our country, carried out with a clear understanding of principles and on a firm organizational basis.”⁷⁵ The argument echoes the earlier argument of Machel’s, in particular, his insistence on the political education of women. This education, the *Sechaba* piece notes, will not only allow women to participate fully in the liberation struggle, but will also let them “emancipate themselves from ‘traditional oppression.’”⁷⁶ As in Machel’s work,

⁷² *Sechaba*, Vol 12, 3rd Q 1978, p.50

⁷³ *Sechaba*, Vol 12, 3rd Q 1978, p.49

⁷⁴ *Sechaba*, Vol 12, 3rd Q 1978, p.50, my emphasis

⁷⁵ *Sechaba*, Vol 12, 3rd Q 1978, p.47

⁷⁶ *Sechaba*, Vol 12, 3rd Q 1978, p.50

the burden is placed on women to participate fully, therefore throwing off dated “tradition,” and also contributing to the bigger and necessary project of liberation.

This intellectual framing helps us to understand the policies the ANC would pursue in terms of political education for women, and practical action around women’s issues including domestic violence and sexual violence.

IV. Practice

Throughout the 1980s, both memoirs recalling the period and archival documents from the time testify to the emphasis placed on “the upgrading of women”. High-ranking women in the ANC viewed many of the women within the organization as socially backward and bound by gender-role stereotypes which impeded their full participation in the liberation movement. With the influx of women post-Soweto, new Women’s Sections were established and grew in all regions where ANC members were present. And one of the central tasks of these Sections was precisely to provide “political education” to help upgrade new women members. But from the start, the discussion groups, lectures, and seminars intended to provide this new education became instead sites where women contested and resisted aspects of the ANC line. Although few records survive from these Women’s Sections, those documents that are in the archive reveal women members asserting different interpretations of policies, or calling for change. There was no wholesale rejection of the ANC’s analysis on women – indeed, most agreed on the necessity of “upgrading” – but the

varied responses of the multiple Women's Sections suggest that their meetings became sites for discussing women's issues in ways unintended by the initial ANC plan.

In 1980, for example, the Women's Section in Luanda sent a series of monthly reports to the head office, the Women's Secretariat in Lusaka. These Reports reveal a strict adherence to the 'party line' – to the extent of rejecting a suggestion from the Secretariat that women could be disadvantaged within the ANC. Describing their meeting's response to a discussion document sent by the Secretariat, Jessica Monare, the Secretary there, wrote:

There's a part [in the discussion document] that says Women especially in MK are not given enough scope after finishing their course, and most women are typists. We totally disagree with that because – (a) there is nobody so far from MK has gone for typing course then come back and worked as a typist; (b) After finishing our course, we work under different departments, we are having the example of the ordinance department where most people in that department are women; (c) We have comrades in the camps who work as garment workers. So we rule out this question. We are given enough scope.⁷⁷

The Secretariat, it seems, was trying to incite discussion around women's disempowerment within the Movement – but these women in the Luanda rejected the assertion. Although small in number – the Section was composed of only ten women, they reported – they were confident in their work.

Indeed, in further reports, Monare went on to detail, with optimism, the excellent morale of the group and the progress they had made in discussing the ANC's "Strategy and Tactics" document (a key strategic piece promulgated after the 1969 Morogoro Conference). They

⁷⁷ "Report from Luanda," March 1980, MCH01-5.1, Mayibuye

planned to next study the Freedom Charter, she wrote.⁷⁸ This work, she explained, was having concrete benefits:

Our comrades are more self-confident and bold. They do not only participate fully during our political discussions, but also contribute in general meetings and discussions. We now raise our views and opinions on political issues freely. This is one of the greatest achievements of our Unit.⁷⁹

Thus, the Luanda Women's Section unit felt itself to be making progress, and advocated the ANC line of political upgrading. At the same time, they rejected any imputation of women's disadvantage.

Highlighting the challenges of long-distance administration, however, the Luanda Women's Section had to admit that they were unable to contact women in the ANC's Angolan camps, and had no idea what work they were doing. In April of 1980, Monare advised the Secretariat that "We have not heard anything from the comrades in the camps about how they have organized themselves. There is absolutely no contact whatsoever."⁸⁰ This total communication failure underscores the discontinuities of the ANC exile experience, and reminds us that there was no one representative "woman's experience" across these diverse and poorly-connected sites. Shireen Hassim points out that "Ironically and unwittingly - and despite the resistance of the military leadership - MK provided an important arena within the movement in which to raise issues of gender equality."⁸¹ These women in Luanda felt MK was a space where they could participate in debate and move forward.

⁷⁸ "Report from Luanda," April 1980, MCH01-5.1, Mayibuye

⁷⁹ "Report from Luanda," June 1980, MCH01-5.1, Mayibuye

⁸⁰ "Report from Luanda," April 1980, MCH01-5.1, Mayibuye

⁸¹ Shireen Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority* (Madison WI: Univ of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 97.

The East Africa Women's Section, in contrast to the small Luanda Section, was large, in more frequent touch with the Lusaka Secretariat, and involved in a great deal of administrative and management work, including dealing with childcare, and publishing VOW. As we have seen in other chapters, ANC leadership frequently visited East Africa, and issues of population management there won the attention of the central governmental bodies of the ANC. The East Africa Women's Section, then, was busy and active. But political education took second stage in this context, where the demands on members' attention were many. In a 1981 Report to Lusaka, the East Africa Women's Section advised the Secretariat that they had suspended political education meetings. The job of the Political Education Coordinator, established since the revitalization of the Section in 1979, had been frustrating and challenging, as the time-consuming work was "not appreciated by many." In the face of disinterest in political education, the Section had concluded that

the majority of our women were more practically than intellectually oriented. Although we are involved in the fight against the fascist regime, we do not necessarily have to approach it from the same angle. Our women here have many daily problems in exile. These often lead to confusion and frustration. This is partly why they cannot be forced into political discussion when they are faced with concrete problems like food and clothing for themselves and their children.⁸²

Given the everyday challenges women were dealing with, political education felt abstract and "intellectual." Indeed, in trying to provide political education, the leadership in the Women's Section had come to conclude that they were being unrealistic. The Report explained, "We have to be practical and make them feel involved and not lectured to."⁸³ In this framing, women's quotidian needs took precedence over political discussion, and

⁸² "ANC SA Women's Section East Africa Report," July 1981, MCH01-6.4, Mayibuye

⁸³ "ANC SA Women's Section East Africa Report," July 1981, MCH01-6.4, Mayibuye

inclusion of the women in a meaningful way was more important than ‘upgrading’ them to a party line.

But the abolishment of political education didn’t imply a lack of political consciousness. Instead, the report also complained about the absence of women’s representatives on other governing bodies in East Africa, namely those to do with the SOMAFSCO school. The report argued:

In all of these it is not enough to have women members. Women members can be part of any organ as cadres of the movement. There are time when it is necessary to have a woman for the express purpose of representing women’s interests, and the Women’s Section should decide who should represent them.⁸⁴

Here, distinct from the ANC line of upgrading women to appropriate political consciousness – but not necessarily in contradiction to it – the Women’s Section insisted on the importance of women’s representation *as women*. It’s possible to speculate that the heavy involvement of these women with childcare and other issues particular to women was contributing to a growing analysis of women’s specific needs within a self-described revolutionary society.

Women based in Maputo, Mozambique, also asserted to the Secretariat the need for attention to women’s specificity. Writing to the Secretariat in preparation for the Youth Conference of 1982, the Youth Section in Maputo raised several points about women’s equality. Unfortunately, no records seem to survive from the Maputo Women’s Section – but according to the authors of the Youth Section report, there was a great deal of overlap in

⁸⁴ “ANC SA Women's Section East Africa Report,” July 1981, MCH01-6.4, Mayibuye

membership between the Youth and Women's Sections, and the Youth Section identified women's issues as part of its purview. The Report begins by devoting a great deal of time to the ANC's accomplishments in the realm of gender equality. Inaccurately but optimistically, the authors observe that "Since the formation of our Movement 70 years ago, the ANC's policy has always been that of treating and regarding all members as equals."⁸⁵ The report celebrates the many historic accomplishments of women in the ANC, making the usual invocation of heroic women. The authors, apparently women, express great gratitude to the ANC:

We want to put on the record our heartfelt gratitude to the Movement and the comrades who have made it possible for us to see our selves as part of a new unfolding world in which we have as much say and role to play as our male comrades.⁸⁶

But after this gratitude, the Report turns to complaint – specifically, they complain about the failure to deploy women in MK, and about male chauvinism. Pointing out that only one woman had apparently been sent into active combat in South Africa – Thandi Modise – the Report states that "It is important for us, as it is for the people who select cadres for the front to know why so many women are not fit to work on the ground at home."⁸⁷ In addition to complaining about inadequate practice in the realm of work, they also question the tendency to focus solely on women's education. Although women were told they were equal, not enough was done, they argued, to ensure women's equal participation:

Although females are being told they need to participate, very little if any at all is being done to see to it that these young women who yesterday knew their roles to be

⁸⁵ "Paper by ANC Delegation from Mozambique: Young Women in the Liberation Struggle," October 1982, MCH01-8.2, Mayibuye

⁸⁶ "Paper by ANC Delegation from Mozambique: Young Women in the Liberation Struggle," October 1982, MCH01-8.2, Mayibuye

⁸⁷ "Paper by ANC Delegation from Mozambique: Young Women in the Liberation Struggle," October 1982, MCH01-8.2, Mayibuye

that of subservient and docile beings, who understood their main function in life to be only bearers and rear children, that their whole life should revolve around the bedroom, kitchen, and nursery, are taught now that they have a role to play and that the ANC is fighting to have all this corrected.⁸⁸

And in addition to the lack of mechanisms for participation, the Report levels specific accusations against men in the organization. Citing male chauvinism as a problem still “alive” among men, they suggested “that yet another effort should be made to liberate our males of male chauvinism.” Rather than settling for education to emancipate women from their misconceptions, they made a novel suggestion: “We therefore stress that male education is as necessary as the education for the female in our ranks.”⁸⁹ This is a rare moment in the ANC archives, where women explicitly condemn male behaviour.

This small sampling of moments from a variety of ANC sites in the early 1980s suggests the ANC policy of “political upgrading” was playing out in a variety of unexpected ways. In discussion, women in some sites affirmed all aspects of ANC policy, while other women in other Units raised complaints and questions, and freely modified policy in practice on the ground. The picture that emerges is of a negotiated process – negotiated between the Secretariat and multiple regions – of putting into practice an abstract plan to uplift women. In the process, women added their own interpretations and innovations. Analysing the same period, Shireen Hassim has concluded that, “Not surprisingly, given MK’s extremely hierarchical and authoritarian structures, it was also within MK that the limits of the

⁸⁸ “Paper by ANC Delegation from Mozambique: Young Women in the Liberation Struggle,” October 1982, MCH01-8.2, Mayibuye

⁸⁹ “Paper by ANC Delegation from Mozambique: Young Women in the Liberation Struggle,” October 1982, MCH01-8.2, Mayibuye

rhetoric of equality were experienced."⁹⁰ Without disagreeing with Hassim's observation of ongoing inequality, I want to highlight the importance of what she labels "rhetoric." While concrete results were limited, women involved in these Women's Sections demonstrated a willingness to engage in the process of the discussion, a willingness that suggests that at least some believed that the ANC processes could be of use.

1985

In 1985, the ANC held its first Consultative Conference since the 1969 Morogoro Conference. This conference marked a significant moment for policy on women to be discussed, particularly given the increased numbers of women in the movement, and the new logistical challenges posed by pregnancy and children in exile. ANC conferences are considered "the highest organ of the ANC," meaning it is conferences that establish rules and programmes for the ANC. The NEC maintains these policies between conferences.⁹¹ The 1985 Conference, held in Kabwe, Zambia, gathered 250 delegates from around the ANC regions, and involved extensive preparation. In the year preceding the conference, NEC members circulated discussion documents to all the ANC regions, and requested written responses to be submitted. The conference itself took place over several days, and involved discussion and debates of various issues, including contentious topics, like the recent mutinies in Angola, the insufficient deployment of MK fighters to South Africa, overall strategy and tactics of the movement, and whether or not to admit white people to the NEC.

⁹⁰ Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*, 99.

⁹¹ "Second National Consultative Conference: Report of the commission on national structures, constitutional guidelines and codes of conduct", 1985, ANC website, <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=136>, accessed June 4, 2014.

While the final reports of the conference are preserved, fewer records of the consultative process survive. However, two undated and anonymous reports – the only author being “Women’s Section” (with no mention of *which* Women’s Section) – shed light on how Women’s Sections approached the Conference. These documents would have been prepared in response to the documents circulated by the NEC. They addressed general issues within the ANC – but they also raise complaints specific to women’s experience. They describe childcare needs, for example, and maintain that women should be sent to Tanzania to raise children. But in addition to “policy for women”, they raise complaints about women within the wider ANC. Specifically, they protest inequalities women face, both in terms of special treatment and disadvantage. For example, a report on “The State of Organization in the Women’s Section” suggests that “Our Regional Commanding personnel must stop asking women where they want to go. We must all be given that right if it exists this is referred to male comrades too. Here we mean if choice exists it must be for everyone regardless of sexes.”⁹² Here, it seems that women are being given preferential choice about where they are sent, and the Women’s Section is objecting to that. There may be an underlying accusation of particular women receiving special treatment. But the same report also complains about men receiving more specialised training:

There are males who are trained as commanders and even sent to go and specialise in different military subjects. We deem it necessary also for females to go and acquire such knowledge. Women must be involved in any type of work like males and must recognise their work. Illiteracy campaigns must be aggravated further to a higher level as we see it been [sic] necessary especially on our side as women. This can help women socially and economically to be independent. This what we term emancipation of women not to be depending on men in all spheres.⁹³

⁹² “State of organisation in women's section,” No Date, MCH01-43.1, Mayibuye.

⁹³ “State of organisation in women's section,” No Date, MCH01-43.1, Mayibuye.

Here, the Report makes a critical claim for women to receive the same training as men, echoing the earlier demands of the Youth Section of Maputo, that the ANC's declarations of equality be met with equality in practice.

Another Report, entitled "Women's Section's Recommendations to Further the Development of Our Movement", similarly commented on the uneven training and deployment of women. It noted that "Females are facing problems when they are called in Lusaka they find that there is nobody who cares for them and they end up working in the Women's Section."⁹⁴ That is to say, women were being sent to work only in the Women's Section, not in the movement more broadly.

The two Reports, read together, underscore the significance of this demand for inclusion. While the Reports do raise questions of specific "women's issues", the majority of each document focuses on wider "ANC issues." Some of these are welfare issues, such as the provision of childcare, clothing, and accommodation, reflecting the fact that women in the ANC took primary responsibility for this welfarist work. But the Reports did not shy away from raising more contentious issues, including favouritism. They complained about people working in logistics having unfair access to resources. They also condemned the special treatment of people related to NEC members, demanding that favouritism be "crushed."⁹⁵ In addition, they complained about unjust punishments, suggesting that people should not be

⁹⁴ "Kabwe Consultation - Women's Section points on how to further develop our movement," No Date, MCH01-43.1, Mayibuye.

⁹⁵ "Kabwe Consultation - Women's Section points on how to further develop our movement," No Date, MCH01-43.1, Mayibuye.

sent to Angola for punishment, and that training should be delivered in a less “brutal” and more standardized manner.⁹⁶ They suggested that people should have the “right to talk” – to voice complaints with the ANC. They also weighed in on whether or not white people should be allowed to serve on the NEC – saying that they should, but not in the highest offices.⁹⁷ These questions – favouritism and corruption, complaints, punishment, training, and membership – were central issues to the ANC. In one sense, it is unsurprising that these reports address these questions, because they were so central. At the same time, the fact that women are raising these issues in the context of “women’s issues” is significant. One reading could say that women’s issues were marginalized – that women in the organization were forced to think only about “national liberation” and not about women’s struggles. But another reading is also possible, one that would read these women as, despite also emphasizing specific disadvantages they were suffering as women, feeling sufficiently included within the ANC as a whole to articulate a set of complaints about the movement. In this instance, these women were speaking “as women” but not about issues restrained to “women” – reflecting the ideal of emancipation meaning equal participation within a liberated nation.

The final written Recommendations issuing from the Kabwe conference maintain a similar line to earlier discussions. In a section of the document devoted to “internal mobilization” (namely, work to be done inside South Africa), the authors of the Recommendations posit women’s liberation as dependent on the end of apartheid:

⁹⁶ “Kabwe Consultation - Women's Section points on how to further develop our movement,” No Date, MCH01-43.1, Mayibuye.

⁹⁷ “Kabwe Consultation - Women's Section points on how to further develop our movement,” No Date, MCH01-43.1, Mayibuye.

The true liberation of our womenfolk can only come about with the destruction of the apartheid system. The organisation and mobilisation of women should be linked up with the national liberation movement and trade unions. Women in the rural areas should be organised, exploiting existing traditional structural forms of organisation.⁹⁸

The ANC's overall analysis seems not to have changed. However, with regard to women's participation in exile, the Recommendations devote more time to women's specific disadvantages, even within the ANC. The document advocated specific policies towards women at multiple junctures, stating, for example, that "In our drive to ensure the fullest and active participation of our women in the struggle, we must follow a policy of positive discrimination in favour of women."⁹⁹ The same issue was raised specifically with regards to MK – "Our training courses in MK should be specially adapted to acknowledge that women start with a disadvantage arising from the society we come from."¹⁰⁰ In these regards, then, it is possible to conclude that the Conference took seriously some of the concerns raised by the Women's Sections. It is difficult to be certain without more comprehensive documentation from the Conference, but it is possible to draw tentative conclusions, which see women as participating and altering the course of the Conference.

Historian Shireen Hassim suggests that at Kabwe, "the NEC departed from its earlier approach of mobilizing women solely for national liberation and formally recognized that women's equality would deepen and enhance the quality of democracy itself."¹⁰¹ I would

⁹⁸ ANC – "Second National Consultative Conference: Report, main decisions and recommendations", (1985) <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=137> Accessed June 4, 2014

⁹⁹ ANC – "Second National Consultative Conference: Report, main decisions and recommendations", (1985) <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=137> Accessed June 4, 2014

¹⁰⁰ ANC – "Second National Consultative Conference: Report, main decisions and recommendations", (1985) <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=137> Accessed June 4, 2014

¹⁰¹ Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*, 106.

propose a slightly different reading. Rather than implying that at this Conference, women were able to put forward women's concerns as "ahead" of national liberation, I would suggest that the limited sources I present from one of the Women's Sections demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the centrality of the ANC's project, national liberation. But within that commitment, the Women's Sections felt they had the authority to raise, as women, complaints about their experiences as women (namely, discrimination), but also about a whole range of other problems in the movement. What's lacking is a critique of idea of national liberation as emancipation, even if many other trenchant and dangerous criticisms are raised.

Sexual and Domestic Violence

Shireen Hassim has observed that "A significant and widespread problem [in exile] was violence against women."¹⁰² In the lengthy review of the intellectual context of policies on women, no mention has been made of sexual or domestic violence. This silence doesn't imply there was no problem in these domains, but does reveal that there was, perhaps, no language with which to discuss such problems. The ANC in exile, particularly in the 1980s, was in the process of developing a significant bureaucratic infrastructure, one that seemed particularly fond of "reporting". Anthropologist Fiona Ross suggests that early ANC commissions of enquiry in fact provided one example for the eventual constituting of the TRC – Ross names the Motsuenyane and Skweyiya as examples.¹⁰³ In naming only these

¹⁰² Ibid., 94.

¹⁰³ Fiona C Ross, *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa* (London; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2003).

two, she understates the case – in exile, the ANC held numerous other major investigations, notably, Shishita in 1981 (into spy infiltration), and the Stuart in 1984 (into the first camps mutiny), as well as an investigation into the death of Thami Zulu (unpublished). In addition to these publicized inquiries, the ANC conducted inquiries into a number of bureaucratic problems in the 1980s – for example, into “the crisis at the Charlottes” (see earlier chapters), “Disciplinary problems in Mazimbu/SOMAFCO”, “Problems in the Health Department”, and even a prolonged inquest into a car accident that occurred on a SOMAFCO school holiday. All of these inquests shared a relatively similar format – a certain number of people were appointed as investigators; these investigators physically travelled to the site of the problem, met the people involved, and interviewed them; they then wrote up a report of their findings, with recommendations. In some of these cases, only the final report survives (in other cases, such as the Shishita Report and the report into Thami Zulu, the reports are difficult to access), and in others (such as the SOMAFCO car accident), pages of notes from the investigation survive. But in amongst these inquests, there is none devoted to sexual violence specifically.

Instead, sexual violence surfaces as something mentioned in conjunction with other problems or issues, and is seldom named as such. The absence of any report dedicated to sexual abuse is, in the context of so much reporting, worth remarking. It is possible that such a report was made and then hidden or lost (this is not impossible – the security archives of the ANC are not publicly accessible).¹⁰⁴ The ANC has itself admitted, in its internal reports and TRC submissions, that violence against women within its ranks was a

¹⁰⁴ See Hugh Macmillan, “Was Madiba Co-Opted into Communism?,” *The Mail and Guardian Online*, January 17, 2014, <http://mg.co.za/article/2014-01-16-was-madiba-co-opted-into-communism/>.

problem. In this section, acknowledging that silence does not mean absence, I will explore several ways in which gendered issues not addressed in the official “party lines” manifested themselves in exile, and how ANC members dealt with them. Rather than simply dismissing the approaches the ANC took as “failures” – although there were many failures – I will consider how incidents were understood, given the political formation of the organization.

This section cannot accomplish a social history of violence against women in exile – indeed, I cannot imagine what such a thing would look like, nor am I sure it would be desirable. A historians’ academic publication does not seem like the right place for such a reckoning, particularly when many survivors and perpetrators are still living. When conducting interviews for this research, I chose not to ask people about this topic, although if they mentioned it, I didn’t ignore it.

So between these two polarities – that histories of gender-based violence cannot be ignored, and yet cannot be coolly reconstructed in the contained language of social history, or accessed easily by the social historical researcher – what path to choose? This section will engage primarily with the administrative archive of the ANC, asking not how gender-based violence is remembered, but how administrators of the ANC in the 1980s understood and sought to regulate sexual and domestic violence that occurred. It will first consider three brief incidents of violence against women that appear in the archive, detailing them and analysing the ways in which the emergent apparatus of the ANC brought itself to bear on these questions.

In October 1981, senior Women's Secretariat members Gertrude Shope and Florence Mophosho, both based in Lusaka at the time, visited Morogoro, and specifically the Charlottes. Their trip was a planned mission to investigate problems in the Morogoro region, and the report they prepared after their time in Morogoro details the problems they found, and the solutions they proposed. They spent most of their time dealing with so-called disciplinary problems in the Charlottes, especially those pertaining to young women residents meeting and dating men associated with the PAC (see previous chapter). But they also took time to meet a young woman, a student at SOMAFCO, who had been raped by a group of male students.

Shope and Mophosho met this woman in the context of meeting students at SOMAFCO. Separating girls and boys, they addressed the students about the importance of maintaining discipline, particularly in avoiding alcohol consumption and dagga (marijuana) smoking. To the boys, they "appealed to male students to take their women folk along to be on par with them politically and otherwise by assisting them where they are weak and accept them as sisters and comrades and not as objects for their entertainment, where they will end up at Charlottes with unplanned babies."¹⁰⁵ To the girls, they state, they were "equally frank and harsh", counselling the female students "not to allow themselves to be misused", and to avoid drinking alcohol.

¹⁰⁵ "Report on Visit to Morogoro, by F Mophosho and G Shope," 1981, MCH01-1.7, Mayibuye.

Here, they also mention one specific incident, that of a schoolgirl who had been raped by five boys. The Morogoro Women's Committee had informed Shope and Mophosho about this incident. Their comments are worth quoting in full, brief as they are:

After getting reports of the girl's general conduct, we shared the view of the committee and of other girls that she should have received some [sic? Same?] kind of punishment as boys as she also enticed the boys, in that she went with them on a drinking spree. The national leadership is handling the problem. We spoke very strongly to her outside the meeting. She apologised and promised not to repeat this mistake again.¹⁰⁶

On the surface, this response is distressing but not unique. As feminist activists and scholars across a variety of national and temporal contexts frequently decry, survivors of rape are frequently blamed for their own complicity in the crime committed against them.

But I want to point to an interesting equalization going on here. The complicity of the victim is typically used, for example in court settings, to discredit the victim and let the assailant off, either to mitigate or absolve his sentence. But that is not the case here. The boy students have been punished, and there is no question that they should be punished. Their crime is clearly named as "rape" – the girl's consent is not in question. But equally, some of the girl's compatriots ("other girls"), as well as the Women's Committee, believed the girl also should be punished. She should be punished, the line of reasoning goes, because she led the boys on, and drank with them. It is difficult to get a sense, from the document as written, whether she was to be punished for the "enticement", or for the "indiscipline" in drinking with them. Drinking was a general concern for the leadership at this time, as the senior women's comments to the students more broadly suggest.

¹⁰⁶ "Report on Visit to Morogoro, by F Mophosho and G Shope," 1981, MCH01-1.7, Mayibuye.

There is no further information about this case, probably because it was then dealt with by the national leadership, and records from this body are not comprehensively publicly accessible. But going on the admittedly limited sources available on this incident, it is possible to read the incident and response as evidence of a particular politics of “upgrading.” The girl who was raped, in this case, was held by this logic to have behaved improperly, as had the boys.

Another incident, almost a decade later, reveals a new agency on the part of the students, and perhaps a new spirit of critique. In November 1989, the headmaster of a school associated with the ANC community encountered a young woman student exiting the male dormitories, late at night. On seeing her, he “forced [her] to his room for sexual intercourse.”¹⁰⁷ The other students at the school realised what was happening and surrounded his house, expressing their consternation. The young woman eventually escaped the house – accounts do not detail how – and later, other students recorded an interview with her about the events. The decision of her colleagues to elicit an interview, and of her to give it, suggests a strong criticism on the part of the students towards the principal, as does the students’ action in surrounding the house during the rape. The sources on this incident are not sufficient to draw broader conclusions about student solidarity and mutual aid, but the minimal facts do point to such sentiments and practice. But the very presence of these accounts in the archive, and their place there, tells us something about gender analysis in the ANC in the late 80s. The event enters the archive via

¹⁰⁷ “Letter to Director of Schools, Cde. Manghezi, from S. Khoza, Dakawa.” 17 November 1989, Director 19.5, UFH

a series of concerned letters exchanged between the SOMAFCO Directorate and the Dakawa staff. Again, the staff clearly took the incident seriously, and intended to discipline the principal – who did not deny the allegations” and admitted to being “under the influence of liquor,” and was subsequently relieved of his duties.¹⁰⁸ But no broader discussion about sexual violence on the campus took place, as far as the records indicate. On the administrative level, this incident seems to have been read merely as unfortunate; unlike the earlier incident of rape, in which both parties were held to be guilty of political misconduct, here, the incident seems to be read administratively rather than politically.

Finally, domestic violence, sometimes called “wife-bashing”, was also identified as a problem in exile. Women’s Section reports, particularly from East Africa, note efforts to address this issue, while disciplinary investigations, such as the investigation into SOMAFCO, cite it as a problem to be corrected. In her memoir, Women’s Section member Baleka Mbete recalls establishing domestic violence courts, and arresting men. The ANC, she explains, had “facilities to lock our own people up for a few days.... This was better than handing them over to the host country’s justice system, where we would lose control completely.”¹⁰⁹ Mbete’s discussion suggests considerable engagement by women within the ANC on this issue. At the same time, however, there is no evidence of a dedicated investigation, as there was into spying, misconduct at the Charlottes, or disorder at SOMAFCO. It would be unfair to characterize this as “official silence” – domestic violence was officially mentioned, on multiple organizational levels. But what was missing, I would

¹⁰⁸ “Letter to Director of Schools, from Dakawa Staff,” 14 November 1989, Director 19.5, UFH.

¹⁰⁹ Baleka Mbete, “In for the Long Haul,” in *Prodigal Daughters: Stories of South African Women in Exile*, ed. Laretta Ngcobo (Durban: University of Kwazulu Natal Press, 2012), 81.

argue, was a particular analysis that would have given domestic violence meaning. Spying, misconduct, and disorder were all behaviours that “signified” – they could be read as indicative of a deeper problem, therefore demanding investigation. Domestic violence, and rape, did not signify in the same way. Part of the reason for this, I would argue, was the feminist politics of liberation, which did not fully account for zones of intimacy.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to resituate the ANC’s party line on women inside a different intellectual trajectory. Rather than read the ANC against feminist movements, I instead read its statements and work in dialogue with a historical trajectory of Communist and revolutionary movements’ thought on women, and their place within national liberation. In doing so, I tried to push back against a reading of women in the ANC as having to discover previously-misapprehended oppression. In doing so, I follow sociologist Zine Magubane’s suggestion that , “Rather than dismiss these women as being hopelessly deluded by their own collusion with patriarchs of the national liberation struggle, as other scholars have done, we should instead try to understand how the women in question conceptualise the multitude of issues and challenges they are facing.”¹¹⁰ But in distinction from Magubane’s analysis, which describes a shared framework for women’s struggle within the ANC and other South African women’s movements stretching from the 1950s into the 1980s, I here highlight both disagreement within the ANC over “women”, and also

¹¹⁰ Zine Magubane, “Attitudes Towards Feminism in the ANC,” in *Road to Democracy, 1980-1990*, SADET (Pretoria: SADET, n.d.), 982.

the influence of multiple international strands of thought on ANC women through these years.

Writing on a very different political history, that of France in 1968, Kristin Ross points to two ways histories of 'politics past', particularly of past dramatic events, are often captured: by sociologists, or by purveyors of narratives of trauma. Ross rejects both modes of analysis and attempts instead to capture the multiple everydays of political life in 1968.¹¹¹ As I noted in the introduction to this chapter, coming from a different direction, Shireen Hassim, writing about the failures of the ANC government to create material improvements in the status of women, suggests that these failures result from the fact that 'women's issues' were posed as outside of the political.¹¹² In this chapter, I attempt to bring these two trajectories of thought together. Ross's work on May 1968 undertakes a history of political subjectivity, exploring the intellectual lineages and circumstances that came together to produce the ways of thinking that occurred during 1968. As such, her work reminds us of the possibility of uncovering previous ways of engaging with politics, in their own moment – rather than reading May 68 only in the shadow of what it became, or what its participants became. In this light, then, it is interesting to consider Hassim's contention that, by the 1990s, 'women's issues' were outside politics. For this explanation, Hassim in this and other of her works has looked to the way in which the national struggle took pre-eminence over the emancipation of women in the ANC's political programme. Agreeing with Hassim on the 1990s, this chapter calls into question such a reading for the 1980s, a period in which, arguably, most individuals' actions inside the ANC were read through the lens of the 'political'. In a context

¹¹¹ Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 1st ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹¹² Hassim, "Democracy's Shadows."

in which sexuality, childbirth, military action, education, personal conduct, timeliness, cleanliness, and overall 'discipline' were all understood to have real political implications, the question in fact becomes, how did domestic violence and 'women's issues' exit the realm of political consideration in the 1990s?

CHAPTER FIVE: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND THE NATION

I. Introduction.

This chapter shifts from the ANC's exile period to the aftermath of exile, to consider how events of exile, particularly violent events, have been dealt with in the public realm.

Starting in 1979, officials in the ANC's External Mission had reason to suspect that "agents", people trained as covert operatives by the apartheid state, were infiltrating the ANC's exiled operations. As a result of these suspicions, the ANC radically increased their security apparatus, sending more cadres for training in security techniques in the GDR and the USSR, and building detention centres to hold suspected agents. As the years passed, some of these new security cadres committed acts of physical torture. Suspected infiltrators were held for prolonged, indefinite periods, without access to the necessities of life, or legal defence. Some were killed. By 1984, abuses by these security cadres, in combination with other difficulties, sparked mutinies in the ANC's military camps in Angola. MK leaders cracked down heavily on the mutinies, and leading mutineers were executed; others were imprisoned, including at the ANC's infamous "Quatro" prison camp in Angola. In response, at the 1985 Kabwe conference, ANC and MK leadership drafted and approved a Code of Conduct for their soldiers, and put into place other systems, such as a rudimentary justice apparatus, to try to prevent future abuses by security cadres. Nevertheless, the ANC

continued to imprison suspected enemy infiltrators, sometimes in sub-optimal conditions, until the organization's return to South Africa beginning in 1990.

This set of facts is relatively well-established, and while, as we shall see, various parties debate aspects of the "camps scandal," as these events have been dubbed, for the most part, there is consensus around the above version. Rather than shedding new light on these difficult events of the 1980s, this chapter instead explores what took place in the 1990s, after the ANC's return to South Africa – namely, the revelation of these abuses in the public sphere. This chapter explores the multiple moments of revelation of the ANC's violent past, and the debates that ensued over the meaning of this violence. In essence, these debates disputed whether the abuses were the result of the difficult context the ANC faced (threat from the South African state, infiltration by enemies, inadequate resources and training), or from a deliberate policy by ANC leadership to punish any dissident members of the organization.

Instead of just examining the camps scandal, however, this chapter brings in the question of violence against women in exile. Unlike the events in the ANC's military camps, the experiences of women in exile have not been the subject of any official inquiries. Unlike the camps scandals, violence against women in exile has not been the subject of any full-length book, or any in-depth public debate. When we talk about 'violence against women in exile', then, it is difficult to know what is meant at all – in contrast to the organized chronology presented above for the camps scandals, no such tidy summary is available regarding violence against women in exile. All it is possible to say is that some women were raped in

exile, including by their fellow ANC members; others were sexually harassed, threatened, and discriminated against. At times, some women who were suspected of being infiltrators were subject to violence, including sexual violence. We have no sense of chronology, frequency, or statistics regarding these incidents. It is this very absence that is of interest in this chapter – a core question here is, what explains the silences in contrast to the (relative) openness around the widespread “violence against men” that took place in the camps?

Of course, silence around sexual violence is common in multiple situations, and comprehensible. In the particular case of survivors of violence within the ANC, women are and have been reluctant to come forward about these abuses, for a number of reasons: fear of reprisals, shame, desire not to incriminate colleagues, and the fear of being undermined. As ANC activist Jessie Duarte pointed out in a formal submission to the TRC, women currently occupying powerful government positions do not necessarily want people to know they were assaulted or abused in the past.¹ Acknowledging the very real reasons for silence, in this chapter I argue that the frequent invocation of past violence against women – invocation usually without detail, invocation of this violence as something greater than what is spoken – should be attended to as a phenomenon beyond being merely the result of shame or fear. Via a comparison with discussions of the camps scandals, I will argue that violence against women in exile has been silenced in part because of the challenge of assigning meaning to it.

¹Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes, *Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Submission to Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, May 1996), <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/submit/gender.htm>.; See also discussion in Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes, “Dealing with the Aftermath: Sexual Violence and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, no. 36 (January 1, 1997): 7–18.

From the outset, those making revelations around the violence in the camps (against men) have made claims about the meaning of this violence. At the most simple level, opponents of the ANC have argued that the violence that took place in the camps means that the ANC is, and perhaps has always been, a “bad” organization – anti-democratic, violent, insidious, invidious. For some commentators, exile transformed the ANC, while for others, the ANC was always-already “bad.” On the other hand, defenders of the ANC have posed the violence in the camps as a regrettable result of the difficult context of exile, and have maintained that the ANC, in conducting inquiries and attempting to overcome its failings, corrected and made redress for its errors. For the purposes of this chapter, what is particularly interesting is the way the ANC’s exile period has been evoked, repeatedly, either to justify the ANC, to call it to account, or to condemn it entirely. But such narratives – either condemnatory or exculpatory – have not emerged around violence against women in exile. On this topic, a narrative has failed to “stick.” In this chapter, as I explore the ways knowledge about violence against women entered the public sphere, I argue that narrative has failed because of the challenge of deciding whether or not violence against women was “political” – i.e., whether its occurrence revealed a fundamental flaw within the ANC in exile, or whether it simply revealed that life in exile was hard, and involved many of the same problems that people experienced inside South Africa. Unlike the case of the camps scandals, commentators have hesitated to pick up either side of this debate. Jacob Zuma’s rape trial in 2006, which reactivated discussion around sexual violence in exile, marks the first time that one hard narrative around women in exile emerged – this despite the multiple earlier revelations of such violence having occurred.

At its most basic, this chapter will narrate together, for the first time, the revelations in the 1990s of these two sets of events, tracing first the gradual “discovery” of the camps violence, and then the more uneven opening of discussion on violence against women. It will first describe the series of events of revelation of the camps scandal – first, a media event, then a series of public inquests, and finally, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission itself. It will then discuss how this information has been interpreted and deployed. The chapter will then turn to the murky and slower revelations of violence against women, which emerged first, partially, through a series of interviews with returned women, then, much more vividly, at the TRC. The chapter will then compare the different position of gender-based violence in the camps versus ‘male violence’ in the camps in the TRC’s final report. Finally, it will turn to a novel, the only one to represent sexual violence in exile, and finally, to Jacob Zuma’s rape trial, the event which provided the most concrete and coherent narrativization of gender-based violence in exile. (See Figure One, Table of Events). In doing so, this chapter is inspired by literary theorist Rosemary Jolly’s observation that we must “make sense of the broader role of narratives, fictional or otherwise, in their construction of the ideologies by which we live and through which we live our lives.”² In doing so, Jolly argues, we can gain a fuller picture of the meaning of the concept “violence.” That is what this chapter seeks to do.

² Rosemary Jane Jolly, *Cultured Violence: Narrative, Social Suffering, and Engendering Human Rights in Contemporary South Africa* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 8.

Date	Event	Information	Source
1981	Shishita Report	Evidence of infiltration in ANC	ANC
1984	Stuart Commission	Report into mutinies and abuses in camps	ANC TRC Second Submission
1990	ANC acknowledges torture in exile	Torture acknowledged in South African media	Skweyiya Report
1991	Returned detainees denounce conditions in exile	Torture and ill-treatment by ANC	Skweyiya Report
1992 (August)	Skweyiya Commission	ANC elicits information on abuses	Skweyiya/ Amnesty International
1992 (December)	Amnesty International publishes report	Independent detail on abuses in camps	Amnesty International Report
1993	Motsuenyane Commission	ANC-appointed but independent and public investigation	Motsuenyane Report
1996	TRC Hearings begin	Independent investigation of ANC abuses	TRC
1996	Goldblatt and Meintjes submission to TRC	Calls for gender sensitivity in TRC; some info on violence against women in exile	TRC
1997	ANC Second Submission to TRC	ANC admits abuses (again), including sexual exploitation of women	TRC
1997	Special Hearings on Women at TRC	Some specific testimony on violence against women	TRC
1998	ANC tries to block TRC Report	Seeks court injunction to block publication of TRC Report	Media
2006	Jacob Zuma rape trial	Sparks new debate around sexual violence in exile	Media

Table: Chronology of Investigations into Violence in the Camps

II. The Camps Scandals – Temporality of Revelation

To date, no historians have yet turned their attention to a detailed discussion of the ways in which the camps scandals entered public consciousness and debate. Historian Steve Davis has cautioned, correctly, that the information about the events surfaced in a fraught and charged political context.³ The early 1990s in South Africa were a time of massive violence, verging on civil war, and multiple factions were actively trying to discredit the ANC. Given this complexity, the present effort should not be read as a definitive history of the debates over the camps scandals. My purpose here is to outline the basic path by which the camps violence was revealed, and how it has been accounted for and analysed, in order to highlight the contrasts between its treatment, and the treatment of gendered violence.

Searchlight

The earliest media mentions of the camps violence, and exile violence more broadly, came from a Trotskyist journal based out of the United Kingdom, *Searchlight*. The periodical, run by former ANC member Paul Trewhela, and historian Baruch Hirson, was published twice a year from 1988 to 1993, with a final issue in 1995 (none in 1994).⁴ Trewhela is still publishing on these questions today. From the first issue, the paper posed itself as propagating a new left movement in South Africa (one historically linked to Trotskyist movements in the South African past), and defending this (pure workers’) movement against “Stalinists and nationalists” – namely, the South African Communist Party (SACP)

³ Steve Davis, “The ANC: From Freedom Radio to Radio Freedom,” in *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives*, ed. Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), 117–41.

⁴ “Searchlight South Africa,” <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/otherstu/srchlght.htm> (Accessed April 30, 2014)

and the African National Congress (ANC) and other potentially black nationalist groups.⁵ The main argument of *Searchlight* throughout was that the ANC was a violent and Stalinist organization, dominated by the South African Communist Party, white Communists, and the Soviet Union. In exile, *Searchlight* argued, members who attempted to push for democratization of the ANC were harshly punished, including with torture. The core of *Searchlight's* argument was political: that the abuses in the camps revealed the corruption at the heart of the ANC. As we shall see, its findings have influenced many other analysts of the ANC.

RECOC and the Early Commissions

If, as I will argue, information about violence against women seeped slowly into the public realm, information about the camps scandal burst rapidly into public consciousness after the exiles' return. In 1990, a group of men who had been detained by the ANC, and then released, returned to South Africa and formed the Returned Exiles Coordinating Committee (RECOC). In mid-May 1990, RECOC gave a press conference in South Africa denouncing abuses in the ANC camps, recounting their own experiences of torture and prolonged detention. In June 1990, ANC cadres in Umtata, in what was then the Bantustan of the Transkei, assassinated RECOC member Sipho Phungulwa.⁶ His assassins later applied for and received amnesty from the TRC on the grounds that the killing was politically motivated.⁷ In their eyes, Phungulwa and other RECOC members were *askaris*, namely,

⁵ "Editorial," *Searchlight South Africa*, 1, 1, 1988. P.7

⁶ "Report on Torture, Ill-Treatment, and Executions in ANC Camps," Amnesty International, Dec 2 1992. p.11. Yasmin Sooka Collection, *Traces of Truth*, University of the Witwatersrand.

⁷ See Amnesty Committee TRC, *Application In Terms Of Section 18 Of The Promotion Of National Unity And Reconciliation Act, AC/98/0034*, Amnesty Application (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, August 18, 1998), http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/decisions/1998/980818_ndzamelala%20kubukelietc.htm.

former ANC members who had been ‘turned’ by the apartheid state to work for them, and betray the ANC. RECOC’s public denunciations of the ANC served as evidence, for these men, that REOC was subverted by the state, and secretly politically motivated against the ANC. This difference of interpretation underscores the complexity of the political stakes of these conflicts, and this time period. It is beyond my capacity to untangle the many layers of political intrigue, and that is not my main purpose here – rather than sorting through the truth behind the violence, I am interested in the meaning assigned to the violence. But it is worth noting that the political motivations of RECOC and its supporters are unresolved, and that the apartheid government and its allies certainly, throughout this period, actively worked to destabilize the ANC.⁸

A year after Phungulwa’s death, in August 1991, ANC President Nelson Mandela, in response to growing public and media pressure, ordered an official ANC inquest into the alleged abuses. This inquest would be known as the Skweyiya Commission, after its chair. It should be noted that there is an error in the dating in the Commission’s official report on the ANC website – its narrative states that RECOC formed in 1991, and that Mandela acted only months after that to bring about the investigation. But the timeline proposed by Amnesty International and by *Searchlight* publications from the time makes it clear that Phungulwa was assassinated, and RECOC already making pronouncements, in 1991.⁹

⁸ See Terry Bell and Dumisa Buhle Ntsebeza, *Unfinished Business: South Africa, Apartheid, and Truth* (Verso, 2003); Daniel Douek, “Counterinsurgency’s Impact on Transitions from Authoritarianism: The Case of South Africa,” *Politikon* 40, no. 2 (2013): 255–75; Daniel Douek, “‘They Became Afraid When They Saw Us’: MK Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the Bantustan of Transkei, 1988–1994,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39, no. 1 (2013): 207–25.

⁹L. Skweyiya, B. Mabandla, and G. Marcus, *Skweyiya Commission Report* (African National Congress, 1992), <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=95>; “Report on Torture, Ill-Treatment, and Executions in ANC Camps,”

The Skweyiya Commission began closed hearings into abuses in March 1992, and published its findings in October 1992. The Commission followed the model set by earlier ANC commissions of inquiry that it held in exile. There had been many of these – the most famous is the Stuart Inquiry, in 1984, which investigated the camps mutinies and their causes, but less well-known are a series of smaller inquiries into relatively quotidian events: car accidents, dysfunctional work environments, disagreements between personnel, and administrative issues. All of these commissions had the same form: the ANC leadership named commissioners, and set the ‘terms of reference,’ instructing the commissioners on what to investigate. These commissioners then held a series of hearings, inviting people involved in the issue to testify in front of them. After collecting testimonies, the commissioners wrote a report, and submitted it to the leadership, with their findings and recommendations. As Fiona Ross has observed, this model helped to influence the eventual format of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.¹⁰

In the case of the Skweyiya Commission, Mandela appointed Thembile Lewis Skweyiya and Brigitte Mabandla to run the commission – choices that prompted dissatisfaction, as both were ANC members. However, both also had legal training, and in addition to themselves, an independent lawyer formed part of the Commission, and representatives from Amnesty International were invited to attend the hearings.¹¹ The hearings were not open to the

Amnesty International; P. Trehwela, “A Death in South Africa: The Killing of Sipho Phungulwa,” *Searchlight South Africa*, Vol 2, No 2, January 1991. <http://www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/DC/sljan91.3/sljan91.3.pdf>

¹⁰ Fiona C Ross, *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa* (London; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2003), 9.

¹¹ The Skweyiya Report acknowledges the dissatisfaction around the choice of commissioners. <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=95> (Accessed July 31, 2014). Lewis Skweyiya is often confused with Zola

public, and the Commission had no power to compel witnesses. The Commission admitted its own limitations, observing that many viewed it as a ‘tame’ commission, and may have feared to come forward, for fear of reprisals.¹² Despite these limitations, the Skweyiya Commission did indeed find that multiple abuses had been committed by ANC security forces after the mutinies which took place in their Angolan military camps in 1984. The report further observed that this information was already public knowledge, pointing out that the President of the ANC had admitted publicly in 1990 that torture had occurred. It is worth briefly mentioning the details the Commission heard. From seventeen former detainees,¹³ the Commission heard consistent and credible accounts testimonies regarding length of detention, and conditions of detention, particularly at Quatro prison camp, an ANC military camp in Angola. There, they found, detainees were subject to solitary confinement, inadequate food supply, inadequate medical care, and harsh treatment, including forced labour, beating, suffocation, being buried alive, being burned with boiling water, and being forced to crawl through stinging plants (dubbed “napalm” for the burning sensation they produced) and red ant colonies.¹⁴ Many also described making false confessions under torture at various locations, including in ANC residences in Zambia and Tanzania.

After the publication of the Skweyiya Commission report, Amnesty International (AI) published its own report into the abuses in the camps, in December 1992. The seventeen-page report was based on both AI presence at the Skweyiya hearings, but also on work AI

Skweyiya, a high-ranking ANC figure in and after exile. They are not the same person, although ANC documents do not clarify whether or not they are cousins, as has been alleged.

¹² Skweyiya, Mabandla, and Marcus, *Skweyiya Commission Report*.

¹³ 11 of the 32 RECOG testified – Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

had done with ANC detainees in Zambia and Tanzania in the 1980s. The Report explicitly stated that its findings were incomplete, and that further investigation into the situation in the camps was needed. It provided much the same information as the Skweyiya Commission, but in greater detail, and with more in-depth case histories of particular prisoners' treatment. The report also provided names and dates of former detainees who returned to South Africa and were assassinated, allegedly by ANC officials (incidents occurred in June 1990 and 21 May 1992).¹⁵ AI's avowed intention in publishing the report was to push for greater accountability. It is worth mentioning that, up to this point, none of these Commissions had made mention of any 'gender-specific' issues.

Apparently under pressure due to the allegations, the ANC took further action, and less than a month after the publication of AI's report, in January 1993, the ANC announced it would hold an independent and public commission into the camps scandal. This Commission, the Motsuenyane Commission, was to be "first time a liberation movement has engaged an independent commission."¹⁶ The Commission was not headed by an ANC member. Rather, Samuel Motsuenyane was a "retired business leader", with professional training as a social worker and agronomist. The two other commissioners were a constitutional lawyer from Zambia (David Zamchya) and a trial judge and professor from the USA (Margaret Burnham). The Commission held public hearings at a large public stadium in Johannesburg from May 13 to June 18, 1993, hearing testimony from 50 witnesses, including 11 alleged

¹⁵ "Report on Torture, Ill-Treatment, and Executions in ANC Camps," Amnesty International.

¹⁶ SM Motsuenyane, *Reports of the Commission of Enquiry into Certain Allegations of Cruelty and Human Rights Abuse against ANC Prisoners and Detainees by ANC Members*, REPORTS OF THE COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY INTO CERTAIN ALLEGATIONS OF CRUELTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE AGAINST ANC PRISONERS AND DETAINEES BY ANC MEMBERS, (August 20, 1993), Traces of Truth Online Archive, Wits University, http://truth.wwl.wits.ac.za/doc_print.php?fl=2_2/3021-h1-2-1-01.html.

perpetrators of human rights abuses. They collected more than 2,500 pages of testimony. The Commission also travelled to two former ANC settlements, Dakawa and Mazimbu, and a UNHCR refugee camp (Kigwa) in Tanzania.¹⁷ They worked quickly, and published their 132 page report in August, 1993.

As will be discussed in further detail below, the Motsuenyane Commission report marks the first time that violence against women was publicly mentioned in the context of camps abuses.¹⁸ The Report mentions one cadre, Dumisani Khosa, who reported being detained at Quatro after protesting the sexual harassment of ANC women.¹⁹ The Report also mentions one camp security guard being accused of rape in 1987, but provides no further details.²⁰ Most of the report focuses on providing specific and detailed descriptions of individuals' experiences of torture and detention, and making recommendations to the ANC (largely for apologies). They also list the names of some of the alleged perpetrators of abuses, including Andrew Masondo, who would later testify at the TRC. Thus, for the first time violence against women emerged as an issue, and for the first time, specific ANC perpetrators were named.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (the TRC)

Created by Act of Parliament in 1995, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission eventually was to hear many thousands of testimonies from both victims of apartheid, and

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The ANC's internal Stuart Commission, conducted in 1984, did mention harassment of women as a problem (one that led to conflict between men in the organization), but this report was not made public until the TRC hearings.

¹⁹ Motsuenyane, *Motsuenyane Report*, 41.

²⁰ Ibid., 32.

perpetrators. Its goal was to elicit testimonies from these witnesses in order to “establish as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of the gross violations of human rights” between 1960-1994.²¹ It did so via Gross Human Rights Violations hearings; roughly 2,000 witnesses testified to such violations at sixty hearings around the country, and an additional 22,000 written statements were taken.²² In replacing court trials as a means for resolving past violence, the TRC was instead intended to “[transform] the country’s fragmented ‘collective memory’ into a shared national history.”²³ The TRC’s project was one of healing and national reconciliation, rather than prosecution.

Commissioners chosen from civil society, religious organizations, and political organization held hearings across the country, over several years. These hearings gathered significant media interest at the time. Outside of the hearings, teams of researchers compiled written submissions from witnesses, and did additional investigations.

The TRC Commissioners also held a judicial function – they had the power to grant amnesty to perpetrators who testified, if they confessed, and if their crimes were deemed political.

The South African TRC is the only Truth Commission to have been given such power.²⁴

Unsurprisingly, the Amnesty hearings generated a great deal of controversy. At these hearings, perpetrators who confessed to acts of violence were able to escape legal prosecution.

²¹ M. Sanders, “Ambiguities Of Mourning Law, Custom, Literature and Women before South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” *Law Text Culture* 4, no. 2 (January 1, 1998): 107.

²² “TRC Category 2 – Human Rights Violations,” Traces of Truth, University of the Witwatersrand. http://truth.wvl.wits.ac.za/cat_descr.php?cat=2 (Accessed August 4, 2014)

²³ Sanders, “Ambiguities Of Mourning Law, Custom, Literature and Women before South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” 108.

²⁴ “TRC Category 3 – Amnesty,” Traces of Truth, University of the Witwatersrand, http://truth.wvl.wits.ac.za/cat_descr.php?cat=3 (Accessed August 4, 2014)

Over the course of its work, the TRC held hearings in multiple sites around South Africa. In addition to these general hearings on gross human rights violations or amnesty applications, the TRC held special hearings on specific sectors, including Business, Legal, Faith Community, Media, Armed Forces, Prison, Women (as will be discussed below), Chemical and Biological Warfare and Conscription, as well as specific topics, such as the Mandela United Football Club (which dealt with the allegations against Winnie Mandela). In addition, special hearings were held on the political parties, including the ANC.²⁵

The TRC attracted an immense amount of scholarly attention during its tenure and since. Some scholars and activists have criticized the TRC sharply for its failures on the judicial level, protesting that the TRC simply didn't work. The only perpetrators who came forward were those who had already been found out; equally, as recent commentators have underscored, those who did not receive amnesty have not since been prosecuted, undermining the mission of the TRC.²⁶ Others, most notably Mahmood Mamdani, have argued that the TRC focussed too intently on "perpetrators", thus allowing "beneficiaries" of apartheid to avoid claiming responsibility.²⁷ In focussing on specific "gross human rights violations" committed under apartheid, critics have argued, the TRC failed to condemn the

²⁵ See TRC website for complete list - <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/special/index.htm#pp2>

²⁶ Bell and Ntsebeza, *Unfinished Business*; Jane Quin, "Op-Ed: De Kock Ordered My Sister's Killing – and No, His Debt Is Not Paid," *Daily Maverick*, June 27, 2014, <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2014-06-27-op-ed-de-kock-ordered-my-sisters-killing-and-no-his-debt-is-not-paid/>.

²⁷ See Mahmood Mamdani, "Amnesty or Impunity? A Preliminary Critique of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC)," *Diacritics* 32, no. 3/4 (October 1, 2002): 33–59. See also Mark Sanders, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

entirety of apartheid as itself a violation.²⁸ The focus on individual harm occluded apartheid's larger project of "targeting entire communities for racial and ethnic cleansing and policing."²⁹ Other scholars and past TRC participants have been more optimistic about the TRC's successes.³⁰ Other scholars have been less interested in the judicial domain, and more interested in the types of testimony that the TRC enabled, and the silences it generated. Scholars of literary texts, narrative, and theatre have explored what sort of 'national memory' the TRC hearings created, and what kind of truth.³¹

The ANC at the TRC

The ANC's record at the TRC is controversial and mixed. Famously, it attempted to block publication of the TRC's final Reports in 1998, arguing that they erroneously and unjustly drew a moral equivalence between the crimes of the apartheid state, and the crimes of those who struggled against apartheid. Scholar Todd Cleveland highlights here the changed attitude of the ANC, noting that by the time it had acceded to power, it was less open to discussing its own troubled past than it had been at the time of its earlier commissions.³² At

²⁸ Ross, *Bearing Witness*; Premesh Lalu and Brent Harris, "Journeys from the Horizons of History: Text, Trial and Tales in the Construction of Narratives of Pain," *Current Writing* 8, no. 2 (1996): 24–38.

²⁹ Mamdani, "Amnesty or Impunity?," 34.

³⁰ Kader Asmal, Louise Asmal, and Ronald Suresh Roberts, *Reconciliation through Truth: A Reckoning of Apartheid's Criminal Governance* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, in association with Mayibue Books, University of the Western Cape, 1996); Alex Boraine, *A Country Unmasked* (Cape Town; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³¹ Heidi Grunebaum, *Memorializing the Past: Everyday Life in South Africa after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2011); Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa* (New York: Three River Press, 2000); Lalu and Harris, "Journeys from the Horizons of History"; Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998); Deborah Posel and Graeme Simpson, *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press : Distributed by Thorold's Africana Books, 2002). This is just a small sampling – it is hard to find a scholar in the South African social sciences and humanities who has not commented on the TRC, a scholarly investment that reveals the massive import of the project.

³² T. Cleveland, "'We Still Want the Truth': The ANC's Angolan Detention Camps and Post-Apartheid Memory", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, Vol 25, No 1, 2005. P.10

the same time, the TRC's Final Report praised the ANC's openness. It highlighted the ANC's willingness to hold its own inquiries prior to the TRC, noting that "the ANC should be commended for setting a high standard in this regard." Equally, the Report acknowledged the ANC's willingness to submit information about its own past, citing the lengthy written submissions the ANC made. The Report observed that "Much of the detail contained in this section comes from the ANC's own enquiries and submissions to this Commission."³³

At the TRC, the ANC made an official submission, and then a second, more detailed submission, in response to questions from TRC Commissioners. These written submissions, each over 100 pages in length, provided explicit detail about the administration of exile, listing names of committee members and describing the responsibilities of each committee. The submissions included copies of the ANC's own internal commissions, in the 1980s, into both spy infiltration, and into the camps abuses – the ANC held their first inquiry into this matter as early as 1984. (These reports were confidential, and were therefore not included in the TRC's Final Report, and are not archived on the TRC website, although they are accessible through archival holdings in South Africa.) In addition, the ANC listed the names of people detained in exile, and people executed in exile, as well as those who went missing or died of other causes. Despite the inclusion of these details, though, for the most part the ANC's submissions contained statements of ANC policy, and analysis of the political situation (apartheid) that necessitated armed intervention.

³³ TRC Final Report, Volume 2, 1998, p.326

The ANC's written submissions reveal its attempts to manage its narrative about the camps' abuses. If *Searchlight* and RECOC had sought to portray the ANC as an organized and malicious Stalinist organization, in which internal democracy was violently suppressed, the ANC used the TRC to propose an alternative reading of their time in exile, via their first report, 190 pages long, submitted in 1996, and the second, 248 pages long, submitted in 1997. In these reports, the authors foregrounded three main ideas: that the ANC was a committed political organization, not an ordinary army; that it was under massive threat from the apartheid state's campaign of military raids, spy infiltration, and targeted assassinations; and that "excesses" were exceptional, and occurred due to lapses in training, the infiltration of agents, and the climate of anxiety. The first two points are undeniably true – historians and memoirists agree that 'political education' was a core component of ANC training in exile, including in the camps in Angola, and that cadres were instilled with a strict sense of political ethics.³⁴ The ANC developed a Code of Conduct for its members, specifically designed to prevent abuses, and was one of the only liberation organizations in the world to sign onto the Geneva Convention, in 1980, conventions aimed at regulating military conduct towards civilians.³⁵ Equally, it is widely recognised that the apartheid state vigorously infiltrated spies into the ANC, particularly in the 1980s; assassinations of ANC members, and attacks on ANC camps, including both mass poisonings and bombings, are

³⁴ See discussion in chapter four. See also discussion in Luli Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004); Barry Gilder, *Songs and Secrets* (South Africa: Jacana Media, 2012); Ronald Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous: From Undercover Struggle to Freedom*, Rev. and further updated (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2004); H. J Simons et al., *Comrade Jack: The Political Lectures and Diary of Jack Simons, Novo Catengue* (New Doornfontein [South Africa]; Johannesburg: STE Publishers; African National Congress, 2001); Raymond Suttner, *The ANC Underground in South Africa, 1950-1976* (Boulder, Colo.: FirstForumPress, 2009).

³⁵ "ANC becomes signatory to the Geneva Convention of 1949 and Protocol 1 of 1977", South African History Online, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/anc-becomes-signatory-geneva-convention-1949-and-protocol-1-1977> (accessed July 31, 2014)

well-documented.³⁶ The third point though, the exceptional nature of the abuses, is worth exploring, as it reveals the crux of the eventual debate over the abuses: do they tell us something about the ANC (as RECOG, *Searchlight*, and others would eventually argue), or do they for the most part tell us only about the hardships the ANC faced?

In its submissions, the ANC emphasized its role as a political organization, committed to national liberation struggle, and engaging in what it termed “a just war”. The ANC, it noted, “trained all its combatants as armed political activists and not as mere soldiers whose only responsibility was to understand and carry out orders from a superior command.”³⁷

Quoting its own internal documents from the 1980s, the First Submission argued that “When we talk of revolutionary armed struggle, we are talking of political struggle by means which include the use of military force (...) It is important to emphasise this because our movement must reject all manifestations of militarism which separates armed people's struggle from its political context.”³⁸ According to this argument, then, the ANC was systematically good, vigilant, and disciplined. The submissions pose this reality in direct opposition to the apartheid state, reminding their readers that, “The system of apartheid and its violent consequences were systematic; they were deliberate; they were a matter of policy.”³⁹ By contrast, the submissions insist, the abuses that took place in the ANC prison camps were exceptional. Referring to the abuses at Quatro, to which they admit, the First

³⁶ See Luli Callinicos, “Oliver Tambo and the Dilemma of the Camp Mutinies in Angola in the Eighties,” *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 587–621, doi:10.1080/02582473.2012.675813; Davis, “The ANC: From Freedom Radio to Radio Freedom”; Hugh Macmillan, “After Morogoro: The Continuing Crisis in the African National Congress (of South Africa) in Zambia, 1969–1971,” *Social Dynamics* 35, no. 2 (2009): 295–311.

³⁷ African National Congress, *African National Congress Statement to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, August 1996, 28, <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/index.htm>.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 100.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

Submission argues, “The conditions in this detention centre, which are graphically illustrated in the commission reports, should be considered against the 'norm' which existed in general in the camps, given that conditions in any guerrilla military establishment are very difficult and abnormal.”⁴⁰ In other words, while the conditions at Quatro were bad, they should be understood with reference to the conditions in other ANC military camps, not for detainees, which also suffered from shortages of food, water, and medical care. In this reading, which the ANC maintained throughout its detailed submissions, the violence in its camps was aberrant, exceptional, and without meaning, except insofar as it testified to the challenging conditions the ANC faced in exile.

Before addressing the TRC’s Final Reports, and the narrative direction they upheld in their discussions of the ANC, let us turn to the unfolding of knowledge about violence against women in the camps. As this knowledge came to light, it traced a different path from that of the knowledge of the ‘violence against men’ of the camps.

III. Women and Violence

While the abuses against men (gendered neutral officially, but always involving men) became subjects of public discussion almost as soon as ANC leadership began returning from exile in 1990, ANC women’s experiences of gender-based violence and sexual violence entered the public realm more slowly, and indeed, recursively. The “camps scandal” emerged in a relatively linear manner, with each additional testimonial or commission

⁴⁰ Ibid., 18.

adding evidence and specificity. But the topic of sexual abuse came to be known much more slowly, and then had to be “re-discovered” several times. These questions take on the characteristics of ‘difficult knowledge’⁴¹ – while the terms of debate around the meaning of the camps violence (torture, detention, executions) were clear (the ANC was intrinsically bad or it made mistakes), the terms of debate around violence against women took a long time to become clear.

The stages of revelation can be sketched roughly as follows: early 1990s discussion of sexual harassment and inequality (as late as year 2000); TRC features allusions to violence in the camps, including explicitly violence against women, but no testimonial, except of former detainee; publication of *I Speak to the Silent* raising questions; Zuma rape trial crystallizing events and anger. Even the question of what was to be revealed is vague and uncertain, only truly defined as rape around the trial of Zuma.

Women Abuse: Inequality and Harassment

Between 1990 and 2000, a small number of high-profile former *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) women spoke about their experiences as “women in MK”, most notable Thandi Modise and Thenjiwe Mtintso. Both of these women had high status (rank) within MK, and went on, upon return to South Africa, to serve in prominent positions within the ANC and government.⁴² At the same time as these interviews were given, feminist scholars, particularly in the early 1990s, debated the role of women in the ANC, in the context of

⁴¹ See Erica Lehrer, Cynthia E. Milton, and Monica Patterson, *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places* (Houndmills, Basingstoke Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁴² At present, 2014, Thandi Modise is Premier of Northwest Province, and Thenjiwe Mtintso is the South African Ambassador in Italy.

scholarly debates around women and nationalism, but also political debates around the question of women's emancipation and its compatibility with national liberation.⁴³ These debates had been vigorous and ongoing since the 1980s, but took a surprisingly long time to turn their attention specifically to sexual violence.

Early revelations – and they were framed as such – focused on women's inequality within MK. Prior to the return and legalization of the ANC and MK, informants speaking on record emphasized the positive aspects of women's experiences in MK. In 1989, shortly after her release from an eight-year prison sentence, Thandi Modise gave an interview to sociologist Jacklyn Cock, which was published in Cock's monograph *Colonels and Cadres: Women and War* in 1991 (international edition, 1993). In this interview, Modise emphasized the equality men in MK showed to women, saying "The male comrades respected us for having the courage to be soldiers. They did everything to make us feel their equals."⁴⁴ By contrast, speaking of the women who had gone into exile with her but later betrayed her to the South African security forces, Modise said, "I pity them. I enjoyed better opportunities than them. They are still bowing down to so many forms of oppression." Explicitly, Modise argues that leaving South Africa and joining the ANC was an emancipating experience for her as a woman, specifically. Throughout the interview, Modise played down communism ("Political education focused on events in Africa, and the history of the ANC. There wasn't too much about communism. I never met anyone who hated churches."), and emphasized equality,

⁴³ See, for example – S. Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2006),

C. Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1991); C. Walker, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (New Africa Books, 1990); J. Wells, *We Now Demand! The History of Women's Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 1993).

⁴⁴ Jacklyn Cock, *Women and War in South Africa* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1993), 150.

explaining men and women both did the same chores and the same training, and ate the same food. Modise painted an idealized picture of the camps, noting that “some boys and girls fell in love and got married”. Describing feminine uniforms that drew male attention, Modise comments that the uniforms “gave a feminine touch and we liked to wear them. ... The men whistled but we ignored them.”⁴⁵ On feminism, she explained that “I wouldn’t call myself a feminist. I’m proud to be a woman. ... Feminists really want to be men. But I do believe in equal rights, and I do think that men oppress women.”⁴⁶

In this interview, given very close to the time the ANC was unbanned, Modise gives little away, and continues to put forward a celebratory image of MK and the ANC (unsurprisingly). Cock also interviewed Jacqueline Molefe, then in the command structure of MK, in 1990. She told Cock that “There should be more women there [in the top structures]; there are many capable women in MK, but most top positions are occupied by men.”⁴⁷ But she continued to present MK as a site of equality, stating that “it’s only in the army that I’ve seen equality practiced. In terms of endurance and discipline, women have been outstanding in MK. Because of that – because of what we’ve done on the ground – we’ve been recognized as equals.” She emphasized that respect had to be earned: “In MK I feel I’m respected, but you have to prove yourself over and over again.”⁴⁸ Molefe also pointed to some women’s own “hangovers about how a woman should be treated” as influencing both men and women’s behavior. For the most part, though, Molefe insisted on a positive reading of women’s experience with MK.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 152.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 154.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 161.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 162.

Unlike in the South African Defense Forces (SADF), women in MK were not formally excluded from combat roles, and received the same training as men.⁴⁹ But women participated less in military action. Molefe, speaking to Cock, blames women for this, saying “It was our fault. We didn’t put enough pressure.”⁵⁰ So, while admitting some tensions, these women, speaking before or at the time of the ANC’s unbanning, emphasized a positive portrayal of the ANC. Only an anonymous informant told Cock that “there was some sexism in the camps.”⁵¹

The tenor of interviews changed as the ANC’s legitimacy grew. In 1992, MK Commander and later head of the Gender Equity Commission Thenjiwe Mtintso gave an interview to the alternative press publication *Works in Progress*. In the interview, Mtintso was frank about problems women within MK faced. She begins by stating that “we can now openly admit that there has been a low percentage of women in MK structures,” and advocating that, “we have to make a conscious effort [to recruit women to MK], otherwise women will remain under-represented.”⁵² She also pointed to “gender stereotypes” as having militated against women’s gaining power in MK, saying women were frequently deployed away from military work and towards administrative or secretarial work. She commented that, “You would be

⁴⁹ The majority of militaries worldwide do not allow women to serve in active combat. The USA, for example, changed its rules on this only in 2012. While feminist scholars have debated the meaning of such dubious ‘inclusion’ (critics arguing that the move merely includes women more effectively in violent imperialism), the ANC’s case is arguably different – they viewed themselves as fighting a liberation war, and included women as part of their vision for equality. Regarding women and war, see discussions in Cynthia H Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Pumla Dineo Gqola, “How the ‘cult of Femininity’ and Violent Masculinities Support Endemic Gender Based Violence in Contemporary South Africa,” *African Identities* 5, no. 1 (2007): 111–24, doi:10.1080/14725840701253894.

⁵⁰ Cock, *Women and War in South Africa*, 165.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁵² Devan Pillay, “Women in MK: Thenjiwe Mtintso”, *Works In Progress*, 1992

lucky to find, out of 60 cadres in a camp, two that were women.” The interviewer asked her to what extent women were responsible for their own marginalization, and Mtintso acknowledged the influence of “socialization”, noting that women themselves wanted to be out of the camps, and that many (though not all) women who married tended to leave the camps. This “socialization”, she pointed out, affected both men and women, shaping their understandings of how women should be. For these reasons, she felt women had to work harder than men to prove themselves – “During our training, we had to perform three times more than a man.”

Mtintso did specifically comment on “gender oppression”, and also observed that there were instances of men competing for women, and then blaming women for frictions that occurred. She criticized the women’s sections and the limited women’s political education that was offered for marginalizing women, making these problems “women’s issues”. Only in 1990, she commented, did the ANC stop subsuming women’s liberation under national liberation, and begin to address sexism on its own. Previously, she suggested, “it was seen as divisive and reactionary to discuss or even imply that there was gender oppression in the camps.” Most soldiers, she argued, preferred to believe that men and women were equal already, and so no specific efforts were needed. She also pointed out that, even beyond the ANC, the word “feminist” had a derogatory understanding. Even within the ANCWL, she complained, “there is still talk of ‘we as wives and mothers.’”

At the time Mtintso gave this interview, Nelson Mandela had appointed the Skweyiya Commission, and news media had published extensive accounts of the violence in the ANC camps. But the interviewer did not address these questions with Mtintso.

Eight years later, in the year 2000, Thandi Modise, by then a general in the new South African military, gave an interview to journalist Robyn Curnow. More widely cited than Mtintso's earlier interview, Modise's makes many of the same points that Mtintso's did. A decade after her earlier interview with Jacklyn Cock, Modise here is more open and revelatory about mistreatment of women in the camps. As Raymond Suttner has observed, this contradiction is not inherently problematic – when Modise gave the first interview, the political situation was extremely fraught, and it is entirely reasonable that she was cautious in her testimony.⁵³ By the year 2000, her position and that of the ANC were more secure. In her conversation with journalist Robyn Curnow, Modise alluded to sexual violence in a fairly direct way, describing how she and other new recruits to the ANC decided to learn karate, in defense not only against South African forces, but also against “men who just wanted to take advantage of us.” This anxiety was spurred, she explained, by an incident where several men had fought to take advantage of (i.e. rape) women present in Tanzania, saying “why should we be sex starved?”⁵⁴ Repeating what she had told to Cock a decade earlier, but now with a more critical valence, Modise emphasized women's assertiveness, explaining how women did a great deal of physical labour, such as trench digging, to prove themselves to the men in the camps. Again alluding to sexual violence, Modise described

⁵³ Raymond Suttner, “Women in the ANC-Led Underground,” in *Women in South African History: They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, ed. Nomboniso Gasa (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2007), 233–55.

⁵⁴ Thandi Modise and Robyn Curnow, “Thandi Modise, a Woman in War,” *Agenda*, no. 43 (January 1, 2000): 37.

her growing breasts as a problem, and said the solution was “Exercise even more! Harden your body even more! Try to be one of the boys because that is one of the protections you have.”⁵⁵ Modise also described one incident of male-female conflict, dubbed “the Brushman affair”, which took place in one of the Angolan camps she spent time in. Over a period of months, a man, or several men, had been sneaking into the women’s barracks and fondling women as they slept. One night the women laid a trap and caught the man, pursuing him back to the male barracks. But the men hid the perpetrator, and criticized the women for having rushed outside of their barracks in a state of undress (many of the women were only partially clad.) In Modise’s words, “there was such strong negative feeling against us,” a feeling that she claims continues. “Up to today,” she commented, “you still can’t find an ANC male in that camp to talk frankly about that incident.”⁵⁶

Modise’s interview in the year 2000, then, is frank and more open than her earlier statements, and than Mtintso’s. But its opacity becomes evident when read against evidence presented to the TRC three years prior to Modise’s interview. This tension between what is known (which is more than what Modise says), and what Modise says, undermines any reading of simple ‘linear increase of knowledge’, or gradual revelation. Instead, we see recursive and uneven knowledge: more can be admitted in the year 2000, but at the same time, the opening is also a silencing in itself: the more brutal testimonies of women at the TRC are occluded (perhaps the journalist chose not to ask about them, or Modise didn’t want to discuss it), and at the same time, the camps violence is not raised as a topic.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 39.

Motsuenyane Report, 1993

As mentioned above, the Motsuenyane Report was the first time violence against women in exile was publicly discussed after the ANC's return to South Africa. An earlier commission, the Stuart Commission of 1984, which investigated the mutinies in Angola, had also addressed this topic – but its report was not made public until the ANC's second submission to the TRC, in 1997. (It is now available to the public on the ANC's website.) In their 1984 report, the Stuart Commission devoted two paragraphs to the topic of gender trouble in exile. In a section on "Administration," a sub-section entitled "Womanising" contained the following observations:

Widespread complaint that people in administration use their positions to seduce women comrades. This even affected married women and lovers. The boy-friends are harassed and if need be, transferred to other camps.

Recently a trainee tried to commit suicide because his girl-friend had been taken from him. Women lovers of administration are given special treatment and they tend to reject the authority of their immediate commanders. There is a widespread belief that women are sex objects and that they do not develop politically and militarily.⁵⁷

It's difficult to evaluate, through the neutral language of the report, the degree of coercion implied here – were the senior people "seducing" women, or compelling them? Certainly the women's prior partners seemed to object, as the cases of transfer, harassment, and suicide of partners testify. The Commission's report does not address women's issues again directly, presumably relying on the idea that the other improvements they suggested would help to mitigate these problems. It's difficult to get a sense of the perspective of the report's authors on women – on the one hand, the report seems to condemn that women were

⁵⁷ James Stuart, *Stuart Commission Report: Commission of Inquiry into Recent Developments in the People's Republic of Angola* (Lusaka, Zambia: African National Congress, March 14, 1984), <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=87>.

treated as “sex objects” and couldn’t develop. On the other hand, it also complained about women deploying sexual privilege for their own advantage. While it would be unreasonable to expect an all-male group of soldiers writing in the early 1980s to have a particularly refined feminist interpretation, it’s worth noting the disjuncture between these reported actions and the lofty goals of women’s equality that the ANC promoted.

After no further official mentions of the issue, the Motsuenyane Commission of 1993 again heard evidence about woman abuse. Their final report provides only sparse details, briefly describing testimonies by men about how the ANC security services punished them when they complained about woman abuse. One witness described how he complained openly to ANC senior officials:

Khosa candidly expressed his views on three issues. First, he said that there was a need for better training programmes for the young people who were coming into the ANC, and with whom he had occasion to work at Radio Freedom. Second, he said that it appeared that nepotism was becoming a demoralizing factor within the organization, and third, he discussed the need for greater leadership morality, in connection with which he noted that some persons were involved in the sexual harassment of young women.⁵⁸

After making these complaints, he was detained and punished severely. Beyond this case, the Commission also heard of one MK member who was executed for raping an Angolan woman. The Commission’s report provides no further elaboration or analysis of these events – its focus is on the punishments suffered by men, whether aggressors in or complainants about violence against women, not on women’s experiences. Again, the violence women may have suffered is kept conceptually distinct from the focus: the ANC’s violence towards its (male) members, and the reasons for this violence.

⁵⁸ Motsuenyane, *Motsuenyane Report*.

The raw testimony from the Motsuenyane Commission is not available publicly (the ANC also does not list the Commission on its website, unlike the Stuart and Skweyiya Commissions.) However, *Searchlight South Africa* did reprint, in 1993, testimony from one man, Olefile Samuel Mngqibisa, who spoke explicitly about sexual abuse of women by Mbokodo, the security services. Mngqibisa's testimony is striking – it marks the only occasion where someone directly and publicly stated that organized abuse of women took place in exile, with the open knowledge of authority figures. Mngqibisa stated that he worked at Dakawa, where new recruits just arriving from South Africa were interviewed as they joined the ANC. He testified,

I was part of a group which exposed Imbokodo's sexual harassment of young girls fresh from SA. It was tradition in the ANC, especially in Imbokodo, to sexually abuse young girls and those who were desperately in need of scholarships. When they refused sexual intercourse with Imbokodo they were immediately detained and labelled agents of the SA government.⁵⁹

Scholarships here meant funds to study overseas – ANC students were sent on scholarships to a variety of sites in Europe, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and North America, funded by donors. ANC leadership controlled who got to access these scholarships, which were limited in number. Mngqibisa then described how a group of senior ANC figures in the region tried to stop Mbokodo and investigate the abuses, going so far as to interview girls experiencing abuse. But Mbokodo intervened, and their allies in the region, including, allegedly, Andrew Masondo and Tim Maseko, expelled these senior figures from the ANC. Masondo and Maseko were two senior figures in the Mazimbu administration – negative rumours circulate about both. Mngqibisa also alleged that:

⁵⁹ "Women In The ANC And Swapo: Sexual Abuse Of Young Women In The ANC Camps", *Searchlight South Africa*, No. 11, 1993.

Andrew Masondo impregnated a young Somafco schoolgirl in 1989 and she had to abandon her studies. Masondo seriously abused human rights in the ANC. A majority of ANC girls who studied abroad used their bodies to get scholarships.⁶⁰

The allegations about women using sexuality to obtain favours, or being coerced into providing sexual services in exchange for benefits they should simply have received, were not new, and many testifiers before and since alluded to such abuses. But Mngqibisa's allegations about organized and habitual sexual abuse of new recruits by Mbokodo were new. They are also unrepeated anywhere else. The anonymous author of the *Searchlight* piece stated that they were presenting this evidence specifically to correct the historical record on women. They wrote:

There is now a definite genre of literature concerning women's struggles and women's issues that has arisen in South Africa, or which relates to South Africa. ... The material printed here should become part of the record.⁶¹

The author's hopes did not come to fruition. This particular article is not widely cited (in fact I have never seen it cited). Mngqibisa's case is described in the official Motsuenyane Commission Report, but the report makes no mention of his allegations of sexual abuse, focussing only on his own difficult relationships with the ANC authorities, and his multiple periods of detention. Without more information, it is difficult to know why these aspects of his testimony were eliminated. It is possible that *Searchlight* fabricated the testimony, but this seems unlikely. It's possible that the Motsuenyane Commission's final report preferred to cite only verified information, and could not find additional substantiating evidence for Mngqibisa's claims.

⁶⁰ "Women In The ANC And Swapo: Sexual Abuse Of Young Women In The ANC Camps", *Searchlight South Africa*, No. 11, 1993.

⁶¹ Women In The ANC And Swapo: Sexual Abuse Of Young Women In The ANC Camps", *Searchlight South Africa*, No. 11, 1993.

Whatever the reasons, the result is that, again, explicit violence against women was occluded in the official reporting mechanisms, and thus, left out of the narrative of redressing past wrongs of the ANC.

Women and the TRC

Scholars have discussed women's role and place in the TRC in some depth, and many have been critical of the ways the TRC served women.⁶² Anthropologist Fiona Ross's work is foundational in this regard. Based on extensive observation of TRC hearings, as well as in-depth interviews with women activists in one particularly community who testified at the TRC, Ross makes a two-fold argument about the TRC. She first points out that, although women were the majority of the witnesses at the TRC, they most often testified about abuses suffered by others, most often their sons or husbands, rather than about abuses they had themselves endured.⁶³ Secondly, she argues that the terms of reference of the Commission focussed too narrowly on bodily harm, excluding from consideration the multiple social harms complainants suffered, and narrowing consideration of the wider social violence of apartheid to simply bodily harm. Other scholars, and the TRC itself, have acknowledged this limitation. But Ross focuses the argument on the specific context of women, demonstrating that the very form of the TRC motivated a narrow focus on sexual violence, with Commissioners working to elicit tales of sexual harm from women. Media at

⁶² See Goldblatt and Meintjes, "Dealing with the Aftermath"; Jolly, *Cultured Violence*; Rosemary Jolly, "Spectral Presences: Narrating Women in the Context of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines* 38, no. 3 (2004): 622–37, doi:10.1080/00083968.2004.10751300; Lalu and Harris, "Journeys from the Horizons of History"; Nthabiseng Motsemme, "The Mute Always Speak: On Women's Silences at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *Current Sociology* 52, no. 5 (September 1, 2004): 909–32.

⁶³ As Ross acknowledges, this point was widely made, also by Goldblatt and Meintjes, "Dealing with the aftermath." See Ross, *Bearing Witness*.

the time, she highlights, seized upon these accounts of sexual violence as ‘most true’, and most important to the women telling them. But in her own interviews with women who testified, Ross frequently found that other aspects of women’s suffering took precedence in their own self-understanding of harm. The women she interviewed often emphasized ruptured community relations, for example. These more social aspects were obscured by the TRC’s structural drive towards individual, bodily accounts.

But if sexual violence was made central to women’s testimonies, as Ross argues, it was also a small part of the overall TRC, and one with no tangible impact. Sociologist Tristan Borer points out that, although 140 women made complaints of rape, no men applied for amnesty for the crime of rape.⁶⁴ Only one woman testified explicitly about being raped in exile. One man, a high-ranking figure in exile and after, Andrew Masondo, alluded to rape taking place, but denied that he had specific knowledge of particular rapes being committed. This section will trace the limited ways in which accusations of abuse of women within the ANC emerged at the TRC, This section will first demonstrate that violence against women in the camps was described very clearly – if very minimally – to the TRC: it was not invisible, but it was marginal within the process. But equally striking, this section will demonstrate, is the ongoing silence that greeted the revelations of ‘woman abuse’ in the ANC camps.

⁶⁴ Tristan Anne Borer, “Gendered War and Gendered Peace: Truth Commissions and Postconflict Gender Violence: Lessons From South Africa,” *Violence Against Women*, August 25, 2009, 11, <http://vaw.sagepub.com/content/early/2009/08/25/1077801209344676>.

Goldblatt and Meintjes

In March 1996, the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at Wits University hosted a workshop entitled 'Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.' By this time, TRC hearings had already commenced. The workshop engaged scholars and activists, including current ANC members, most notably, Thenjiwe Mtintso and Jessie Duarte. Researchers associated with the workshop also conducted in-depth interviews with women about their perspectives on the TRC. From this event, its conveners Sheila Meintjes and Beth Goldblatt made a detailed submission to the TRC suggesting that its format lacked sensitivity to women's issues.⁶⁵ As will be discussed below, this report eventually spurred the TRC to hold special hearings on women, in line with the report's recommendations. Goldblatt and Meintjes' report, formally submitted to the TRC and published on the TRC's website alongside the Commission's Official Reports, is notable as providing one of the clearest and most comprehensive discussions of violence in the camps, giving more information than was to be presented at the TRC.

The founding premise of Goldblatt and Meintjes' submission, and the workshop that launched it, was the idea that apartheid was gendered, and that it is therefore important to understand the experiences of men and women as men and women, gendered beings. Goldblatt and Meintjes chose, though, to focus on women's experience alone because "it is women's voices that are most often ignored."⁶⁶ The discussion in their submission focussed primarily on the experiences of women inside the country, devoting only a few pages of the 57-page report to women in the national liberation movements. This was, they stated,

⁶⁵ See description in Ross, *Bearing Witness*. See also TRC Report, Volume 4, p.284

⁶⁶ Goldblatt and Meintjes, *Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. (No page numbers available)

because they were “unsuccessful in [their] attempts to interview women about their experiences in the camps.” This silence is significant, and in their submission, and in a follow-up article they wrote after the TRC, they provide cogent explanations for this silence. Citing women activists still involved in politics, Goldblatt and Meintjes remind their readers that there are powerful disincentives for women to come forward, particularly, paradoxically, women who have ‘succeeded’ and attained high-ranking positions. They quote Jessie Duarte’s incisive commentary: “The Commission is actually asking people to open the empty cupboard and expose that there are no groceries in the cupboard and then they have to live with that element.” Duarte’s words evoke the connection between sex, womanhood, and domesticity, and the violent opening that testifying about rape would entail. And so, beyond Duarte’s analytical point, Goldblatt and Meintjes found no one who would speak on the record about sexual violence in the ANC camps. They do quote one woman who said “At least in prison I knew I was in the enemy camp.” The phrase forces its listeners to imagine unspoken (and therefore, by implication, unspeakable) violence, and via its juxtaposition of terms brings prison, enemies, and the ANC camps into the same framework of meaning. But it is ultimately a phrase of silencing.⁶⁷

Also contained in Goldblatt and Meintjes’ submission is the brief but compelling analysis of the possible causes of the particular violence against women in the camps, performed by Thenjiwe Mtintso. She highlighted the challenging environment of the camps, the psychological damage most people in the camps would have suffered in detention inside South Africa before leaving, the lack of support for people with psychological problems, and

⁶⁷ Goldblatt and Meintjes, *Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*.

gendered social roles and expectations as all potentially precipitating violence against women, including sexual violence. In the absence of more in-depth research, Mtintso's analysis carried the day, at least until the Zuma trial, when new explanations for gender-based violence in exile were put forward. Her analysis was certainly more insightful than what General Andrew Masondo, himself multiply accused of sexual wrong-doings, would later offer in TRC testimony. At the same time, Mtintso's analysis placed the violence against women in the camps squarely in the realm of the sociological – the causes could be found in personal psychology and traumatic circumstance. This reading maintains the events that happened safely outside of history, and outside of meaning or significance – beyond signifying the harm that had accrued to the men that committed acts of violence. Her analysis thus parallels the ANC's accounts of camps violence, with their emphasis on exceptionality, although Mtintso's explanation here rests more on the personal psychology of the assailants than do the accounts of camps violence.⁶⁸ In both cases, there is no meaning intrinsic in the acts other than the pathological nature of the context, or situation.

TRC Testimony

TRC Commissioners took Goldblatt and Meintjes' submission to the TRC seriously. In response to it, the TRC sponsored two conference sessions exploring how they might better address women; the result of these meetings was the decision to hold Special Hearings on

⁶⁸ I should say here that I agree with Mtintso – I think the factors she outlines do a great deal to explain why the exile community suffered from problems of violence against women. But explaining violence against women in the ANC is not the point of this chapter.

Women, which were held in Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town, commencing in July 1997.⁶⁹

The majority of women who testified discussed violence suffered inside South Africa. In her long and compelling speech on the opening of the hearings, Thenjiwe Mtintso, then head of the Gender Commission, made the case for the specificity of women's suffering under apartheid, most particularly, Black women's suffering. Her multi-pronged speech drew on neutral social scientific evidence, reminding her audience that evidence from other armed conflicts, in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Burundi, showed women suffered specific violence in war, and were targeted in specific ways. But she also mobilized more raw and personal language, describing the process of torture, in ways that women specifically experienced it. Women, she reminded the audience, suffered the same torture as men and more – "Women have been made to sit in those invisible chairs. Women have been made to stand the whole day, whether they were menstruating or not. As your blood flows down your legs, security police gained strength from looking at your blood and asking you to drink your own blood."⁷⁰ She cited too the verbal violence endured, using the words "black bitch" and "kaffermeid" [nigger girl], words she had been called, and recounted the ways in which the apartheid torturers would tell women that they were not true activists, just whores to the movement. In recounting these moments, though, Mtintso also narrated her own resistance: she was not there to testify herself, but to introduce the hearings. She said, "I think, Chairperson, the sexual harassment and torment can only be told by other women who are

⁶⁹ TRC Report, Volume 4, p.285

⁷⁰ Thenjiwe Mtintso, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Human Rights Violation - Women's Hearing* (Johannesburg, 1997), 9, <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/special/women/masote.htm>.

here, ready to come to you. It cannot be told by me, because the stories that I carry, I as a Christian say are still my cross, but I still want to carry, for some reason. Perhaps I still want to torture myself.”⁷¹ Her speech was marked, sharply, as distinct from raw testimony.

It is in the same mode of refusal that Mtintso makes oblique reference to the violence in the ANC’s camps. It is worth remembering that by this point, in July 1997, two ANC Commissions had extensively investigated the camps abuses, and mere months before, in May 1997, the ANC had made available information to the TRC which acknowledged violence against women as well as the other incidents of violence.⁷² So, Mtintso was speaking not in a context of mystery or revelation, but to an audience composed, at least in part, of those who already knew the possible truth of what she could reveal. But here again, Mtintso acknowledged, but demurred, saying:

“There is still the experience of the women in the national liberation struggle itself. There is still the experience of those women in the camps, Chairperson. I was in those camps, Chairperson, but that is an experience that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will have to find. It will have to be talked about, because it is yet another experience, different from that of the security police, but having its own dynamic of womanhood.”⁷³

But ultimately, with one exception, women did not discuss their experiences in the camps at the TRC. With the exception of Lita Nombango Mazibuko, who testified at length to her experiences of violence in exile, the TRC heard no specific testimony about violence against women in the camps, and as a result, could not produce a detailed analysis of these abuses.

⁷¹ Mtintso, *TRC - Women’s Hearing*.

⁷² “ANC admits to torture, executions, sexual abuse of women” *The Guardian (1959-2003)*; May 13, 1997; ProQuest Newsstand pg. 11

⁷³ Mtintso, *TRC - Women’s Hearing*, 10.

The only vivid accounts of sexual abuse in exile came from the testimony of Lita Nombango Mazibuko, an ANC member whose first work had involved helping people flee into exile in the 1980s. Mazibuko had been based inside South Africa, and helped facilitate 'escape routes' out of the country, channelling willing volunteers into nearby Swaziland. In 1988, an expedition she had organized was caught by the South African forces, and some cadres died in the ensuing struggle. As a result, Ms. Mazibuko came under suspicion of being a spy or double-dealer, who had potentially turned in her own expedition. She was then kidnapped, tortured, and interrogated over a period of months by ANC cadres – it seems she was already outside of South Africa when she was detained.⁷⁴ The late date of these events, 1988, is a tragic indictment of the failures of the ANC to reform its security services, even after the 1985 Kabwe Conference, usually cited as a moment of reckoning that crystallized reforms.⁷⁵ Mazibuko had never heard of, according to her testimony, the Motsuenyane Commission, and therefore did not testify there.⁷⁶

Mazibuko's account is striking both in its ruptured and traumatized narrative, and in the violence it describes. In these regards, it resonates strongly with accounts given of the abuses in the camps, situations where (male) victims also described seemingly random abductions and detentions, interspersed with torture, interspersed with unexpected

⁷⁴ TRC Report, Volume 4, 1998, p309

⁷⁵ See Callinicos, "Oliver Tambo and the Dilemma of the Camp Mutinies in Angola in the Eighties"; African N, *Further Submissions And Responses By The African National Congress To Questions Raised By The Commission For Truth And Reconciliation*, May 12, 1997, <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/submit/anc2.htm>; ANC Second Submission

⁷⁶ Lita Nombango Mazibuko, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission - Women's Hearings* (Johannesburg, 1997), 11, www.justice.gov.za/Trc/special/women/mazibuko.htm.

release, and reintegration into normal ANC work.⁷⁷ These testimonies too are significant in their collapsed agency, and in the extent to which they convey the massive confusion and incoherence of those subject to erratic and prolonged detention in multiple sites by the ANC. In the case of Mazibuko's testimony, her evidence is no less bodily than theirs, but the torture she describes is occasionally, though not entirely, sexual in nature. She describes being kidnapped by ANC comrades, being tied to a pole and immersed in a ditch of water for hours in Zambia, then being smuggled over the Mozambican border. In vividly physical, if terse, language, she recounts begging to be able to blow her nose, and begging for a change of clothes. In Maputo, Mozambique, she was made to lie in a hole for four days, with no food. In a confusing series of events, she recounts being flown from Mozambique to Zambia, and there being detained in a variety of locations, including a spell from December to March where she was kept underground and alone, fed only once a day. During this time, she wore the same clothing, and had no opportunity to bathe. At one occasion, she was taken above ground and beaten. In this moment, she explained, she felt her treatment was more due to competition between her two male jailers, who wanted her to pick one of them to have sex with – rather than her alleged betrayal of her comrades.⁷⁸ Later, she was taken to another prison. Eventually she had the chance to meet Comrade Zola Skweyiya, a high-ranking figure in the ANC, who told her she was exonerated. In uneven temporality, she describes being released and baking cakes for Comrade Skweyiya, being trusted with cooking. Stepping back in her narrative though, she acknowledges being raped at another prison in Zambia, saying, "I don't know how to describe this."

⁷⁷ See Mwezi Twala and Ed Benard, *Mbokodo: Inside MK : Mwezi Twala : A Soldier's Story* (Johannesburg: J. Ball Publishers, 1994); Paul Trehwela, *Inside Quatro: Uncovering the Exile History of the Anc and Swapo* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2009).

⁷⁸ Mazibuko, *TRC - Women's Hearings*, 6.

It is at this point in her account that the Commissioners of the TRC intervene.

Commissioner Mkhize, a woman, asks her, “was it a principle or a rule of prison that women would be violated in this manner?”, and Mazibuko replies in the negative. This question itself can be seen as searching for a narrative: the commissioner is asking if rape was the rule inside the ANC, the underlying truth of women’s experiences. Mazibuko resists this narrativization. Indeed, she cites instead ANC policy to the contrary, explaining:

“We used to be in camps and we would be told that men do not have the right to violate us. You could only get involved if you wanted to, but if you didn’t want to you couldn’t. But it did happen that at that Sun City [prison] one Desmond raped me nine times.”⁷⁹

For Mazibuko, her assault was specifically not the result of ‘policy.’ She detailed further sexual torture by another “comrade,” Tebogo, “who was also very young.” She testified:

He raped me and he also cut my genitals. He cut through my genitals and they were cut open and he put me in certain room and he tied my hands, my legs, they were apart, he also tied my neck, and he would pour Dettol over my genitals. The pain that I experienced I have never spoken about.⁸⁰

After these incidents, she recounts, she was assaulted again, hung by her neck from a tree.

But she did not die, and was eventually moved to Tanga Prison, in Tanzania, where the conditions were better. After a year, an ANC tribunal came and found her not guilty, and she was released.

But, she recounts, she was sexually assaulted again after her return to South Africa, when she went to Shell House (the ANC headquarters) to seek out compensation for her house in Swaziland, which had been sold out from under her, and all her belongings taken, when she

⁷⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 9.

was abducted into detention. Although some, including Jacob Zuma, helped her there, another man, Comrade Mdu, took her to see a house (with the promise it could be hers), and then held her there, and raped her overnight, at knifepoint.

When asked by the Commissioners what should be done, either to prevent other women from suffering similar violence, or to compensate her, her only demand for redress is shelter and compensation for her lost household property. “If there could be some consideration,” she said, “I would appreciate to get a shelter. ... If I could be restituted and get the things that I need or that are necessary to subsist I would appreciate that.”⁸¹ At the time of testifying, it seems that Mazibuko was impoverished, without resources and semi-homeless.

Although it has not travelled far, and has not been widely cited or grappled with, as far as I am aware, Mazibuko’s testimony nevertheless stands out as the only direct account at the TRC by a woman of abuse in exile.⁸² One reason, perhaps, that she could make this account is that Mazibuko was already, in her own telling, out of the fold. Mazibuko had not risen high in ANC structures, and never occupied a prominent position. Therefore, she had little to lose. In this regard, her position is perhaps comparable to that of the former detainees of RECOC, who were already expelled from the ANC, and could therefore speak against it.

⁸¹ Ibid., 10.

⁸² As far as I have found, only Goldblatt and Meintjes 1997 and Antje Krog mention her testimony, although excerpts from it also appear in the TRC Final Report.

But Mazibuko's account has not been read alongside these other detainees' testimonies. The most critical accounts of the ANC's abuses, Stephen Ellis's *External Mission* and Trehwela's *Inside Quatro*, make no reference to her testimony.⁸³ Equally, the more exculpatory pieces that emphasize the security challenges the ANC faced also exclude her testimony. And, as we shall see, the later pieces on sex abuse in exile around Zuma's rape trial also leave her testimony unmentioned. Arguably, her gender, and the centrality of sex in her experience, disqualify her from the purportedly gender-neutral but in fact male-centred accounts of Ellis and Trehwela. More contentiously and hesitantly, it's possible to speculate that her status as an outsider (an accused spy) tainted her still in ANC circles, preventing her recuperation within the self-critical ANC literature.⁸⁴

But another speculative explanation presents itself. Perhaps it was easier for Mazibuko to come forward precisely because the violence she suffered was 'outside of the family'. She suffered torture and rape because she was potentially 'outside' the ANC, accused of being an agent. Therefore, the violence she suffered could be posed differently, not as a distinct problem within the ANC, a new problem, but another manifestation, a variation (that of rape) on a problem already made extremely visible since 1990, that of ANC security service abuses. It is notable, though, that scholarly accounts addressing the security services abuses, leave out the question of gendered experiences, and make no reference to Mazibuko's particular experience. In this way, the gendered-male experiences of ANC

⁸³ Mwezi Twala and Benard, *Mbokodo*; Trehwela, *Inside Quatro*.

⁸⁴ See Fiona Ross's discussion of Yvonne Khutwane, who also suffered loss of political legitimacy through probably false allegations. See Ross, *Bearing Witness*. Chapter 4.

detainees stay firmly and safely in the realm of the ‘public’, and avoid any risk of being seen as ‘domestic’.⁸⁵

Perpetrator Testimony?

In March 1998, General Andrew Masondo testified *in camera*, in a “Section 29” hearing.⁸⁶

The majority of TRC hearings were open to the public, and hosted audiences. In addition, many were televised and broadcast in South Africa and internationally. The majority of these public testimonies are available on the TRC website for ongoing public access. Most of these testimonies were also voluntary – they relied on people choosing to come forward.

Section 29 hearings were investigative – a particular incident compelled the commissioners to conduct an investigation into its circumstances, and to invite witnesses to testify (usually accompanied by a legal team). Most Section 29 hearings were also held in camera – secretly. This means that testimony from them is, in many cases, not available for public access.

Masondo’s testimony, which I cite here, has been made available on an internet ‘leaks’ site.

It should be noted that this testimony is technically not publicly available. Therefore, there is the possibility that the information contained in the document has been tampered with in some way. Equally, it may be a violation of Masondo’s rights to use it. However, he is deceased, and none of the information I cite is very sensitive, and most of it is ‘public’ knowledge already.

⁸⁵ E.g. Callinicos, “Oliver Tambo and the Dilemma of the Camp Mutinies in Angola in the Eighties”; Stephen Ellis, *External Mission* (South Africa: Jonathan Ball, 2012).

⁸⁶ See – TRC Act - <http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/acts/1995-034.pdf>. In the terms of a section 29 investigation, the TRC issued former State President PW Botha with a subpoena to answer questions about state-sponsored violence under apartheid. He failed to appear, and criminal charges were laid against him. See SAHA TRC Guidebook, pg. 27 http://www.saha.org.za/resources/docs/PDF/Projects/trc_directory.pdf and also discussion in A. Krog, *Country of My Skull*. (Ironically, “Section 29” was also the section of the apartheid state’s Internal Security Act which allowed for indefinite detention - http://sabctrc.saha.org.za/glossary/section_29_of_the_internal_security_act_no_74_198.htm?tab=hearings)

Masondo, by this time a General in the new South African National Defence Forces, had served as MK Commissar from 1977-1985 and 1991-1994. He had been on Robben Island for thirteen years (arrested for MK activities in 1963) before entering exile, and once in exile, received training in Moscow for the ANC. His TRC testimony mostly focussed on his work as Commissar, as his name was closely associated with abuses that took place at the ANC's Quatro prison. Indeed, as the Commissioners pointed out, the ANC's own internal Stuart Report had, in 1984, recommended Masondo for particular sanction, and he had been removed from his Commissar role as a result.⁸⁷ (In what may have been an error in judgment, he was redeployed to the SOMAFSCO school.)

Masondo's in camera testimony, which took an entire day and once transcribed amounted to 69 single-spaced pages, focussed mostly on the alleged abuses at Quatro, the judicial systems the ANC used to determine guilt of the accused, and the accessibility of defence and appeal procedures for these accused, as well as the role of the Commissar in all of this.⁸⁸

The Commission was most interested both in Masondo's personal role, and in the information he could provide about the role of the security services, chiefly whether or not they "patrolled the ideological terrain" within the ANC – i.e., if people were detained, tortured, or executed for political reasons.⁸⁹ Masondo for the most part denied that abuses took place, or explained that when they did, he was not present to witness them. He insisted

⁸⁷ "Andrew Masondo,"

<http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/andrew-masondo> (accessed April 7, 2014); Andrew Masondo, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Section 29 Hearing, "in Camera"* (Johannesburg, South Africa, 1998), <http://cryptome.org/za-masondo.txt>; Stuart, *Stuart Commission Report*.

⁸⁸ Other scholars have also cited this testimony.

⁸⁹ Masondo, *TRC Section 29 Hearing*, 28.

that accused cadres were well-represented, that most of those detained needed to be detained, and that the security services in general did not commit significant 'excesses'. His testimony was frustrating to the extent that at its conclusion, one commissioner observed, "I therefore yearn for a day when you yourself would come before us and say I did it, I did not do it."⁹⁰ The Commissioners' line of questioning here reveals the search for a narrative: the Commissioners were interested to confirm or deny the allegations made in *Searchlight* and elsewhere, that the abuses in the ANC's camps were 'political' in nature. In other words, they wanted to know whether or not they were motivated by ideological sanction. The question they were seeking to answer was if the ANC had been using its detention centres to punish dissidents, or those who criticized ANC policy.

Given the Commission's focus on the camps abuses, Masondo's testimony seldom touched on specific questions of violence against women, but when it did, he was equally unforthcoming. He provides what seems to be the only account of the type of justice that was rendered when rape accusations were made. He described an instance of a woman making a rape allegation against a fellow cadre. At prompting from the Commissioners, who wanted to know how such complaints were investigated, and if justice was done (particularly, if the accused was allowed to be represented and defended, or if he was just summarily executed), Masondo explained:

Now, we took that very seriously. You rape a woman, it is keeps. We said because it is a serious matter, I was there myself, we brought in some of the you know, the whoever was the witnesses, I mean of this thing and we listened to this. And ultimately we came to the conclusion that in this particular case, it wasn't true. The chap was left.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Masondo, *TRC Section 29 Hearing*.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

Interesting here is the fact that rape allegations were made and investigated – something that Zuma’s rape accuser’s testimony would later reiterate. Equally, the Commissioners were interested in the justice done – or not – to the alleged rapists (the question of whether or not they faced a fair trial), rather than the crimes committed against women. This uneasy erasure of the women’s bodies, names, and experiences again points to the failure to reconcile public, ‘political’ crimes with intimate sexual crimes. Neither witness nor questioners can fit these two things into one narrative stream of interrogation.

Later, though, the Commissioners turned to the question of violence against women.

Questioned on this, Masondo insisted that protection of women was part of the military code of conduct in exile. He noted,

When you say you are at war, obviously even militaries have rules. That is why we said nobody should rape women. That is why we said nobody should point even an unloaded gun to somebody. At the base of this thing was to preserve the life of our people.⁹²

Paralleling the ANC’s emphasis on ‘violence as exception’, Masondo affirms that the ANC’s regime of law forbade violence against women – conceptually linked here with the threat of an unloaded gun. Violence against women is in this posing a disciplinary offence, something potentially (but not actually) dangerous, a violation of the rules of a particular military.

In a roundabout way, Masondo continues to affirm the efficacy of ANC justice in exile when he explains that he himself was only formally accused of sexual abuse once. While there were, he admits, rumours of additional sexual misconduct, he was only investigated once –

⁹² Ibid., 33.

and in that instance exonerated. In a circular manoeuvre, he explains that ANC justice worked, because it found him not guilty when he was not guilty. In his own words,

You know, I for instance at one time there is this allegation that I used to misuse girls. I should have been called just once, and you can go to the whole records of this thing, you won't find that I was called for that. The only time that these people said I had impregnated a girl, when I was in Mazimbo, they checked, they found that there was no substance whatsoever.⁹³

Later in the same afternoon, he further attributed these allegations to those jealous of his power, again reminding his audience that he was only formally investigated once:

I said it is said that I had misused some of the women cadres, and the strangest thing, I must have been a very, very terrible person, where I have been misusing women cadres, the National Executive doesn't even call me once to say, Masondo, you have been doing one, two, three. You see, I mean you see, this is the one I told you, I told you about the case where in Mazimbo, it was alleged that I had actually impregnated a girl, a girl who had only gone into my house once with other girls. Now, that one was made public that time, and it was investigated, and ultimately they did not find any truth in that.⁹⁴

Once again, the ANC's failure to find him guilty is held up as evidence of the organization's success at criminal justice. Asked about if women could complain if abuses took place, Masondo said they could complain to the President (Tambo), Mzwai Piliso, or himself, as well as the Women's League, which he explained visited the camps. Clearly, his intention was to demonstrate that there were institutions present for addressing such problems. In this framing, violence against women has no particular meaning. It is something "bad", but it can be dealt with, and has no greater symptomatic meaning.

It is worth quoting a long and convoluted passage from Masondo in full, particularly as parts of it were used in the TRC's Final Report. The Commissioners questioned him about

⁹³ Ibid., 36.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 59.

the “misuse” of women – not rape, per se, but allegations that women were made sexually available to the Security forces, at their request. They made specific reference to one instance, where a man was alleged to have committed suicide because his girlfriend had been taken by the Security forces. Masondo’s reply acquitted the Security men, blaming instead camp commanders, but also naturalized the commodification and exploitation of women. He said:

In Angola, there are at one time 22 women in a group of more than 1 000 people. I am sure you would have a competition amongst people, there was a time in fact, there was an allegation, not that Security, but Commanders, were misusing women. ... there is a possibility that within the African National Congress, that type of thing would have happened, considering the ratio of the women to the men, it would be strange in fact, even if I didn't know about it, it would have been strange that they, the women themselves would probably in some cases, use the fact that they are few, to get certain advantages, and other people who would want to have them, would possibly do something to try and cut a favour. But that type of thing I must also put into context, that such incidents would have been there, but to give the impression that women in the camps were having a terrible time, I can assure you that for instance, the men in the camps used to make a lot of sacrifices so that for instance women should be treated better. But that other thing is the normal thing, that even in society sometimes, but the law of supply and demand, must have created some problems.⁹⁵

Sociologist Tristan Borer, referring to the elements of this that were quoted in the Final Report, describes this testimony as chilling, but it would perhaps be more accurate to underscore its extraordinary misogyny and casual erasure of sexual assault. Coerced access to women, in this account, is rendered in terms of commodity exchange, via the metaphor of the invisible hand of the market. Along the same lines, women are not “used” but “misused”, a turn of phrase relying on the idea that there is a correct way to use women.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 62.

In sum, Masondo's testimony could have been a site of linkage between the camps violence, and violence against women. He certainly discussed both in his testimony. Instead, however, the two are held separate, linked only by the question of justice – the justice available to the accused rapists. While the Commission was keen to elicit information about whether or not women had the right to complain if they suffered abuse, most of their questioning focused on the rights of the accused to a fair trial, and the general administration of justice in exile. And their over-riding interest was in the camps scandal – in discovering whether the abuses in the camps were the result of political, or ideological, dissent. Violence against women, both Masondo and the Commissioners seemed to agree, was something objectionable, but open to simple remedies of making complaints. Neither party was interested in considering whether violence against women was systematic, or the result of deeper inequities – although ironically, Masondo's grim testimony inadvertently painted a picture of exactly such inequities, when he posed women as commodities to be competed over.

IV. The TRC's Final Report

The final report of the TRC, published in 1998, consists of six volumes. Of these, one chapter, Chapter Ten of Volume Four, addresses women's experiences, drawing mainly on testimonies from the "Special Hearings on Women". The account is a sensitive one, making broad admission of the TRC's own limitations, acknowledging that in not considering "gross violations of human rights" more broadly, they are sidelining many women's experiences.

In discussing the gender-specific abuses in the ANC camps, the Commission is brief but critical. They cite Masondo's comment about "the law of supply and demand", and quote some of the more painful details from Lita Mazibuko's testimony. They also quote Mtintso's reference to sexual coercion. But coverage of the abuse of women in the ANC camps amounts to only six out of the 144 paragraphs of the chapter. Making reference to the ANC's failure in its own submissions to discuss abuses against women in depth, the Report observes: "In light of these silences, Commissioner Hlengiwe Mkhize remarked that 'the submission failed women.'"⁹⁶Insofar as TRC offered reconciliation at all (and in fairness, most believe it didn't), women's suffering within the ANC barely featured.

The TRC and Different Violences

By contrast, the TRC Final Report was able to devote many pages to the abuses of (mostly male) detainees in the camps. Volume Two contains 180 paragraphs of discussion on the abuses committed in the camps, detailing accounts of executions, detentions, and torture within the ANC's exile locations. Again in contrast to the experiences of women, and the ANC's attention to the question, the TRC Final Report in this instance commended the ANC, acknowledging with gratitude the ANC's openness in reporting on its own past problems.⁹⁷

Rape and sexual abuse are not explicitly discussed here, although one woman's testimony of torture, including sexual abuse, is included (Paragraph 179, p.365). Instead, via the formulation of the Report, women's suffering is discussed in the specific "Women" chapter

⁹⁶ TRC Final Report, Volume 4, 1998, p.297

⁹⁷ TRC Final Report, Volume 2.

in Volume Four, while the ANC's camps abuses are found in Volume Two, alongside the findings against other political formations. At the outset of the "Gender" chapter, the Report noted the obvious problem, that placing gender in its own chapter may have the unintended effect of marginalizing women's issues – "sidelining, rather than mainstreaming, the issue."⁹⁸ Here, we can note that the crimes of sexual violence are relegated to the category of "women" instead of "political" – a decisive act of categorization, relegating these considerations to the personal or private, instead of the public and political.

Of course, the TRC's decision to focus on gender-neutral, mostly male, victims in its discussion of the ANC's camps abuses is not unreasonable. First of all, most of the victims were men, as men made up the majority of the residents of the camps. Secondly, on a more taxonomic level, the abuses in the camps scandals could be classified politically: the allegations were specifically against ANC officials, mainly those in the Security department. These assailants were alleged to have acted with specific purpose – to extract information and confessions from accused agents or spies, or to punish those found guilty of offenses against the ANC. A significant focus of the TRC investigation was to determine whether or not torture was official or systematic ANC policy, and to what extent top officials condoned or encouraged torture.

The Commission ultimately found that the ANC did not use torture in a systematic or widespread way. They found instead that torture "was used by a limited number of ANC members who were members of the security department and in specific time periods. It

⁹⁸ TRC Final Report, Volume 4, p.289

was not an accepted practice within the ANC and was not used for most of the three decades with which the Commission is concerned.”⁹⁹ Nevertheless, they did also find that the ANC did not act sufficiently to prevent torture, and that the organization was guilty of gross violations of human rights in conducting torture, and in executing people on the basis of confessions and information acquired through torture.¹⁰⁰ The very fact of these findings gave a logic to the abuses – abuses that victims testified about and the ANC admitted to. The logic of the TRC – that abuses occurred under difficult situations, in which security officers got out of hand and committed “excesses” – is the same logic the ANC offered via its internal investigations. The violence against women was similarly not found to be strategic or motivated, although the TRC does not make this finding explicitly. Despite the presumable commonality of intent, then – that violence against women could also be said to have occurred, without sufficient preventive effort from the leadership – this violence did not figure in these discussions within the Report.

Admitting that it makes sense, on some level, to exclude abuse against women from the discussion of camps abuses – it is nevertheless worth noting two effects of this exclusion. First, women can be forgotten in the discussion of camps abuses, and secondly, the abuse of women, what we might call “gender-based violence”, is allowed to be non-political, and ‘personal’.

In opening discussion on ANC abuses, the TRC Final Report commends the ANC for its openness, citing the internal investigations the ANC did, and the high degree of cooperation

⁹⁹ TRC Report 1998 Volume 2, p.362

¹⁰⁰ TRC Report 1998 Volume 2, p.366

of the ANC with the TRC in submitting documents and sending witnesses.¹⁰¹ This discussion contrasts sharply with the condemnation of silence regarding violence against women made in Volume Four,¹⁰² but the writers of the Report do not draw this equation. The openness to discussing camps abuses, and the silence around abuse of women, are left disconnected, despite the fact that both involve the same geographical locations, actors, and time periods. This silence affirms the uneasy place of sexual abuse in the Commission – could rape be considered a political crime? As ANC member Jessie Duarte mused in the Submission on Gender, could someone receive amnesty for rape if they defined it as a political act?¹⁰³ This question was never tested in the TRC, because no one ever admitted to rape, and therefore, no one requested amnesty for it. But the very structuring of the Report denies the possibility, relegating rape to something personal and to do with “women” (although firmly accepting it as a gross violation of human rights), as distinct from other crimes. In other words, the victims of rape were equal to other victims, but those who committed rape were not necessarily the same as other perpetrators of human rights violations, as the act was not captured in one static category.

Reconciliation and Interpretation

Did the TRC put to rest, or reconcile, the camps abuses in the ANC’s and South Africa’s history? Many have argued that the TRC, and the ANC’s own processes, did accomplish this. Most recently, ANC stalwart, former exile and MP, and current NEC member Pallo Jordan advanced this idea. With reference to President Jacob Zuma’s present failures to take

¹⁰¹ TRC Final Report, Volume 2, p.325

¹⁰² TRC Final Report, Volume 4, p. 297

¹⁰³ Quoted in Goldblatt and Meintjes, “Dealing with the Aftermath.”

responsibility for the most recent corruption scandal of his presidency, Jordan wrote that the ANC had a great history of accountability, citing specifically the abuses in exile. “The ANC leadership,” he wrote, “accepted collective responsibility for the human rights abuses committed by its members during the armed struggle.”¹⁰⁴ Holding up the ANC’s past successes at admitting its errors, Jordan condemns Zuma’s inability to make similar amends, and similar reconciliations.

Jordan is not the only current ANC member to point to the camps scandals as questions that have been solved. Albie Sachs, a prominent jurist in South Africa today, who had a long involvement with the ANC in exile, recently gave a powerful interview on Canadian radio. In this interview, he directly addressed the past abuses of the ANC – he described the moment he, as a legal advisor, was summoned by ANC President Oliver Tambo for advice on how they should treat spies they had caught in their ranks (this would have been in the early 1980s). He recalled his feelings of shock when Tambo told him, “We do use torture.” But Sachs gave this interview in the spirit of celebration – the moment of Tambo’s revelation was a turning point, a moment where Sachs, and others, could then intervene to generate a code of conduct that would prevent further abuses. His interview posted the revelation of abuse, and its correction, as a moment in the ANC’s history that strengthened it.

¹⁰⁴ Pallo Jordan, “ANC must display moral courage over Nkandla”, March 27, 2014, *Business Day*, <http://www.bdlive.co.za/opinion/columnists/2014/03/27/anc-must-display-moral-courage-over-nkandla>, Accessed April 3, 2014. Jordan’s choice to cite this history of reconciliation is particularly poignant given that he himself was detained and subject to humiliating treatment by the security forces in exile.

Significantly, the interview also included Sachs' criticism of the current incarnation of the ANC, presently sunk into scandal on the eve of an election.¹⁰⁵

Equally, two notable men who were prominent in the ranks of MK, Ronnie Kasrils and Barry Gilder, have addressed the issue of camps violence in their published memoirs; both articulated the same position, that the abuses that occurred were exceptional. The differences between the accounts of the abuses in the works of Kasrils and Gilder in fact point to the changing position of the ANC in the post-apartheid period. Kasrils, whose memoir was published more than a decade before Gilder's, addresses the violence relatively quickly. Kasrils, it should be noted, occupied the upper echelons of MK's power circle, and was also a prominent member of the South African Communist Party, which played an important role inside the ANC in exile. Kasrils travelled extensively throughout the African bases of the ANC, and was heavily involved in the training of ANC cadre in the Soviet Union. While his memoir admits to tensions generated by the new arrivals following the Soweto uprising of 1976 (which many argue helped precipitate the eventual mutinies and security crackdowns), and he acknowledges that some abuses may have occurred, he is most concerned with minimizing both the extent of violence that occurred, and his possible role in it. This last was particularly important, as some RECOC members named Kasrils directly in their testimonies. In response, a later edition of Kasrils' memoirs contains, in an appendix, sworn affidavits of other MK cadres who were present in the military camps at

¹⁰⁵ See interview, CBC The Current, April 3, 2014. <http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent/episode/2014/04/03/soft-vengeance-the-story-of-albie-sachs/> See also recent documentary – *Soft Vengeance: Albie Sachs and the New South Africa*, 2014. <http://www.softvengeancefilm.org/MAIN.html>

the same time as him, affirming his innocence.¹⁰⁶ For Kasrils, his chief concern was to call into question the legitimacy of complaints against him, and maintain his innocence, without denying that some abuses took place.

Barry Gilder, writing more than a decade after the first issue of Kasrils' book, frames the camps abuses differently. Gilder is a less well-known figure than Kasrils, although post-exile he worked at a high level inside the state security forces (a ministry Kasrils was also involved with). In exile, Gilder was one of few white Afrikaners to train with MK. While he makes much of his musical presence (he was a singer, and travelled and sang with various ANC cultural groups), he also writes proudly about his military work in his recent (2012) memoir. His account emphasizes the comradeship and the political commitment of ANC cadres, and the devotion to "politics" evinced by senior leadership. Strikingly, he gives a vivid account of an ANC meeting in which "excesses" by the security forces were addressed. Comrade Mzwai Piliso, who was named by internal ANC documents as complicit in abuses, was present at the meeting, and at the meeting, Gilder recalls, Piliso was called to account and publicly (within the ANC) censured for his actions. Gilder recalls him – "He still sits expressionless and attentive, almost at attention, among his now-former subordinates. He has known what was coming, and he has come to face the music in the presence of the many cadres who call him *'Tata'*."¹⁰⁷ For Gilder, this moment provides an explicit moral lesson, a contrast between the ANC of exile, and the ANC of today. He writes, "I wonder, as this recollection now forms itself decades later, whether there are many (or any) cadres of

¹⁰⁶ See Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*. Trehwela's work also levels numerous accusations against other white communists, more broadly.

¹⁰⁷ Gilder, *Songs and Secrets*, 175.

today's ANC who would take such news with such dignity. ... I miss comrade Mzwai and his ilk."¹⁰⁸Gilder's account is a striking example of the ways memories of the exile past are deployed – here, the revelation of abuses in exile is inverted to a positive value. As in Albie Sachs' interview, for Gilder, the moment of discovery of abuses became a time when the ANC proved its moral fibre by addressing "the rot". Like Pallo Jordan, Gilder wields the spectre of the camps abuses – and the ANC's strength at addressing them – as a tool of condemnation of the current ANC. In this way, the camps abuses become figured as a positive experience in the history of the ANC – a difficult period, but one that enabled the ANC to gain strength.

Critics of the ANC perform an inverse manoeuvre with the same information. In the years since the TRC, Paul Trewhela published his *Inside Quatro*, providing fresh detail into the abuses committed. Much of the information in it reflects what was already published in *Searchlight*, but it nevertheless provides new and unpleasant details about the suffering detainees experienced. Equally, historian Stephen Ellis published his newest account of the ANC's exile years, *External Mission*, in 2013, continuing discussion of criminality and violence within the ANC in exile. In addition, a series of journalists and commentators have condemned the ANC of today as continuing to embody or live out the deformations born out of the violence of exile. Critical works on the arms deal (a corruption scandal that began in the late 1990s and has returned to haunt the ANC many times in the ensuing years) have emphasized that the ANC's flawed internal political culture was shaped by the violence of

¹⁰⁸ Gilder, *Songs and Secrets*, 175.

exile.¹⁰⁹ The most comprehensive book on the arms deal devotes a chapter to the ANC's exile years, entitled "A questionable legacy." While in fairness, the chapter gives much attention to the criminality and corruption that were rife within the apartheid state, it also details thirty years of political disagreements within the exiled ANC. It specifically cites the security forces in the 1980s as "the archetypal Gestapo-style security branch, with agents everywhere, surrounded by mystery and intrigue, and unaccountable to any beyond a small group at the top of the leadership corps."¹¹⁰ The anti-communism that inflects their account is clear, and is shared by many commentators (including Stephen Ellis.¹¹¹) Indeed, conservative political commentator RW Johnson went so far as to attribute the 2012 Marikana massacre to the ANC's long history of connections with Soviet-style politics, an allusion to the supposedly irretrievably violent character of the ANC's exile years.¹¹² In all of these accounts, the ANC's exile past is read as holding the key to the essential truth of the organization.

In a more nuanced direction, historian Todd Cleveland has argued that the ANC's obfuscation around the abuses committed, and its efforts to prevent the publication of the TRC's report in 1998, amounted to re-traumatization for the victims who had testified. The ANC in this way, Cleveland argues, failed to allow these victims' stories to enter the national

¹⁰⁹ See for example Paul Holden and Hennie Van Vuuren, *The Devil In The Detail How the Arms Deal Changed Everything*. (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2011).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.; see also Andrew Feinstein, *After the Party*, Second Edition (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2007).

¹¹¹ Pallo Jordan has explicitly accused Ellis of having been actively anti-Communist, to the point of being supportive of the apartheid regime, in the 1980s. The recent furor around Mandela's death and the SACP's revelation that he was a member of the Central Committee revealed the extent to which Cold War paranoia still shapes the narration of these histories.

¹¹² RW Johnson, "After Marikana," *LRB Blog*, August 19, 2012, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2012/08/19/hsfbilliafrica-com/after-marikana/>. R.W. Johnson has, of course, been using this argument to account for every development of post-apartheid politics since the unbanning of the ANC.

narrative, and denied its own wrong-doings, antithetical to the spirit of the Truth Commission.¹¹³

These two positions – that either the ANC has fully reconciled itself, or that it has failed to admit its violent origins – foreclose analysis. Each position renders impossible an adequate imaginary of the exiled past: neither creates a frame that can include both the brilliant and compassionate cadres we know were there, and the Mthembu or Masondo or other unnamed perpetrators dripping molten plastic onto bare flesh, or cutting genitals, or burying people alive. These actors cannot be reconciled by either mode of explanation, each of which holds either that the ANC was good (but a few mistakes were made), or that it was bad (and the mistakes were not mistakes but a pattern). In one, the ANC is irredeemable, and in the other, it is not in need of redemption. Both approaches have eliminated richer historical analysis, which would take into account the politics, the commitments, and the dangerous circumstances the ANC faced, in order to produce not a balanced account (because what happened was manifestly unbalanced), but a critical and political reading of the crisis within the ANC that allowed these abuses. Recent historical work by Hugh Macmillan and Steve Davis has been the first to shed real light on these difficult questions, with Davis underlining the importance of generational tensions in elevating tensions between the security forces, rank and file, and ANC leadership and elites, and Macmillan

¹¹³ Todd Cleveland, “‘We Still Want the Truth’: The ANC’s Angolan Detention Camps and Post-Apartheid Memory,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25, no. 1 (2005): 63–78.

analysing the significant influence of the politics of the host nations in shaping security and insecurity within the ANC.¹¹⁴

But whether or not the ANC has reconciled its camps abuses, none would claim that the story of the abuses of women in the camps has been adequately accounted for. Despite hearings at the TRC, and media coverage, the questions of the abuse of women were not framed in a narrative way until the trial of Zuma, nearly a decade later. In the interim, one book was published, which can be read as a sharp indictment of exile sexual politics, and which many feminist critics writing about Zuma's trial would later cite.

V. A Literary Digression: I Speak to the Silent

In 2004, two years before the allegations about Zuma came to light, Mtutuzeli Nyoka published *I Speak to the Silent*. Nyoka's is not the only book to deal with exile, or the TRC – indeed, there are many¹¹⁵ – but his is the only to address directly questions of sexual violence in exile, although he does not mention the ANC by name.

The novel is written as a fictional memoir by Walter Hambile Kondile, a self-professed “simple man,” whose daughter Sindiswa has become involved in “politics” and fled into exile. Although much of the novel consists of Kondile's descriptions of his own childhood,

¹¹⁴ Davis, “The ANC: From Freedom Radio to Radio Freedom”; Hugh Macmillan, “The African National Congress of South Africa in Zambia: The Culture of Exile and the Changing Relationship with Home, 1964–1990* *,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2009): 303–29.

¹¹⁵ See for example, Mandla Langa, *A Rainbow on the Paper Sky* (London: Kliptown Books, 1989); Lewis Nkosi, *Underground People* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2002); Mongane Wally Serote, *Scatter the Ashes and Go* (Braamfontein [South Africa]: Ravan, 2002); Gillian Slovo, *Red Dust* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

and life in the small Eastern Cape town of Alice, with its privations and racialized inequalities, the story is driven by Kondile's hunt for his daughter. All he knows is that she entered student politics in the 1970s, and then fled into exile (on learning this, his wife naively asks, "where is exile?"). When Kondile himself enters "exile" (in this case, the nation of Lesotho) in search of his daughter, he discovers that his daughter was raped by a respected "struggle hero", Rayond Mbete, and died as the result of a septic abortion as she sought to rid herself of an unwanted pregnancy stemming from the assault. Kondile returns home unbearably saddened by the news, and descends into alcoholism and domestic abuse, only to find peace some years later, when he murders the man who raped his daughter. The book ultimately finds resolution after Kondile serves time in prison for the crime, gets pardoned, and has the chance to see the wife of his daughter's rapist testify at the Truth Commission – where she admits to her husband's sins.

Overtly, the book is a condemnation of silence, following the same logic as the TRC. At multiple instances, the narrator insists on the importance of 'breaking the silence'. Indeed, in describing why he is telling his story, the narrator explains, "It was a desire to speak to the silent. To awaken them to the simple but salient fact that iniquity is not only the work of the evil among us, but also a product of the silence of those who bear witness to it."¹¹⁶ In other words, the narrator condemns those who are silent in the face of injustice, and invites them to join him in speaking. The logic of the narrative recapitulates this argument, many times over: Kondile's daughter enters exile because he and his generation were "silent" in the face of oppression. As he tells himself when he discovers her death, he "had never told

¹¹⁶ Mtutuzeli Nyoka, *I Speak to the Silent* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004), 8.

her how [he] really felt about the injustice we suffered at home.”¹¹⁷ Equally, as her young husband tells him, “Many people, including you, did nothing. That is why people like Sindi and I ended up in this country.”¹¹⁸ The narrative is punishing: Sindiswa is pushed into exile and later death because of the silence of the older generation in the face of oppression. She is also killed by another silence – the silence of Raymond Mbete’s wife, whom, she later admits, was well aware of his abuses of young women, but was too afraid to intervene. The same is true of the others in the exile community – because they depended on Mbete, and feared his sanction, they tolerated his sexual abuse. Sindiswa is not the only woman to die as a result of this, the novel demonstrates. Kondile kills Mbete because he will not admit to his assault – he attempts denial and justification via an arrogant lecture about the hardships of exile and war. The point the novel makes again and again is that silence must be broken. The novel is in this sense a *mea culpa* of an older generation, whom, Nyoka’s narrator alleges, stayed silent in face of oppression. The events in the novel form one allegorical instantiation of a paradigmatic case of silencing and its pernicious effects.

But what to make of the inclusion of rape as the driving plot point? Feminist scholars have pointed to the novel as one of the few that courageously address rape and violence against women.¹¹⁹ Helene Strauss, for example, reads it as “[testifying] to the reality of sexual abuse that many female activists in the liberation struggle endured in exile at the hands of their

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 127.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 130.

¹¹⁹ For example, Pumla Dineo Gqola, “‘The Difficult Task of Normalizing Freedom’: Spectacular Masculinities, Ndebele’s Literary/Cultural Commentary and Post-Apartheid Life,” *English in Africa* 36, no. 1 (May 1, 2009): 61–76.

male comrades.”¹²⁰ Strauss’s reading of the book takes it as “a *call of the silenced*, who on the South African gender stage, feature primarily as women whose voices of trauma are muted by the epistemological constructions that safeguard ruling masculinities.”¹²¹ But what place do sex and sexual crime hold in the book? The novel is demonstrably conservative, both in its relation to politics and to sex, and the co-implication of the two is telling. The novel insists upon the multiple levels of innocence of Sindiswa: she resisted the rape; it drove her into depression and despair; she was a virgin when she was raped; she sought to escape but eventually was driven back to Mbete out of financial need; she found true love and got married, in a church wedding, before being again trapped by Mbete; she eventually confronted her rapist and openly accused him of his crime. She is a pure victim, on every count, and Mbete is pure evil. Her death must come, because it is the final absolution – the novel would be unthinkable if she lived. Indeed, her death and her post-mortem salvation at the hands of her avenging father, can hardly be read as a testimonial of what ‘women activists in the struggle’ endured. Instead, many of them, as we know, lived on in the aftermath of abuse. Sindiswa’s death obscures that possibility – because ultimately the book is not about her.

The series of clichés that surround Sindiswa’s rape and Mbete’s crime make it clear that this story is not “about” rape or about sexual violence. Rather, the story is about “evil” and “silence”, and the crime of rape stands in as the perfect example of pure “evil”. As Kondile himself puts it, rape is the violation of all tradition. He explains – “It had been instilled in me

¹²⁰ Helene Strauss, “Memory, Masculinity and Responsibility: Searching for ‘Good Men’ in Mtutuzeli Nyoka’s ‘I Speak to the Silent,’” *English in Africa* 36, no. 1 (May 1, 2009): 79.

¹²¹Ibid., 84.

by my illiterate parents to show respect for women at all times and to treasure little children. This, according to them, was the very essence of humanity... The Mbetes of the word were the betrayers of this hallowed code.”¹²² At its simplest, then, the novel is a trenchant condemnation of political leaders who betrayed their principles and then justified it by recourse to politics. It is no coincidence that each time Mbete and his henchman-rapist are confronted (three separate narrative moments), they deny their criminality and justify their actions through self-identification as “struggle heroes” who have sacrificed for the cause. The satire here is broad and obvious – Nyoka’s book condemns the present South African leadership who justify their present excesses by recourse to their heroic past.

But the novel is also a condemnation of exile and struggle politics more broadly. While the ‘silence’ of the elders is condemned by word and action, the space of “exile” is depicted as no healthy alternative – instead, it is a place of silence and fear: “A strange, pervasive fear held this place in thrall. And this fear gave rise to a deadly silence.”¹²³ When Kondile enters the exiled space of Lesotho, no one will tell him the truth. Indeed, the most intrusive sound he experiences in Lesotho, aside from the lies told to him by Mbete’s assistant, is the inarticulate wailing of a brain-damaged South African exile, injured in a South African military raid on an exile safe-house. The message could not be clearer: the apartheid state was causing terrible damage to the youth, but exile provided no real salvation. Equally, the novel represents the political activism of the young people inside the country as destructive. The narrator mourns his generation’s failure to intervene and give proper

¹²² Nyoka, *I Speak to the Silent*, 128.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 137.

guidance to the youth – but while he commends the bravery of the “young lions” who took on the apartheid state, he sees their mission as ultimately suicidal and formless. He observes, “they fought with courage, albeit often without direction,” (105) and the novel’s descriptions of carnage and bloodshed on the streets of Alice bear out his conclusion. The youth are depicted as engaging in a hopeless and violent battle that they can hardly understand. This assumes one version of history, uncritically accepting the idea that “the parents” generation was meek. But it also poses the political activism of the youth as a tragedy. This gives space for an acknowledgment of the suffering, the many dead inside the country and the many lost in exile. But it also shuts down a view of political action as positive or constructive – the fight of the ‘young lions’ is posed as a suicide mission, in effect, and one necessitated, almost automatically, by conditions of repression and lack of parental guidance (the two causal factors). Such an account elides the agency of the youthful participants, and obscures the specific political analyses that these youth generated.¹²⁴ One version is not necessarily “more true” – no doubt many of the youth involved in township rebellion were reactive and violent, rather than analytical and political.¹²⁵ But the effect of Nyoka’s critique is to depict apartheid as an apolitical tragedy that could have been solved, and can still be absolved, by confession and speech.

By the same token, the crime of rape is pushed outside of politics, including outside of gender politics. Mbete is merely and absolutely evil, on all levels, and Sindiswa is merely

¹²⁴ See for example Julian Brown, Hirson, Pityana (ed), L. Schuster, for more complex explorations of political engagements

¹²⁵ Serote’s *Scatter the Ashes and Go* provides bitter criticism of the “young lions” for disregarding and resisting the leadership of former MK cadres returned from exile in their efforts to prevent further bloodshed in the early 1990s .

and entirely innocent. In such a presentation, sexual violence belongs only to the category of 'sinner', and is not amenable to negotiation or correction: the transgressor, who was always-already evil, must merely be eliminated. With this approach, Nyoka's novel in fact perpetuates the silencing of sexual violence, as its commission is removed from the political, or indeed the social, and is relegated to the metaphysical or symbolic realm.

VI. The Zuma Trial

Although it was published two years before Zuma's 2006 rape trial, Nyoka's book, in retrospect, eerily foreshadowed the accusations against Jacob Zuma. On November 4, 2005, a woman who came to be known in the press as Khwezi (the Zulu word for star, a pseudonym chosen to preserve her anonymity) laid a complaint of rape against Jacob Zuma, then the Deputy President of the ANC. The rape, she alleged, had taken place one night when she was staying with Zuma, whom she regarded as a father or uncle figure to her. She had known Zuma since she was a child in exile, where he was a friend of her (now deceased) father.

The case went to trial in May 2006. Zuma's trial occasioned significant public commentary and debate, particularly because of his deliberate evocation of Zulu patriarchal masculinity as justification for the sexual act, the overt violence of supporters who demonstrated in Zuma's favour (chanting "burn the bitch" and burning pictures of the accuser), and because

of Zuma's attitude towards AIDS as revealed in the trial.¹²⁶ He admitted he knew the woman was HIV positive, and did not use a condom, saying he showered after they had sex.¹²⁷ Zuma did not dispute that sex had taken place, but argued it was consensual, and that the woman had demonstrated her desire to him via her mode of dress and her conversation with him.¹²⁸ The trial also came to stand in for the South African justice system's failure to address the massively high rates of rape and sexual violence.¹²⁹ The judge in the case allowed Khwezi's past sexual history to be admitted as evidence in the trial, and it probably proved decisive. Ultimately, Zuma was acquitted, and is today the President of South Africa.

South African feminist scholars widely viewed the trial, and its results, as epochal. Activist Mmatshilo Motsei wrote, "Jacob Zuma's trial was both a form of victimization and a moment of re-awakening. ... I know from talking to other people that the South African political landscape will never be the same again."¹³⁰ But despite the abundance of commentary on the trial, only Shireen Hassim has discussed in depth one key revelation of the trial. During

¹²⁶ Liz Gunner, "Jacob Zuma, the Social Body and the Unruly Power of Song," *African Affairs* 108, no. 430 (January 1, 2009): 27–48; Shireen Hassim, "Democracy's Shadows: Sexual Rights and Gender Politics in the Rape Trial of Jacob Zuma," *African Studies* 68, no. 1 (2009): 57–77; Mark Hunter, "Beneath the 'Zunami': Jacob Zuma and the Gendered Politics of Social Reproduction in South Africa," *Antipode* 43, no. 4 (September 1, 2011): 1102–26; Mmatshilo Motsei, *The Kanga and the Kangaroo Court: Reflections on the Rape Trial of Jacob Zuma* (Sunnyside: Jacana, 2007); Steven Robins, "Sexual Politics and the Zuma Rape Trial**," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34, no. 2 (2008): 411–27; Vasu Reddy and Cheryl Potgieter, "'Real Men Stand up for the Truth': Discursive Meanings in the Jacob Zuma Rape Trial," *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 24, no. 4 (2006): 511–21.

¹²⁷ This fact led to him being dubbed "Showerman," particularly thanks to the sharp satirical cartoonist Zapiro's illustrations, an appellation which persists today.

¹²⁸ V. Reddy and C. Potgieter, "'Real Men Stand Up for the Truth': Discursive Meanings in the Jacob Zuma Rape Trial." *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 2006, 24(4): 511–521

¹²⁹ See discussion in Hassim, "Democracy's Shadows"; Motsei, *The Kanga and the Kangaroo Court*.

¹³⁰ Motsei, *The Kanga and the Kangaroo Court*, 18.

the forced revelation of Khwezi's sexual history, she revealed she had been raped twice before, in exile, where she had grown up.¹³¹

Although few scholars have addressed this element of the trial, Khwezi's revelation of her rape in exile sparked a new debate over sexual violence in exile, a more open debate than had ever occurred at the time of the earlier revelations, in the TRC. Newspapers published accounts of women describing their own experiences.¹³² The Women's Network of the opposition party, the Democratic Alliance, even demanded that an official inquest be held into the allegations of woman abuse.¹³³ Such an inquest was never held. Writing on these revelations, Motsei notes that "those who raped her [Khwezi] and many other girls and women during the liberation war are not man enough to take responsibility for their actions or make a call for a national cleansing programme that rids women of the hidden shame and trauma that emanates from rape in exile."¹³⁴

During Zuma's 2006 trial and in the years of reflection that followed, the sexual abuse that took place in exile, particularly in the camps (itself an interesting displacement, as Khwezi herself was not in the camps when she was assaulted), came to be read in direct continuity with the grotesque spectacle that surrounded Zuma's trial. The trial also became the occasion for critical meditation on the place of women in an emancipated nation, and specifically, the ANC's emancipated nation, given Zuma's prominence in government.

¹³¹ I am indebted to Sukhthi Naidoo, who alerted me to this fact.

¹³² See for example Moipone Malefane, "Women were 'sex objects' in ANC exile camps," *Sunday Times* (South Africa), 3 March 2006.

¹³³ South African Press Association, "Probe Charges of Abuse in ANC Camps: Network", 26 March 2006.

¹³⁴ Motsei, *The Kanga and the Kangaroo Court*, 75.

Feminist scholars of South African nationalism read the trial and the past abuses as collapsed like a slinky, with the two chronological poles, the 1980s and 2006, conjoined, seamlessly linked by the presence of two protagonists, Zuma and Khwezi, who were themselves present in both instances. The 1990s disappears as a moment that failed, and the 1980s, exile, becomes a moment that presaged, or already embodied, failure. The trial, and its symbolic connection to the abuses of the camps, came to confirm feminist critiques of the 1980s and 1990s, which argued that the national liberation movement, particularly the ANC, under-privileged women's emancipation at the expense of national liberation.¹³⁵ Writing in 2009, Shireen Hassim argued that "what we are dealing with now is the consequence of failing to address feminist demands around sexuality and gender-based violence; that is, of ruling out any form of explicitly feminist debate that went beyond national liberation."¹³⁶

Even without undertaking the complex sociological and political investigations that would be required to gain a deeper understanding of the causes of rape in South Africa and elsewhere, it is clear that these feminist commentators writing in the early 21st century were and are correct: the end of apartheid, and national liberation, has not improved the lot of life for most women in South Africa. But being correct about the present does not always make one correct about the past, nor is the link between past and present violence always as clear as it seems. Without disputing Hassim's conclusion, that the ANC has failed, post-apartheid, to make women's rights an equal political issue, I want to highlight here the way

¹³⁵ Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review* 44, no. 1 (July 1993): 61–80; Cherryl Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991).

¹³⁶ Hassim, "Democracy's Shadows," 68.

women's rights, in this rendition, are still held in separation from the camps violence. Zuma's trial provided the first solid narrative direction for explaining violence against women that had occurred thirty years ago: the violence was held up as an index of the ANC's failure to foreground women's issues as political issues. This is the same point Mtintso raised in her 1992 interview, when she explained that it had been taboo to discuss sexism in the camps as an issue distinct from national liberation. But in this later rendition, the analysis is applied particularly to explain past sexual violence and its persistence.

Conclusions

In drawing together these two disparate sets of events – the torture and violence in the ANC's camps, and the violence against women that occurred in the same camps – I have attempted to demonstrate that, despite running parallel, these narratives have almost never touched. They have not been read and part and parcel of the same thing; instead, each set of events has received different discursive treatment and interpretation.

The narrative structure of this chapter has been organized around revelation, pointing to the ways in which both the camps violence and the violence against women, but particularly the violence against women, had to be discovered and rediscovered again and again. This is not exceptional in itself. Scholars working on legacies of violence have pointed to the ways in which “not knowing” and “knowing” have been simultaneous. Writing about work undertaken in Argentina during its ‘dirty war’, Diana Taylor observes that “Everyone I interviewed and worked with there knew and didn't know what was happening, but not

knowing became the preferred strategy for survival."¹³⁷ But this set of events is particularly tantalizing, because of the juxtaposition of two such similar scenes of violence – one became known, and the other didn't. The unevenness makes clear the specificity and silencing of gender-based violence, which multiple parties have struggled, over the past quarter of a century since the ANC's return, to incorporate into some narrative of meaning.

The meaning of the camps scandals, as I have demonstrated, is hardly resolved. Writing on torture more broadly, Taylor reminds us that "ultimately, debates about torture come back to test a people's sense of national identity."¹³⁸ This has certainly been true in the case of the ANC, as its members have worked to define and delimit a narrative that accounts for the organization's past use of torture. It is perhaps fruitful to consider the debates around the camps scandals as comparable to the debates and moral reckoning that took place in the US around both Guantanamo Bay and Abu-Ghraib. As Lauren Berlant observes, both of these sites have become symbols, the words evoking a whole set of practices, abuses, and horrors.¹³⁹ In much the same way, "Quatro" has, in post-apartheid South Africa, become a potent signifier, gesturing either at the ANC's moment of failure to be redeemed, or at the moment of truth revealing the inherent flaws of the ANC – depending on who you ask.

But there is no concurrent symbol that gathers the disparate experiences of women in exile together. What this lack of narrative thread reveals, I argue, is indecision over whether abuse of women could be properly conceived of as a political issue. Yes, women's equality is

¹³⁷ D. Taylor, "Double-blind: The torture case," *Critical Inquiry*, 33 4 2007, p.714

¹³⁸ Taylor, "Double-blind", 713

¹³⁹ Lauren Berlant, "On the Case," *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 4 (June 1, 2007): 663–72.

a political question. That sexual assault should not occur is a political question – and the ANC had a policy against this, we know that. But when sexual assault still occurs, despite policy, is that political? This question is unresolved and debated. Mtintso offered sociological explanations. Nyoka interjected to provide what I would argue is a specifically anti-political account of gender-based violence and its redress. Hassim’s intervention operates on essentially the policy level: that the ANC should have had firmer policy on women’s issues, including gender-based violence. If the accounts of the camps violence tend to fail because they read the violence either as an affirmation or as a paradoxical moral triumph (in both cases foreclosing analysis), the question of gender-based violence has not even reached that level of discussion.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined women in the ANC, and the politics of gender in the ANC, during the exile period of the organization. Although the focus of this thesis is “exile,” it has included women’s work inside South Africa before their departure, and has reflected on the ways exile and its traumas have been remembered since the ANC’s return to South Africa in 1990. In doing so, it argues that exile cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon, cut off from what came before or after. In making these links, this thesis is in dialogue with recent works on the history of the ANC, which emphasize the organization’s changing nature throughout the more than one hundred years of its existence.¹

Throughout this dissertation, I have struggled against writing the words “into exile” to describe where ANC members went. In Mtutuzeli Nyoka’s novel *I Speak to the Silent*, the mother who has lost a daughter to politics naively asks, “Where is exile?”² In the case of the ANC, as no doubt for many people and political formations, the question is not easy to answer. The easy gloss of “exile” as a label obscures the regional differentiations and experiences that exiled people would have encountered. This variation of experience has made the writing of ANC’s exile histories difficult. Historian Steve Davis has suggested that the lack of unified histories of exile stems from this lived experience of exile – he comments that “the inability to express the armed struggle in narrative terms partly stems from the

¹ See Philip Bonner, “Fragmentation and Cohesion in the ANC: The First 70 Years,” in *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today*, ed. Arianna Lissoni et al. (Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 2012); Arianna Lissoni et al., eds., *One Hundred Years of the ANC: Debating Liberation Histories Today* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012); Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders, eds., *Southern African Liberation Struggles: New Local, Regional and Global Perspectives* (Cape Town: UCT press, 2013). See also *South African Historical Journal*, Special Issue on the ANC at 100, Vol 64, Issue 3, 2012.

² Mtutuzeli Nyoka, *I Speak to the Silent* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004).

peripatetic existence endured by most exiles.”³ In his dissertation, Davis focuses on the multiple representations and narratives of exile and armed struggle within the ANC. Here, I have moved in a different direction.

Although agreeing with Davis’s insights into the scattered reality of the ANC’s exile years, I argue that the reason that it is difficult to write a unified history of the ANC in exile is because it is difficult to define what in fact the ANC was. Multiple people defined themselves as “ANC”, in contexts so different as to be almost unrecognizable. What could a LSE student who spent evenings typing ANC pamphlets in a London office have in common with a sixteen year old living in a shared house with fifteen other people in Mozambique, waiting to be sent for military training in a jungle camp? The astonishing variation of background, experience, and even involvement within the organization merits attention, I argue. This feature makes writing one history complex – but it surely also made living within the organization, or attempting to manage it, extremely difficult. To some extent, such diversity may have always been a part of the ANC. But the exile period was certainly the most organizationally challenging time for the ANC – and as a result, questions of identity became salient.

Part of the project of this dissertation is to make this internal differentiation part of the story. This dissertation has offered a new reading of the ANC in exile, making a concentrated effort to consider the connections and misconnections between ANC regions, and ANC personnel, as a vital part of the exile period. In this reading, the spread and

³ Stephen Davis, “Cosmopolitans in Close Quarters: Everyday Life in the Ranks of Umkhonto We Sizwe, 1961-Present” (Doctoral thesis, University of Florida, 2010), 21.

extension of the ANC across disparate and poorly networked spaces is itself a story worth telling. Specifically, I argue that this dispersion made the task of defining community and membership particularly urgent for the ANC, in changing ways throughout exile. I pay careful attention to their efforts to delimit insiders and outsiders of the ANC community, and maintain discipline among cadres, particularly via the policing of sexuality and reproduction. It is in this space of delineation and definition that the notion of “politics” became crucial to the ANC.

Historians and memoirists have emphasized the importance of “politics” in uniting the ANC in its exile years. Hugh Macmillan, for example, points to OR Tambo and other leaders’ skill in uniting a “broad church” of shared belief, despite differences in the movement.⁴ Historian Luli Callinicos has made a similar point, emphasizing the importance of political commitment and the role OR Tambo played in creating this spirit. She observes, “As the years went by without sign of material progress towards liberation, a steady adherence to the local ANC often became restricting, and required some measure of endurance. Many comrades in exile recalled how it was Tambo who provided the movement's narrative.”⁵ Callinicos here emphasizes the importance of “steady adherence”, and credits Tambo with providing the governing narrative. This adherence, also labelled as political commitment, entailed sacrifice, Callinicos observed: “Commitment meant a willingness to suspend personal freedom and individual pleasure if necessary.”⁶ In a 1977 speech to new military cadres, OR Tambo emphasized the necessity of sacrifice – life should be devoted to the

⁴ Hugh Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia, 1963 to 1994* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana Media, 2013).

⁵Luli Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2004), 445.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 429.

struggle. He told the new trainees, "As political soldiers, you will be expected like others before you, like us who stand here before you, to dedicate your entire life to the struggle for the liberation of our motherland."⁷ Shared political belief, including faith in self-sacrifice, was a defining element of life in the exiled organization, these commentators argue.

Equally, political education was considered a vital part of the organization's work, necessary for instilling the requisite political community. In her biography of Oliver Tambo, Callinicos describes the importance Tambo attributed to the process of political education, observing that "'Oliver Tambo was concerned not only to use education as a weapon in the struggle, but also to build an intelligentsia within the army itself, as well as throughout the movement. History and political theory were particularly important in developing cadres.

.... A grasp of the strategy of liberation as a whole was crucial to the success of this process."⁸ In their edited work *Comrade Jack*, Marion Sparg, Gwen Ansell, and Jenny Schreiner (two of whom are past MK members) compile the lectures academic and ANC member Jack Simons gave in the ANC's Angolan military camps. The collection celebrates the importance of Simons' intellectual and political contribution to the MK training camps.⁹

But what is this "politics"? Clearly, as Jack Simons' papers and OR Tambo's assertions emphasize, political education in part meant training MK cadres to be a "political army", not just a military one – to learn via theories of the state, capitalism, and revolution what their

⁷ Tambo cited in Luli Callinicos, "Oliver Tambo and the Dilemma of the Camp Mutinies in Angola in the Eighties," *South African Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2012): 237.

⁸ Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, 455.

⁹ Sparg et al, *Comrade Jack*, New Doornfontein [South Africa]: STE Publishers; Johannesburg: African National Congress, 2001

greater role was. But it also meant living by a certain set of moral codes, as Tambo's emphasis on giving one's life to the struggle suggests.

Former MK member Barry Gilder provides a rich definition to this question, recounting an anecdote from his time spent in MK training camps in Angola. He recalls that Mzwai Piliso and Joe Gqabi, senior members of the ANC, paid a visit to Quibaxe camp, where he was based. It's worth quoting in depth, for the sentiment conveyed. Gilder remembers that, after the senior officials' address to the assembled soldiers:

Suddenly a comrade put up his hand. ... "*Yini politics? What is politics?*" There is a gasp and a murmur of '*Hey, comrade!*' from the assembly – the impertinence! Comrade Joe looks momentarily taken aback. ... The poor boy stands hesitantly, his arms dangling at his sides. There is complete silence. Mzwai raises an imaginary AK to his shoulder, staring down its sights at the comrade. – *Comrade! ... When you are pointing your weapon, politics is what tells you where to aim and when to pull the trigger.*" There is a moment of absolute stillness, making sure there is no more to come. Then the assembly breaks into rapturous applause and a rousing fighting song.¹⁰

This vivid account underscores the high stakes of the ANC's work, and the militarist consciousness necessarily at work in the movement. But while Gilder's reminiscences provide an answer for what politics meant in a moment of struggle (where to point the gun), the answer leaves unclear what one should do to "be political" the rest of the time. As we have seen through debates over sex and conduct, in the lived and long durée context of exile, "correct politics" came to include abstinence from alcohol, marijuana, and indiscriminate sexuality – ideals that proved hard to live up to.

¹⁰ Barry Gilder, *Songs and Secrets* (South Africa: Jacana Media, 2012), 58.

Historian Steve Davis has commented also on the underlying significance of “politics” as a state of being in exile. He writes,

If one idea permeated the ranks of Umkhonto we Sizwe at different times and in different places, it was the idea that revolution was coming, and that the MK would be the vanguard of this coming revolution. When these plans fell through, and they fell through at different times and for different reasons, the details of everyday life filled the evidentiary vacuum, and provided me with a rich field for exploring the problems of ‘struggle history.’¹¹

While Davis is interested in what happened when “plans fell through,” in the moments when it was clear that the revolution was not imminent and MK’s role was unclear, I instead focus on the meaning of this guiding sentiment within MK: that the revolution was imminent. A main theme throughout my dissertation has been to take seriously the idea of political commitment, self-described revolutionary commitment, but not taking it for granted. Instead, I historicize what political commitment meant, to whom, and when, arguing that its meaning changed and was debated throughout the exile years.

Sociologist and past ANC member Raymond Suttner is the only scholar to have theorized “political commitment” in the history of the ANC in depth, and as such, he provides many useful insights for this work. Writing on the ANC underground, of which he was briefly a part, Suttner describes the challenges of such work – isolation, keeping secrets from friends and family, facing everyday risk without immediate support, and the occasional tedium. Making copies of pamphlets, or other such tedious tasks, while of great importance, were not immediately exciting activities, and without political understanding, Suttner argued, it would be easy for solitary underground members to become disaffected. “Depoliticization”,

¹¹ Davis, “Cosmopolitans in Close Quarters,” 15.

in these situations, was a particular risk – losing their political faith, cadres might drop out of the movement.¹²

Equally, Suttner has emphasized the importance of relegating the demands of ordinary life in favour of focussing on the struggle. “The requirements of revolutionary conduct,” he has observed, “required sacrifices and suppression of emotional and other needs expressed in normal social relations.”¹³ Suttner’s work reminds readers of the exigencies of the militarized situation that members of the resistance, whether inside the country or in exile, faced, and sensitively details the necessary burdens of such work, including frequent personal isolation and danger. However, Suttner leaves to some extent unexplored the content of that “revolutionary conduct” – while sacrifices are to be made, it is not always clear what these sacrifices should be. My reading of the ANC archive suggests that the nature and quality of these sacrifices was a topic of debate within the ANC’s External Mission. While most agreed that it was important to be ‘an ideal cadre’, or an appropriate revolutionary citizen, the boundaries and content of this identity were actively negotiated over the years of exile. Conversations over sexual and romantic behaviour, contraception, alcohol, adherence to rules, and overall discipline became, I have suggested, staging grounds for a debate over the precise meaning of “being an ideal cadre” in exile. The content of this debate, of this cadre identity, had serious ramifications in an exile context where the ANC was struggling to maintain loyalty, even in the doldrums of its time, and when it was plagued by attacks from the apartheid state.

¹² See discussion in Raymond Suttner, *The ANC Underground in South Africa, 1950-1976* (Boulder, Colo.: FirstForumPress, 2009). Chapter Five.

¹³ Raymond Suttner, “Women in the ANC-Led Underground,” in *Women in South African History: They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers*, ed. Nomboniso Gasa (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2007), 248.

I began this dissertation with two epigraphs about love, loss, and political commitment, included in the Introduction. The first, Che Guevara wrote to his wife in 1967, not long before he left for his final, and fatal, mission. The letter reiterates his love for his wife, in rich and detailed words. But it is also, necessarily, a letter about leaving her – about choosing other commitments over her. He couldn't be certain that his last campaign would lead to his death, but the tenor of his letter to her indicates that he thought it might. The quote combines two loves and indicates their irreconcilability: it is precisely his love for his wife and children that, "like a knife in his side," impels him into politics – and thus away from his family.

In the second, the young woman, Zola, who spoke to fellow ANC member Nadja Manghezi about her reasons for choosing exile, and choosing the ANC's army, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) echoed a similar sentiment, many years later. Zola would have entered exile about one decade after Che wrote to his wife. She, like many other young men and women, left South Africa after the 1976 Soweto Uprisings. She ended up in Mozambique, like many others. And she chose to join the army – because she wanted to be home as soon as possible. Again, Zola left South Africa out of political commitment, but felt torn by her family love, which pulled her into the military, paradoxically. More clearly than in the case of Che, Zola, in common with many other ANC exiles, didn't realize her sojourn outside the country would be so substantial. She, like many others, expected to return in short order, triumphantly, to overthrow the apartheid government. This is quite distinct from the life choices Che

Guevara confronted and made. Nevertheless, the evocation of loss and love and politics is one that runs through much ANC writing, both in exile and after.

I began with these two quotes because they encapsulate three themes that have been central to this dissertation. First, using the words of a privileged Argentinean who became a committed internationalist, and travelled the world – including a period spend in central Africa, along the border of the Congo – calls up a side of ANC history that, I argue, has often been neglected. Other works on the ANC’s exile period have focussed on the ANC’s connections to South Africa, and to solidarity movements in western countries. While important, these connections are not the full story. In this dissertation, I have explored the international travels and activities of a set of women ANC members, in order to suggest that reading the ANC as not just international but internationalist in orientation helps us better understand the organization’s mission and commitments, particularly during its exile period. Secondly, both quotes’ emphasis of love and family provided an opening for another major focus of this dissertation: the negotiation of love, sexuality, and family life in exile, and their specific conjunction with the organizational structures of the ANC. Thirdly and finally, running through both of these quotes is an engagement with the idea of political struggle, and political commitment. The concept of “politics” underlies the ANC’s internationalism, and also the complex negotiations over everyday administration within the organization. In all of these aspects, the work of women and the changing politics of gender are crucial to understanding life inside the ANC in exile.

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