

**“We Hid Books in Bags of Sugar”**  
**South African History in Opposition**



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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

History education is inevitably political. That political contention arises out of the struggle between the state and the people's need to control interpretations of the past and is rooted in contending sets of values and views of history. Between 1948 and 1990 in South Africa, the National Government and the resistance movement fought over control of the stories told in history classrooms. For both the National Government and the resistance movement, this fight was deeply tied to the struggle for political power. This struggle played out in history classrooms, across the pages of newspapers, in political rhetoric and in historical scholarship. Students took the streets as academics revised historiography – both actions part of the same movement to reject the National Government's use of history education as a tool of oppression. Driven by teachers, academics, politicians, students and communities, this struggle identified history education as a main site of political contention during apartheid, those actors recognizing the power of history education to justify and further a political agenda. Both the National Government and the resistance assigned a political agenda to history education – the former using it as a tool of oppression and division, while the latter tried to transform history into a tool of liberation. Integral to the National Government's use was the silencing of inquiry, while integral to the resistance's attempts to challenge the National Government was the encouragement of questioning.

During apartheid, the National Government prescribed an Afrikaner-nationalist interpretation of the past for use in history classrooms, a story constructed to justify the state's policies of separate development. Positioning events such as the Great Trek as central to history education, this story glorified Afrikanerdom and whiteness, while subjugating and marginalizing Africans. The story emphasized Afrikaner perseverance, and black barbarousness. Most importantly, the story rooted racial separation in historical "truths." The government sought to encourage ethnically-based nationalism and racial isolation and to secure the position of Afrikaners as the dominant ethnicity of the Union of South Africa. Students, educators, activists, scholars and communities challenged that story through protest and through the process of questioning and revising historiography. These resisters confronted the National Government's use of history to justify apartheid policies by reclaiming and taking ownership over stories about the past.

This thesis explores the conflict embedded in history's role in serving the needs of the state versus the needs of the people. To that end, I have engaged with themes and events that run from 1948, the year the National Party came to power on the platform of apartheid, to 2012, eighteen years after South Africa became a democracy. In the main, this paper is about individual and community efforts to recapture and control historical narratives in the face of state control of history. To contextualize those efforts, I have examined the National Government's use of

education to serve the system of apartheid, and the framing of post-apartheid South Africa as a “rainbow nation.” Central to this thesis are the responses of students, educators, scholars and activists to the conditions of apartheid education, and later by the post-apartheid political agenda. History teachers working in South Africa today and history teachers who taught during apartheid identify common challenges and themes of their work, thus threading together past and present.

The themes that I have tried to thread through this historical study, connecting the efforts of various actors during apartheid with the experiences of teachers post-apartheid, center around the creation of an educational space that is safe for questioning. Under the right conditions, history classrooms, both historically and presently, have become sites of critical inquiry. Streets, newspapers, and academia have all served a similar purpose. When examining the history of resistance against state-control of historical narratives during apartheid, certain events serve as key turning points. The implementation of Bantu Education in 1953, and the Soweto uprisings of 1976, for example, are fundamental to understanding the shifts within and approaches to resistance to apartheid education.

History teaching has political consequences everywhere. Apartheid-era curricula and textbooks tell a common tale of authoritarian government silencing questioning around the historical record. Resistance against apartheid education took the familiar form of intellectual struggle,

and post-conflict government reconciliation has been attempted the world over. Ireland, Israel, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Rwanda (to name a few) have gone through similar transformations in their history classrooms. Contemporary debates around the political function and racial element of history education flourish in the United States today. Currently in the United States, Texas's school board is struggling over what historical content to include in textbooks. The case in Texas is of major concern to the rest of the US because, as one of the two largest textbook purchasers in the country, Texas' preferences for historical emphasis can dictate what students in New York or Minnesota are learning about history.

History education's purpose as a tool of oppression reflected the use of education in general during apartheid to perpetuate racial and class stratification. The education system under apartheid served to subordinate Africans while uplifting Afrikaners, using history as justification.<sup>1</sup> As a tool of social control, apartheid education trained youth to have the interracial interactions designated by apartheid policy.<sup>2</sup> Thus, language instruction played an important role in asserting white dominance and creating a sustainable labor class. The Soweto uprisings of 1976 responded directly to the implementation of mandated Afrikaans instruction in schools. Importantly, history education was also used to

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, Walton. "Education: Keystone of Apartheid." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1982): 214.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

impose social values on students, which suggested black inferiority. Beginning in the late 1960s, the Black Consciousness Movement directly responded to the victimization and subjugation of blacks in the Afrikaner historical narrative. This back and forth relationship between oppressive control and struggle for liberation characterized the 1970s, and efforts by educators, scholars and activists to challenge historical narratives characterized the 1980s.

The National Government tried to separate politics and history while simultaneously assigning history education an agenda of nationalism and ethnic division. Students, educators and activists identified history education as a site of political contention. They leaned in to the complexities of multiple perspectives, thus attempting to democratize history education specifically and education at large. By embracing questioning and local, vernacular histories, resisters tapped into the liberatory power of history education. However, their work was limited by the contradictions of democratic education operating in an authoritarian state.

Between 1948 and 1990, South African classrooms were characterized by the presence of two curricula. The official curriculum, prescribed by the National Government, was in constant battle with the oppositional curriculum, over time, energy, and space in the classroom. History teachers fought the Afrikaner historical narrative by making their classrooms a safe space for questioning, bringing in counter memory and



providing their students with access to African history and a variety of historical sources. History education became therefore a subversive act of political resistance against apartheid, where teachers deconstructed the story that buttressed European domination and gave their students access to historical knowledge that could serve as empowerment. History teachers, students, parents, activists and community members turned schools and universities into sites of struggle against the apartheid system through their activism and insubordination of the official historical narrative. Their actions prefaced the transition out of authoritarianism in the early 1990s.

In 1994, through a series of negotiations and a political compromise, South Africa became a democracy. The new political agenda was to be unity, reconciliation, and multiculturalism.<sup>3</sup> Education, therefore, would be a site of unification instead of division. For teachers, the challenges of teaching history changed in accordance with the new government's political goals. The political compromise produced the Government of National Unity, which consisted of members of the National Party and the resistance movement and was headed by Nelson Mandela. In the years following apartheid's legal deconstruction, history education in South Africa was renewed as a source of political contestation. History was to be taught in the context of a post-conflict democracy, and history teachers would therefore be the communicators of

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<sup>3</sup> Evans, Martha. "Mandela and the Televised Birth of the Rainbow Nation." *National Identities* 12, no. 3 (2010): 309.

this new political agenda of unity and reconciliation. But, as during apartheid, honest teaching of history demands questioning. By “honest” teaching of history, in this paper, I mean to say history teaching that, for the teacher, feels genuine, but also that acknowledges and engages multiple perspectives. Apartheid history, in classrooms, can bring feelings of guilt, anger, and blame to the foreground. Thus, education for oppression was met with education for liberation, and then became education for reconciliation. As political goals and end-goals of historical narratives, oppression and reconciliation are both limiting and do not provide space for critical questioning.

The efforts of both the National Party and the resistance to apartheid education are well-documented in speeches, policy documents, letters, manifestoes, and other sources. This thesis draws from primary and secondary sources, sometimes produced by the same people. Each source came with its own set of benefits and challenges, and taken as a whole, do not represent the entirety of sources that document the National Party’s education system or the struggle against apartheid education. They represent the sources available at University of Cape Town’s Archives and Special Collections, and, as with any archival collection, reflect the politics and circumstances of what can be and is deemed worthy of being kept, preserved, and catalogued.

### **Scholarship Review**

The specific topic of this thesis has not been explored by a large number of academics, but a dedicated group of scholars has pursued the topic from various angles. Peter Kallaway of the University of Cape Town and Gail Weldon of the Western Cape Education Department have both written extensively on apartheid-era education policies and curriculum. Weldon's dissertation explored how post-conflict societies re-imagine themselves through history curricula within the framework of how education can contribute to both conflict and the shaping of post-conflict identities. Kallaway's work corresponds to the issues raised in Weldon's dissertation. Pam Christie and Colin Collins also add to this conversation about the purpose of apartheid education, arguing that Bantu Education specifically was geared towards creating a sustainable labor class. Cynthia Kros, in conversation with the other authors, discusses the architecture of apartheid education in design and intent. Albert Grundlingh, of the University of Stellenbosch, has studied the history of apartheid education and its political function as well, placing himself in dialogue with Kallaway and Weldon.

Johnathan Hyslop and Alan Weider researched the conditions of teaching under apartheid and teacher resistance to apartheid. Hyslop provides a history of teacher unions, while Weider engages with personal histories of teachers. They contributed historical background for my interviews with teachers. Shireen Motala, Salim Vally, Linda Chisolm and Wally Morrow all elucidate on student resistance to apartheid education.

The anthologies edited by Peter Kallaway and Mokubung Nkomo address the various facets of the history of education during apartheid.

Martha Evans provides insight into the media's portrayal of Nelson Mandela's inauguration, and Eric Foner contextualizes South Africa's post-apartheid reluctance to highlight history education in Rwanda's 1994 genocide. Tali Nates and Weldon both extensively researched and wrote on the use of holocaust history in teaching apartheid in South Africa, and other effective methods for teaching difficult histories.

In this thesis, I have tried to synthesize the research and arguments of these aforementioned scholars to provide a scholarly context for my own argument. Their work touched on all of the questions that I needed to ask to build my argument, and provided historical grounding for the thesis itself. None of these scholars have argued my thesis directly. Drawing from their arguments and from a selection of primary sources, I argue that history education is inevitably political. The conflict which exists between history serving the purpose of the state and history serving the purpose of the people creates a tension that cannot be resolved through political compromise, but only through community-based efforts to create space for questioning. To pursue this argument, certain primary sources were essential. The efforts of the National Government to control historical narrative, as well as the efforts of the people to recapture history, are documented through speeches, newspaper articles, policy documents, and

even textbooks, and are vital to telling the story of history education as a site of contention during apartheid.

### **Primary Sources**

The speeches of both National Party officials and members of the Government of National Unity are explicit in intent and even in symbolism. The speeches revealed motivation, bias, and alluded to the historical context of their speakers. The challenge presented by the speeches is that I did not find reactions to those speeches, and therefore could not gauge popular opinion on their politics.

Newspaper articles from the period between 1986-1988, concerning the implementation of alternative education in schools, had been collected, copied and bound by an interested citizen. The articles revealed public opinion about the debate around the implementation of alternative education, and spoke to the larger issue of education and politics in South Africa in general. The newspaper articles were collected from a variety of newspapers, for and against apartheid, from different geographical regions, and socioeconomic inlets. However, the limitations of the article collection were stark: they were clippings, and no context was provided. I do not know if they are representative of news at large at the time, or if they reflect a small debate, or what other articles in the same newspaper addressed. Additionally, the dates of some of the articles were faded, leaving only the month and year. However, the opinions in the

articles do paint a diverse conversation about the politics of curriculum in South Africa between 1986 and 1988.

The materials produced in the vein of creating an alternative historiography to fuel the resistance, such as documentaries by the South African Commission on Higher Education and a pamphlet by the National Union of South African Students form a category on the border between primary and secondary sources. The textbooks and documentaries engage a critique of existing historiography with a revision of South African history. I take them as primary sources, because though they comment on the politics of history education, they also reflect a moment in time and a specific approach to resistance against apartheid education. Taken in consort with the secondary literature that discusses history education in South Africa and the state of history education in SA today, these materials provide a window into how the resistance movement envisioned a liberatory historiography.

Other archival documents, such as a 1976 letter to Prime Minister Verwoerd and student group manifestoes, along with the proceedings from a history conference in 1989, illustrate the acts of resistance to Afrikaner historiography taken by various educational actors. The proceedings from the conference on alternative history education held at the University of the Western Cape also straddles the line between primary and secondary sources. The names of the speakers at the conference also appear in the

byline of scholarly articles, written during and post-apartheid, about apartheid education and its political function.

### **Methodology**

Oral histories are a uniquely valuable source of information, which I collected from South African teachers as an outsider. I conducted the interviews over two month-long sessions in Cape Town. During the month of April 2012, I interviewed six individuals currently teaching or working in the field of history education in Cape Town, and two individuals employed as educators in history museums. I asked them about the challenges of teaching apartheid history in post-apartheid South Africa, the political function of history education, and whether they considered history teachers responsible for teaching towards a goal of national unity and reconciliation. I met all but one of my interviewees through the organization Shikaya, which is the South African outpost of Facing History and Ourselves, an organization based in Boston.

Dylan Wray started Shikaya in 2003, when the Western Cape Education Department and the Cape Town Holocaust Centre collaborated to bring Facing History and Ourselves, a Boston-based educational organization, to Cape Town. Wray had been teaching history for eight or ten years before he was asked to set up the pilot project. The collaboration aimed to use historical case studies to give students an entry point to engage with moral and ethical decision making. The project also focused

on teacher development, providing an environment in which teachers in South Africa could engage with the legacy of apartheid and their own personal history of South Africa before bringing such issues into their classrooms. Shikaya proved to be an essential resource in my research. The staff generously granted me multiple interviews, their library is an extensive collective of books about history education past and present, and through them, I connected with a variety of history teachers active in Cape Town today. Shikaya, in partnership with the Cape Town Holocaust Centre and Facing History, provides material to the Western Cape Education Department to supplement the national curriculum.

I introduced myself to every interviewee as a student from the US and explained my project to each of them. During April, I also sat in on a workshop held at Shikaya on teaching the history of racial science, such as eugenics, and again introduced myself to the group as a student working on a research project. The stories of the interviewees lent deep personal and historical insight into history education, teaching, and the legacies of apartheid. Their stories were invaluable in crafting the story that I seek to tell. The challenges presented by these interviews were also considerable. Because almost all of the interviewees were connected to Shikaya, they had a loyalty to that organization, an awareness of their own limitations, and cared about teaching their students about apartheid. Additionally, the closeness of apartheid and the pervading legacies complicated the answers, attitudes, and realities of the interviewees.



In January of 2013 I returned to Cape Town to continue the research for this thesis. I conducted interviews with eight more individuals who are currently or have been involved in history education in South Africa. I connected with these interviewees through the head librarian of UCT's Archives and Special Collections, and through Zanzile Khoisan, a journalist/activist based in Cape Town. Several of these interviewees I met with multiple times. I asked them about the conditions of teaching history under apartheid, which led, for most teachers, into a discussion of how they resisted apartheid education. Again, for all of these interviews, I introduced myself as an American college student conducting senior thesis research and we discussed my research as well as their experiences.

The questions that I asked all of the interviewees, though planned beforehand, tended to adapt to their narratives. I would venture to say that because all of the interviewees had been history teachers at one point or another, they were all very willing and excited to talk to me about history and their own experiences, interweaving the two.

## **Chapters**

In Chapter two I examine the correlative relationship between the policy and content of apartheid education and the political and socioeconomic function of education under apartheid. I review the oppressive and divisive functioning of this system, in terms of legislation and especially in terms of prescribed historical content.

In Chapter three I explore student resistance to the policies and content of apartheid education, using the Soweto uprisings of 1976 as a turning point in the resistance. The ideology of “liberation first, education later” characterized the students’ struggle between 1976 and 1985, but the resistance movement was not monolithic.

Chapter four examines the shift to the ideology of “education for liberation” and efforts of teachers, activists, and scholars to sustainably democratize the education system. This chapter also considers the limitations of democratizing education under an authoritarian government.

In Chapter five I draw from interviews with South African high school history teachers to paint an image of the challenges of teaching apartheid history almost twenty years after the political transition. These interviews are contextualized in a brief examination of post-apartheid political imperatives.

## CHAPTER TWO: “THERE IS NO PLACE FOR HIM IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY” CHRISTIAN NATIONAL EDUCATION

The National Party structured education during apartheid, in policy and content, to support the larger system of racial stratification.<sup>4</sup> Through an examination of apartheid policy and the political rhetoric of the National Party, as well as an analysis of nationally mandated history curricula, this chapter explores the role of history education in supporting apartheid ideology. Curriculum designers under apartheid designed history education to suppress questioning and to promote ethnically-based nationalism. The deeply political purpose of history education during apartheid – to legitimize and reproduce apartheid ideology, and by extension to support and reproduce the legal framework of apartheid – legitimized the notion of European civilization as superior.<sup>5</sup> This chapter also considers how the National Government utilized history to oppress and divide citizens. By explaining the rhetoric of the National Party, the design and justification of separate education, and the content of prescribed history education, I draw the context of contention over history education in the Union of South Africa.

The content of the Afrikaner historical narrative provided the story needed to justify apartheid policy and the ideology of the National Party.

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<sup>4</sup> Johnson, Walton. "Education: Keystone of Apartheid." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1982): 214.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid p. 222

This story presented Europeans as the most accomplished civilization and attributed “development” in South Africa to whites exclusively, Walton Johnson observed. The National Party worked off of the existing divisions within South African society to forge unity based on ethnicity to protect Afrikanerdom and create a sustainable African labor source.<sup>6</sup> The education system under apartheid shaped people into racial and ethnic subjects,<sup>7</sup> featured overcrowded classrooms and rote memorization. The prescribed history silenced African pasts and stifled critical inquiry. This educational environment fostered, in large part, adamant and sustained resistance on the part of teachers, parents and students.

During apartheid, history education tended to be taught in a cyclical fashion, with certain events and themes being reemphasized each year. The narrative spun slowly, punctuated by the glory and perseverance of Afrikaners. South Africans educated under apartheid remember being taught and being told to teach the same story over and over. “You had this pretty clear-cut Afrikaner nationalist curriculum, heroic phases and the arrival of the Dutch settlers, the Great Trek, the Republics, the Anglo-Boer War...” said Peter Kallaway, adding that his most distinct memory of history education as a boy in South Africa was that it always came back to the Great Trek.<sup>8</sup> The telling of the Great Trek exemplifies the nationalistic

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<sup>6</sup> Christie, Pam and Colin Collins. "Bantu Education: Apartheid Ideology and Labour Reproduction." In *Apartheid and Education*, edited by Peter Kallaway, 160. Johannesburg: Ryan Press, 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Peter Kallaway, interview by author, Cape Town, South Africa, January 9, 2013

function of history education. Beginning in the 1830s, Dutch farmers traveled en masse from the Cape Colony towards the country's interior to escape British colonial rule. Throughout apartheid, the National Party framed the Trek as the central event in South African history. Afrikaner historians of the Great Trek wrote this story as a narrative of triumph and bravery, characterizing the Trekkers as pioneers in an empty yet savage land, "They undertook to found a State and society in the wilderness, and they did it. Some of their ideas were prophetic," Eric Walker wrote.<sup>9</sup> Walker's account of the Great Trek is an example of the glorification and religiosity embedded in Afrikaner historiography.

Apartheid education was not unprecedented – instead, it drew from the use of education for social control already in place in the country. The British used education as a tool of social control in the early 1800s when they tried to "anglicize" the Afrikaners, and during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British tried to civilize Africans, both times through systematic education.<sup>10</sup> The Afrikaner community, Johnson pointed out, appreciated the socializing power of education and thus demanded that Afrikaans be used as the medium of instruction.<sup>11</sup> Throughout apartheid, conditions of school governance and curricular content reflected Afrikaner awareness of the potential of schools as sites of social control. The danger

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<sup>9</sup> Walker, Eric. *The Great Trek*. The Pioneer Histories. London: A. & C. Black LTD, 1934.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson "Education: Keystone of Apartheid" p. 216

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p. 216

of teaching against the curriculum during apartheid reflected the National Government's use of education as a tool of control.

### **Unstable Uniformity**

Teachers were severely limited in what narrative they could promote during apartheid, and were prescribed a curriculum that did not allow for questioning. The space teachers had to deviate from the prescribed curriculum depended on a set of conditions, importantly, the racial classification of the teacher. The oral testimony of those who experienced education under apartheid contributes to an understanding of the way in which apartheid education created a façade of uniformity that could not hold. Though I expand upon the dangers of teaching against apartheid later in this thesis, the experiences of these few teachers speaks to the limitations of teaching and learning under apartheid. Their experiences are an important prelude to the circumstances and conditions of apartheid education because they showcase the impact of those conditions. The dangers of teaching against the curriculum existed from the onset of apartheid education to the onset of democracy.

History teacher Ruby Tena, who is black, was “never to talk about black people,” she remembered. The story she was supposed to teach was that “Whites brought civilization and Christianity, the people on the ground were heathens.”<sup>12</sup> The curriculum prescribed that blacks were

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<sup>12</sup> Ruby Tena, interview by author, Cape Town, South Africa, January 10, 2013

taught as unable to farm, as the willing victims, and that there was no resistance.<sup>13</sup> Tena, who knew that this story was untrue, was not permitted to tell her students what she understood to be accurate, or empowering, history. When the children asked questions, Tena added, “You had to say, ‘well, I don’t know.’ When they asked, ‘what did our people do?’ You say that whites came in with guns.”<sup>14</sup> Tena’s story speaks to the teachers who did not teach against the curriculum for fear of retribution. Some of the students’ parents may have told them the truth, Tena explained, but she could not have been the one to explain it to them. Tena had colleagues who were bold enough to talk about what was going on, she remembered, but they were detained.

The threat of detainment and prison time was a real-and-present danger for teachers, especially those who were black or coloured. Helen Johnson hid letters that her sister Julie Jacobs received from educational activist Neville Alexander in her mattress, sleeping on them at night. He was in prison on Robin Island at the time, and Jacobs’ association with him could warrant trouble for her as well. Johnson also explained, matter-of-factly, that she was accustomed to hiding banned books in bags of sugar, because flour made the pages stick. This worked until the inspectors started to shake out the bags of sugar. For Johnson, this story was

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<sup>13</sup> Albert Grundlingh, interview by author, Stellenbosch, South Africa, January 11, 2013

<sup>14</sup> Tena interview, January 2013.

unexceptional, just one of the many tactics she had developed as a means of intellectual and personal survival during apartheid.

The danger of teaching alternative history education reflected the danger of political resistance against apartheid policies in general. That danger also speaks to the connection between the struggle for a democratic education system and the struggle for national liberation. The struggle for democratic education formed part of the intellectual resistance to apartheid ideology, because to resist the structures of apartheid education posed a major threat to the system of apartheid in general. The National Party relied on its education system to sustain and reproduce the legal architecture of apartheid.

By briefly explaining the conditions of teaching under apartheid, I hoped to preface the very political implications of education during that period. Moreover, the teachers' experiences of having their own questions suppressed and suppressing the questions of their students highlights apartheid education's political function: to silence dissent. The founding document of apartheid education policy further outlines and elaborates on that function, both in terms of the silencing of dissent and the promotion of Afrikaner nationalism.

### **Christian National Education**

The Beleid was the founding policy document of Christian National Education, the National Party's education system. Christian



National Education was the product of ten years of Afrikaner-sponsored research into education.<sup>15</sup> This document is fundamental to understanding the premise of education under apartheid. The Beleid articulated the function of education to support Afrikaner cultural and ethnic isolation, along with the notions of trusteeship and segregation integral to apartheid policy. The Beleid laid out the plan for perpetuation and reproduction of the tenets fundamental to apartheid ideology. The language of the document itself, along with the defense and criticism of the document, spoke to the political positioning and purpose of Christian National Education. This section explores the foundational design of apartheid education.

In 1948, the National Party came to power in South Africa on the platform of apartheid. That same year, the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuur Vereniginge published the Christian National Education policy document, “Beleid” at the Instituut vir Christelike-Nasionale Onderwys in Johannesburg. The ICNO outlined the relationship that should exist between the church, the state, and schools. The document’s designers argued that Christian values (of the Afrikaner Calvinist persuasion) and nationalism should inform and infuse curriculum and lessons. The first article of the Beleid, “Basis” laid out the fundamental principles of Afrikanerdom:

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<sup>15</sup> Johnson, “Education: Keystone of Apartheid”

“We believe that the teaching and education of the children of white parents should occur on the basis of the life and world view of the parents... In this life and world view, the Christian and National principles are of basic significance and they aim at the propagation, protestation and development of the Christian and National being and nature of our nation.”<sup>16</sup>

The Beleid projected Afrikaner cultural values and imperatives into classrooms in the Union of South Africa, thus projecting Afrikaner cultural dominance.

The importance of this document lay in its political and cultural implications. Dr. Chris Coetzee, a member of the committee that produced the document, tried to clarify its purpose in 1960 by arguing that C.N.E. guidelines were never meant to provide mandates for non-Afrikaners. He wrote, “The C.N.E. policy of the F.A.K. is a policy for the Afrikaans Calvinist section of our population. It was never intended for the English Anglican section, neither for any of the other Afrikaans religious or philosophical groups.”<sup>17</sup> However, regardless of Dr. Coetzee’s argument, non-Afrikaner South Africans did not receive the document well. Though the document may have just been meant for a small selection of the white population, that small selection of the white population had control of the government. Non-Afrikaner South Africans, therefore, rightly feared that political dominance of the National Party would pave the way for

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<sup>16</sup> *Documents in South African Education*, edited by Brian Rose, Raymond Tunmer. Johannesburg: A. D. Donker, 1975. p. 120

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid* p. 117

Afrikaans cultural dominance.<sup>18</sup> Pam Christie and Colin Collins perceived the central ideological clash of Bantu Education to be between Afrikaner Baaskap (dominance) and liberal integration (English). However, the exclusion of black Africans from South African citizenship paved the way for the inclusion of white South Africans, regardless of English or Afrikaans heritage.

The C.N.E. document directly reflected Afrikaner values and acted as a sort of blueprint for ethnic separation and nationalistic domination. The document defined nationalism in terms of the perpetuation of Afrikanerdom. Article 3 of the Beleid stated:

“By national education we understand teaching in which the national principle of love for one’s own may effectively become valid in the entire content of the teaching and all activities of the school so that the child shall be led properly and with pride in his spiritual-cultural heritage into the spiritual-cultural possession of the nation.”

The National Party, as indicated by this statement, intended for cultural and ethnic identity to pervade curriculum. This definition of nationalism is revealing in that it suggested the protection of Afrikaner values and cultural heritage as a political and educational imperative. This speaks to the fear of Afrikaners of a loss of collective and distinctive identity and submergence under English culture in South Africa.<sup>19</sup> That Coetzee defended the C.N.E. as only intended for Afrikaners also highlights the

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<sup>18</sup> Rose and Tunmer 119

<sup>19</sup> Ibid p. 82

ethnic division and Afrikaner isolation fundamental to the National Party platform.

Black South Africans were only briefly mentioned in the Beleid, which corresponded with the National Party's complicated intention for ethnic autonomy and isolation. Additionally, the brief mention of black South Africans in the policy document lined up with the subjugation of black South Africans in the historical narrative, as Tena experienced. The education of "Coloured" and "native" South Africans was referred to at the end of the document, in one paragraph each. The education of both groups was tied to the "National Teaching" of Afrikaner children, in the sense that as part of the education of Afrikaner children, those children were tasked with the trusteeship of Coloured and native South Africans. Therein also lay the complication of ethnic autonomy and isolation. Trusteeship entailed Christianising both Coloured and native South Africans, along with enforcing ideas of separate racial identity indicating separate and lesser citizenship status. Beyond the responsibility of trusteeship, though, the C.N.E. diverged on the education of Coloured and native children.

"We believe that he can be made race-conscious if the principle of separation (apartheid) is strictly applied in education just as in his church life. We believe that the salvation (welfare) and the happiness of the coloured, lie in his grasping that he is a separate race-group, that he should be proud of it, and that he must be correspondingly educated as a Christian National. The financing of coloured education must be placed on such a basis that it does not occur at the cost of white education."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Rose and Turner

For “native” students, the emphasis was even more strongly placed on trusteeship.

“We believe that the calling and task of white South Africans with regard to the native is to Christianise him and help him on culturally, and that this calling and task has already found its nearer focusing in the principles of trusteeship, not equality and segregation. In accordance with these principles we believe that the teaching and education of the native must be grounded in the world view of the whites, most especially those of the Boer nation as the senior white trustee of the native.”<sup>21</sup>

Afrikaner students were taught to love and protect all that was theirs, and by definition of trusteeship, “Coloured” and “native” South Africans were pushed into that category. Through the education of Afrikaner youth, their citizenship was entwined with control over non-white South Africans.

Also important to note was the emphasis on the education of “Coloured” and “native” South Africans to constantly enforce their subordinate societal positioning. The Beleid acts as a window in to the design of apartheid education policy, the plan of Afrikaner isolation, and the emphasis on ethnic unity. The document also illustrates the government’s use of history to impose ethnic division and control of the people.

### **Eiselen Report Leads to Bantu Education**

To achieve ethnic isolation, the National Party needed to set up separate education systems. Segregation policy characterized the legal framework of the early 1950s in South Africa, thus the enforced segregation of schools was not unprecedented. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, in 1949 and the Immorality Act in 1950 criminalized sexual intercourse, relationships and marriages between people of

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid

different racial categorization. In 1950, the Group Areas Act regulated Black presence in urban, industrial, and agricultural areas and reserved those areas for White South Africans. Only domestic workers and laborers were allowed into those areas, and their families could not live with them. Also in 1950, the Population Registration Act categorized South Africans into three race groups: White, Colored, and Black. In 1951, the Bantu Authorities Act mandated that all Black Africans live and vote only in their “native” lands, disconnecting Africans from South African national citizenship. The Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act, on 1952, required Africans to carry a “pass-book” containing personal information and employment history and information.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, for the most part schools were largely segregated already, but the National Party took control of the education of Africans during the early 1950s, which, though reflective of the notion of trusteeship taught in Afrikaner schools, did signify somewhat of a sea change.

The National Party’s design for African education came at the end of a four-year process and was built on the premise of African separatism and tribalism. In 1949, the National Party established the Commission on Native Education under the direction of Dr. WWM Eiselen, who is now regarded as one of the architects of the apartheid system. A trained anthropologist and African linguist, Eiselen had rejected scientific racism

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<sup>22</sup> <http://postcolonialstudies.emory.edu/apartheid/> (For all of the acts)

early in his career instead relying on the argument of cultural difference.<sup>23</sup> His academic background informed the Commission's dedication to constructing a black education system that encouraged Africans to embrace their cultural heritage in the vein of segregation. The Commission published the Eiselen Report in 1951, arguing that schools should define and illustrate the distinctions between white and black South Africans early on. The report rested on the notion that, if black South Africans were not taught about their lesser societal status in school, and were instead exposed to European culture and thought, they would be drawn away from their own culture and be lost upon finishing school, when they did not fit in to white South African society and had rejected their own heritage.<sup>24</sup>

Eiselen's report sought to combat the "breakdown of tribal culture" that he perceived as a result of black migration to urban areas and the infiltration of European colonization. According to the report, "The staggering power and glitter of western culture has tended to make the educated Bantu despise their own culture," and Eiselen, as an anthropologist with a deep-set belief in cultural difference, suggested throughout the report that Africans should be taught about their cultural heritage, taught in their native language, and that black communities

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<sup>23</sup> Kros, Cynthia. "W.W.M. Eiselen: Architect of Apartheid Education." In *The History of Education Under Apartheid: 1948-1994*, edited by Peter Kallaway. Vol. 28, 53. New York: Peter Lang, 2002. p. 55

<sup>24</sup> Eiselen Report, Rose and Tunmer

should have control in the schools.<sup>25</sup> The Commission proposed that “Bantu personnel should be used to the maximum to make the schools as Bantu in spirit as possible as well as to provide employment,” and that schools be closely linked with already-existing community institutions.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the report recommended Christianity, social values, and hygiene to be taught in schools, thus suggesting cultural pathology of blacks. Eiselen’s report outlined a system of education that would ensure self-reproducing segregation. By emphasizing “Bantu development,” cultural pride, and self sufficiency, the report laid out guidelines for racial separation. South Africans were to learn about their lesser societal status in school to prepare them for the segregated realities of the outside world.

Out of the Eiselen report grew the Bantu Education Act, which neatly followed the slew of other apartheid policies enacted between 1949 and 1952. The Act, passed in 1953, both drew from and ignored parts of the Report, such as Eiselen’s insistence on community input in schools. The Bantu Education act signified the Union of South Africa taking complete control of African education. Until 1953, English missionaries controlled and operated 5000 out of 7000 black schools. The English missionaries opposed the centralized and officially segregated Bantu Education system, and claimed that apartheid policy disempowered both

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid p. 249

<sup>26</sup> Kros, Cynthia. "W.W.M. Eiselen: Architect of Apartheid Education." In *The History of Education Under Apartheid: 1948-1994*, edited by Peter Kallaway. Vol. 28, 53. New York: Peter Lang, 2002.



the English and the black Africans.<sup>27</sup> Drawing from the Eiselen Report, the Bantu Education Act further promoted the development of black people, and when “development” is referred to, “separate” is either explicitly stated or indirectly implied.<sup>28</sup> While the Act definitively shaped nationalism around ethnic identity, socioeconomic class also factored into the separation, according to Pam Christie and Colin Collins. The class argument is that the white English and Afrikaners oppressed the black Africans through separate education geared towards exclusion from citizenship not only because of racism, but to ensure the availability of a labor source.<sup>29</sup> Bantu Education served the National Party in social, political and economic terms.

While Bantu Education fit well into the other legislative measures taken around the same time to establish the segregation inherent to apartheid, and the policy itself drew from the Jim Crow system of the American South, the Act took control of African education the year before the United States Supreme Court ruled de jure segregation illegal.

The apartheid regime gained its legislative footing just as, in the US, the Supreme Court dismantled legal segregation. While the US tried to position itself as an inclusive democracy, the Union of South Africa blatantly chose to assign Africans separate education geared towards

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<sup>27</sup> Christie, Pam and Colin Collins. "Bantu Education: Apartheid Ideology and Labour Reproduction." In *Apartheid and Education*, edited by Peter Kallaway, 160. Johannesburg: Ryan Press, 1984.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Christie and Collins p. 61

separate existence. The Brown ruling argued in favor of desegregation to support the socialization aspect of public schools. Justice Warren, in his decision on the case, declared that “separate education facilities are inherently unequal” the same year that Verwoerd argued the benevolence of separate education.<sup>30</sup> The National Party education policy separated and controlled black South Africans as part of the larger apartheid system. The pass laws, restricted movement, Group Areas Act and Education Acts had at their core and as their goal the exclusion of black South Africans from citizenship status in South Africa and from interaction with the white minority.

### **Justification of Separate Education**

Immediately after the passing of the Bantu Education Act, the National Party began to publicly justify separate education. The political rhetoric which served this purpose invokes the importance of preparing Africans for second-class citizenship along with the biblical meaning to racial separation. The social and religious meaning assigned to separate education laid groundwork for the ideology of apartheid.

Political rhetoric of the National Party revealed the Bantu Education Act to be grounded in Eurocentricity. In 1954, then Minister of Native Affairs and later prime Minister of South Africa Hendrik Verwoerd gave a speech to the Senate in defense of the Bantu Education Act. In line

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<sup>30</sup> *Opinion of the Court in Brown v. Board of Education* (Supreme Court 1954).

with the Eiselen Report, he criticized the previous Native Education system for educating black students on the same model that white students were taught with. As a result, he argued, “the vain hope was created among natives that they could occupy posts within the European community despite the country’s policy of ‘apartheid.’”<sup>31</sup> Later in his speech, Verwoerd elaborated on this point, leaving little to the imagination:

“There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor. Within his own community, however, all doors are open. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the greener pastures of Europeans society in which he was not allowed to graze.”<sup>32</sup>

The Bantu Education Act, the Eiselen Report and Verwoerd’s speech emphasized the importance of the development of the “Bantu” to meet the needs of “his community” and not to leave that community.

The content of apartheid education reflected and supported the policy of separate development. The content of apartheid-era education perpetuated the subordination of blacks and white domination within schools, again to prepare South African children for the societal structure outside of those schools. The National Party used Afrikaner historiography to construct the official historical narrative of South Africa. This narrative fostered unity among Afrikaners and lent historical gravity to the policies

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<sup>31</sup> Rose and Tunmer p.261

<sup>32</sup> Weider, Alan. *Voices from Cape Town Classrooms: Oral Histories of Teachers Who Fought Apartheid*. New York: Peter Lang, 2003.

of apartheid. The NP constructed the official historical narrative to bolster white, specifically Afrikaner, identity and nationalism. In policy, the apartheid system provided privileged inclusionary citizenship to white South Africans, while the content of the official historical narrative provided collective historic grounding to that citizenship. That narrative characterized public discourse among NP politicians and school history education.

The National Party intended for history education to have a religious and nationalistic purpose. The historic narrative, rooted in Afrikaner historiography, claimed God's will for Afrikanerdom. The Beleid argued that

“history must be taught in the light of the divine revelation and must be seen as the fulfillment of God's decree for the world and humanity... Youth can faithfully take over the task and vocation of the older generation only when it has acquired through instruction in history a true vision of the origin of the nation, and of the direction in that heritage.”<sup>33</sup>

Collins and Christie insisted that with Christian National Education, the National party government “set out what was allegedly the greatest piece of ideological manipulation of the young, since Hitler.”<sup>34</sup> Ideological manipulation hinged on the construction of an historical narrative that would serve apartheid ideology. Christianity provided an ideological foundation for the narrative.

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<sup>33</sup> Rose and Tunmer p. 123

<sup>34</sup> Collins and Christie p. 59

Afrikaner historiography drew from early English historiography, which argued that all peoples had migrated to southern African around the same time.<sup>35</sup> According to this origin story, Afrikaners had as much claim to land as Africans, which helped to justify European seizure of lands. Further, this narrative declared manifest destiny: God gave the land to the Boers, along with the divine right and responsibility to reap its benefits and act as trustees of the African inhabitants. Manifest destiny embedded the narrative with Biblical authority. In 1970, twenty-two years after the National Party came into power, Prime Minister Vorster made a statement standing fast with apartheid and its religious grounding.

“Our only guide in the Bible. Our policy and outlook on life are based on the Bible. We firmly believe that the way we interpret it is right. We will not budge an inch from our interpretation to satisfy anyone in South Africa or abroad. The world may differ from our interpretation. This will not influence us. The world may be wrong. We are right and will continue to follow the way the Bible teaches,”

Vorster said, explaining why the National Party would not alter, defend, or apologize for the system of apartheid. This devotion to and interpretation of Christian teachings was also rooted in the Afrikaners’ relation to the church and in response to British colonial control.

The Church acted as a driving force of literacy for the Boers during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the Bible was an essential component to Boer education. When the British moved towards secular education, the Boers fiercely resisted, and British encroachment on their Church-based

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<sup>35</sup> Weldon, Gail. "A Comparative Study of the Construction of Memory and Identity in the Curriculum in Societies Emerging from Conflict: Rwanda and South Africa." PhD Education, University of Pretoria, 2009. P. 93

schooling fueled the fire of Boer victimhood and resistance. This also served to further develop Boer education in its religious orientation.<sup>36</sup> In this sense as well, education became a site of Christian teachings and nationalism. The Boers' efforts to protect Church-based education intensified both the religious and protectively nationalistic elements of Boer identity. Christian National Education, when considered as a political function, fought to protect Afrikanerdom in light of real and perceived threats from both international and domestic pressures. The strongly religious and nationalistic tone and exclusionary policies of the National Party should therefore be seen as a defense mechanism as much as they were offensive. The origin story was rooted in religion and the National Party constructed an official historical to serve the party's goals of unity based in ethnicity instead of class. The National Party used this story to foster nationalism, and communicated it using history education as a vehicle.

### **History Education Content and Policy Converge**

The political agenda of history education under apartheid emphasized both Afrikaner nationalism and the legitimacy of apartheid policies, by working to historically root both Afrikaner glory and racial separation. This section seeks to expose the way in which Afrikaner historians and textbooks constructed and perpetuated a narrative to support

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<sup>36</sup> Dean, Elizabeth, Paul Hartmann, and May Katzen. *History in Black and White: An Analysis of South African School History Textbooks* Unesco, 1983. p. 23

the apartheid system. This section also serves to illustrate what historical narrative students, educators and activists fought against in their struggle against the content of apartheid education.

Content and policy of apartheid education converged at the point of the nation as social unit. Where Christian National Education identified education as a site to Christianize and nationalize young white citizens, the ideology of this policy positioned the nation as the central social unit. During the 1930s, Afrikaner urban petty bourgeoisie responded to the economic empowerment of farmers with hostility, their actions representing the tensions and fragmentation within Afrikanerdom.<sup>37</sup> The National Party redefined Afrikaner ideology, in a shifting of their political platform, to organize Afrikanerdom around ethnicity and culture rather than class. The ethnic-cultural distinction also solidified the separation of Afrikaners from other white South Africans and South Africans of color, which justified policies pertaining to this separation. Christian ideology played into this ethnic-cultural unity in giving Afrikaners the “divinely allotted task” of the trusteeship of Africans and, in terms of policy implications, guiding Africans towards separate development based on their “ethnic” identity.<sup>38</sup> Education as socialization therefore served to isolate and empower Afrikaners along cultural lines and inform and legitimize policies of separate existence within South Africa.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

Afrikaner historian FA Van Jaarsveld recognized that history education could instill a sense of nationalism in young people. Van Jaarsveld was a prominent and controversial figure in the landscape of South African history, labeled a Marxist by his peers for his association with the socialist Dutch historian Jan Romein.<sup>39</sup> Controversy also stemmed from his urging that history be more scientific and objective. While he considered absolute service to nationalism a shortcoming of Afrikaner historiography, Van Jaarsveld did not negatively portray education that provided students with an awareness of heritage and traditions.<sup>40</sup> In his 1964 book, *The Afrikaner's Interpretation of South African History*, Van Jaarsveld articulated this line of thought: "National history can also have the effect of attaching the youth of the nation to its traditions... knowledge of the past can be the spur to action, and at the same time evoke a feeling of thankfulness."<sup>41</sup> His argument for teaching national history matched up to the C.N.E.'s suggestion to incorporate the "divine revelation" into history education. The preservation and continuation of Afrikaner traditions and heritage was at stake, and history education with a nationalistic bent was the perceived solution. To serve the goal of nationalism, events when told through the lens of Afrikaner

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<sup>39</sup> Albert Grundlingh, interview by author, Stellenbosch, South Africa, January 11, 2013

<sup>40</sup> Mouton, FA and Albert van Jaarsveld. "'Angry Young Men': FA Van Jaarsveld, TS Van Rooyen and the Afrikaner Historiographical Polemic of 1953-1954." *Historia: Amptelike Orgaan* 49, no. 2 (2004): 167.

<sup>41</sup> van Jaarsveld, Floris Albertus. *The Afrikaner's Interpretation of South African History*. South Africa: Simondium Publishers, 1964.



historiography glorified Afrikaners and showcased perseverance against insurmountable odds. Kallaway and Tena's memories of teaching and learning history during apartheid lined up directly with that purpose for history education.

The National Party framed the Great Trek as the central event in Afrikaner history. December 16<sup>th</sup> was (and still is) celebrated by Afrikaners as the Day of the Vow, in reference to a covenant said to have been made between God and the Trekkers in 1838, which led to the slaughter of 3,000 Zulus.<sup>42</sup> As Kallaway remembered, students of history heard this story again and again. The "Anglo-Boer War" that Kallaway mentioned formed the other pillar of the foundation of Afrikaner historiography. The War has since been renamed the "South African War" to acknowledge the participation and loss of life of those who were not English or Boer.<sup>43</sup> In Afrikaner historiography, the Anglo-Boer War, fought between 1899 and 1902, is noted as an example of Afrikaner victimization and isolation, as well as perseverance. The internment of Boer women and children in British concentration camps is highlighted. The National Party chose the Great Trek as a narrative of rugged glory and the South African War as a narrative of trauma, forming a historically

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<sup>42</sup> Bearak, Barry. "A Holiday of White Conquest Persists in a South Africa Far from United." *The New York Times*, Dec. 17, 2009, 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Witz, Leslie, Ciraj Rassool, and Gary Minkley. "Who Speaks for South African Pasts?" University of the Western Cape, South African Historical Society, 1999, 1999.

rooted collective identity for the fragmented Afrikaner population leading up to 1948.<sup>44</sup>

Curriculum designers and textbook writers left precolonial history almost entirely out of the official Afrikaner historical narrative, and gave black South Africans minimal historical space.<sup>45</sup> Their presence served the ideological goal of affirming racial difference. “Bushmen” are defined in a 1976 textbook as a “primitive race from the Stone Age who had been forced to leave Asia by a stronger race.”<sup>46</sup> Official textbooks supported the separate curricula, all of which proclaimed ethnic and cultural difference and assigned lower societal status to black South Africans. The authors of *History in Black and White* observed from their analysis of South African history textbooks that the historiography within those textbooks paved the way to argue that racial separation, and therefore policies to ensure that separation, was natural and historically rooted. The authors cited as an example that pass laws of 1809 are cited to justify the Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act of 1952 and therefore the necessity of blacks to carry passes in the 1970s. The history education prescribed for classroom instruction connected past and present to justify apartheid policies and ideology. The *Official Yearbook of the Republic of South Africa* from 1979 explained the origin of racial separation in southern Africa:

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<sup>44</sup> Weldon p. 91

<sup>45</sup> Dean et al

<sup>46</sup> Ibid p. 57

“From this settlement pattern it followed naturally that any relations between the various peoples of South Africa would from the beginning be regulated on the basis of separate and parallel institutions, separate land ownership, distinctive traditions, cultures, languages, as well as on the basis of differing stages of socioeconomic development.”<sup>47</sup>

The *Yearbook* did not need to use the terms “inferior” or “domination” to make the point of segregation. By historically rooting the separation of “various peoples of South Africa,” the *Yearbook* (ostensibly) provided justification for apartheid legislation and the subjugation of black South Africans.

Textbook authors characterized Africans as barbarous and as interruptions to white domination, and by extension, civilization in South Africa.<sup>48</sup> Walker wrote that the speed and distance of the Great Trek enabled Trekkers to push “in among the Bantu tribes, the first white men to do so in any numbers, and British troops and officials pushed in after them.”<sup>49</sup> From the resulting interactions, Walker argued, “The South African native problem began to assume its familiar form.”<sup>50</sup> Tena recalled being required to teach her students that Africans were “willing victims” of colonization. Grundlingh echoed that point, and added that teachers were supposed to teach that Africans also did not know how to farm.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid p. 17

<sup>48</sup> Weldon, “A Comparative Study of the Construction of Memory and Identity in Curriculum in Societies Emerging from Conflict: Rwanda and South Africa.”

<sup>49</sup> Walker p. 9

<sup>50</sup> Ibid p. 10

<sup>51</sup> Albert Grundlingh, interview by author, Stellenbosch, South Africa, January 11, 2013

From the late 1950s onward, the NP relied heavily on history education for “conveying a set of assumptions relating to the construction and reproduction of apartheid ideology and white domination.”<sup>52</sup> NP education policy depended on the method of rote memorization and discouragement of critical inquiry to “force-feed” Afrikaner nationalist ideology to the students through content in the prescribed syllabus and textbooks. Students were expected to be able to repeat the official version of history back to teachers and, more importantly, on their exams.<sup>53</sup> As a mode of indoctrination, history education was essential as a political function of the regime to continue and reproduce Afrikaner nationalist ideology in the classroom and beyond. The past was used by the National Party to legitimize the present, both in terms of legislation passed and stories told. The subjugation of non-white South Africans through the apartheid system relied on the stories woven through Afrikaner historiography.

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<sup>52</sup> Kallaway, Peter. “Education and Nation Building. (1991)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

### CHAPTER THREE: “BURNING THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS” STUDENT RESISTANCE 1976-1985

Beneath the façade of uniformity crafted by the National Party rumbled political and social instability in the schools. Students, teachers and parents protested Bantu Education from its onset, instantly recognizing in the act an education system designed to train youth for the apartheid reality of exclusion from citizenship. Those subject to this system identified the need to challenge school governance, racist curricula, and the methodology of rote memorization within schools. 1976 was a turning point in terms of the liberation ideology employed by the students acting in resistance. Once awakened to social and political realities, students protested both the policy and content of apartheid education.

Paulo Freire’s theory of “conscientisation” as well as the pedagogy of the Black Consciousness Movement played vital roles in shaping student resistance to apartheid education and challenging the apartheid institution. Students and teachers identified history education as a site of contention in the struggle against apartheid by recognizing that the story promoted by the National Party promoted apartheid ideology. This period is significant because students engaged in resistance against apartheid forged their way into the historical tradition of resistance and thus into the historical consciousness of their fellow students. Thus, students were essentially accessing and crafting history education that applied more

directly and felt more truthful to their lives. Afrikaner cultural domination persisted in presenting itself in schools through history education and language instruction. The Soweto uprisings of 1976 exposed that entwined oppressiveness of the mandated curricula.

This chapter seeks to illustrate student resistance to the system of apartheid education detailed in the previous chapter. The chapter contributes to the thesis' overall argument about the political function of history education by exploring the responses of students to the use of education to control. 1976 marked a turning point for the struggle against apartheid education, both by influencing students throughout South Africa to resist, and by articulating that students were aware of the political function of apartheid education. Students responded to apartheid education in protest and through boycotts, prioritizing liberation over education. The students struggled against both the policy and message of apartheid education, and the resistance challenged the notion of black subordination as natural or a result of cultural pathology or passivity. In this chapter, I explore how the Soweto uprisings of 1976 acted as a catalyst for further action against apartheid education and how the Black Consciousness Movement, informed by Paulo Freire's theory of "conscientisation" articulated student grievances against apartheid education.

Soon after the Soweto uprisings, the University of Cape Town Student Representative Council produced a document examining the events of June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1976. Clause D of the document read: "The black

people of this country have realized that a significantly large amount of oppressive control over their lives is found in the educational system of this country.”<sup>54</sup> The SRC made this statement directly in response to the Soweto uprisings of 1976, but also addressed apartheid education in general and police and government response to the uprisings themselves. In 1976, South Africa was in the midst of a political awakening and a paradigm shift in the approach to resistance was occurring. In this sense, the events of June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1976 represented “both an end and a beginning.”<sup>55</sup> The Soweto uprisings signified the intensification of the “liberation first, education later” ideology, and served as a catalyst for hundreds of thousands of students around South Africa to collectively protest apartheid education. The statement of the UCT students elucidates the connection between the struggle for democratic education and the struggle for national liberation. On top of that, their statement sheds light on student awareness of the ineffective and purposefully oppressive system of education, supported by both apartheid policy and historiographical content. Though almost all of the UCT students were white, their cognizance of the struggle and attempt to engage themselves demonstrated the wide reach and interracial characteristics of the struggle. The white

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<sup>54</sup> University of Cape Town Student Representative Council. "Events since June 16th have Demonstrated." University of Cape Town Archives and Special Collections.

<sup>55</sup> Alexander, Neville. *Education and the Struggle for National Liberation in South Africa*. (Africa World Press, New Jersey) 1992 p.25

UCT students could see that even as white students, they could be, and needed to be invested in national liberation.

The ideology of “liberation first, education later” characterized the struggle between 1976 and 1985. Resistance often took the form of the very literal destruction of apartheid institutions. “People could be burning the school buildings with the kind of rationale that the school buildings are representing the Bantu Education system which is abhorred,” a student-activist recalled.<sup>56</sup> The images of burning school buildings and students in the streets pervaded national consciousness during this period. Such images contrasted and reconstructed the historical narrative and the façade of unity and contented subservience crafted by the architects of apartheid. By writing themselves into the historical consciousness, student resisters countered prescribed history education.

### **Mandated Afrikaans**

As laid out in the Beleid, language and history instruction had a similar nationalistic function: to make Afrikaner domination structurally and ideologically sound. The mandating of Afrikaans instruction for African students served this purpose as well as ensuring the communicability of the labor class. Mandated Afrikaans instruction sought to preference Afrikaans over English as the dominant and authoritative language in South Africa, while simultaneously devaluing African

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<sup>56</sup> *Trade Unions and Democracy*, Edited by South African Committee on Higher Education. Vol. Transcript. Johannesburg, 1985.



languages. It is important to consider the National Government's decision to mandate Afrikaans in schools as well as the related educational function of Afrikaner language and official history.

Mandated Afrikaans language instruction formed another component of apartheid education's enforcement of white, specifically Afrikaner cultural dominance. In terms of Christie and Collins' argument that Bantu Education served to secure a sustainable labor class, mandated Afrikaans instruction, in design, prepared African students to communicate with their white employers. That is an example of policy and content of apartheid education working in consort to ensure the subordination of black South Africans. In 1974, the director of Bantu Education for the Southern Transvaal region dictated that Afrikaans and English would be taught and used on a 50-50 basis in secondary schools, despite students and teachers' stronger grasp of English.<sup>57</sup> This directive contradicted the 1973 promise of the previous director, Dr. H. van Zyl, that individual schools could decide what language to use and that it was not in the best interest of the children to have two primary languages of instruction.<sup>58</sup> During the 1960s, Coloured Education had mandated that Afrikaans be the primary medium of instruction as well. School boards, parents, teachers and students all reacted to this mandate in protest, but their requests for a reverse of the policy were rejected.

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<sup>57</sup> "Unrest in Schools in Taal Row Began in 1974." *The Argus Correspondent*, June 17, 1976, 1976.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

Students throughout South Africa were upset by the implementation of Afrikaans instruction in schools, not only because they had minimal command of the language but because their teachers did as well. Students observed that mandated Afrikaans instruction limited their teachers' capacity for creativity in the classroom. "One teacher taught us social studies in Afrikaans, and she didn't know a word of Afrikaans and she was just in a terrible corner of having to mouth these Afrikaans terms," a student-turned-activist remembered.<sup>59</sup> Students spoke out and organized against Bantu Education, identifying mandated Afrikaans instruction as a symbol of the oppressive system as a whole. The mandate to use Afrikaans as a language of instruction in schools provided a point around which students could rally, and symbolized the oppressive foundation of Bantu Education in a specific policy. The mandating of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in secondary schools is also important to consider in looking at the student responses to that mandate, namely, the Soweto uprisings of 1976. This piece of educational policy also spoke to the National Government's efforts to control the identity of the people and their capacity to interact. Students recognized Afrikaans as an element of apartheid control, and responded accordingly.

### **Soweto, 1976**

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<sup>59</sup> *Trade Unions and Democracy*, Edited by South African Committee on Higher Education. Vol. Transcript. Johannesburg, 1985.p.4

The Soweto uprisings of 1976 illustrate the large-scale onset of student resistance to apartheid education. The events in Soweto and the events for which they served as the catalyst speak to student awareness of the impact of apartheid education and student capacity to organize. I have included the Soweto uprisings to support my overall argument because the events demonstrate that teacher resistance was not unprecedented and to set the foreground for later organizing around education as a source of empowerment. Additionally, I argue that the Soweto uprisings mark the turning point at which South Africans began to hear students' grievances about the oppressiveness of apartheid education.

What started out as a peaceful expression of student solidarity and resistance quickly became an event seared into South African memory. On June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1976, Soweto High School students traveled in small groups from school to school to gather fellow youth to protest the presence of Afrikaans in schools.<sup>60</sup> The group of protestors swelled, gathering more students from the various area schools. Soon five thousand people were marching. Police ordered the protestors to disperse, and instead they began to sing Nkosi Sikelele, according to photographer Sam Nzima. In trying to stop the demonstration, police escalated the situation to a riot. Police shot thirteen-year-old Hector Pieterse in the back, killing him. Nzima took a photograph of Pieterse in the arms of a fellow student, who was running

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<sup>60</sup> Projects Committee SRC Press. "Soweto June 16."

for help, flanked by Pieterse's sister Antoinette. The image captured by Nzima became a visual signifier of the police brutality in South Africa's townships and of the clash between the National Party and the students of the country. This image did not present an exceptional or isolated incident, instead, the photograph exposed what black South Africans knew from the experience of township life. For students across South Africa, though, the events in Soweto and the reporting of those events served as a call to action.

Students responded to the Soweto uprisings in the model of "liberation first, education later;" metaphorically, and sometimes physically burning the institutions associated with apartheid. In early August of 1976, students at the University of the Western Cape protested against the "irresponsible and hostile behavior" of the UWC Staff Association and carried signs that said, "Solidarity with Soweto."<sup>61</sup> As the protests escalated, students burnt down the administration building at the university.<sup>62</sup> The events in Soweto enabled students to articulate grievances against their own institutions and apartheid as a system, and imagery and news of the protests throughout South Africa provided an alternate narrative of the struggle. Later in August, students protested at schools in Langa, Nyanga and Gugulethu, three townships outside Cape Town's city center. With every protest, police strengthened their resolve

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<sup>61</sup> Norton, Victor. "Preliminary Chronology of Events in Cape Town in the Unrest Following the Soweto Riots" (September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1976)

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

against the students, using teargas, shooting, dogs, and other violent methods to disperse the crowds. Schools throughout the Western Cape erupted in protest and resistance against Bantu Education and the apartheid system in general, listing grievances and demonstrating their presence and organizational capacity. Police violence escalated, and the death toll rose. All the while, Prime Minister Vorster insisted that nothing was amiss in the townships and all was peaceful and orderly.<sup>63</sup>

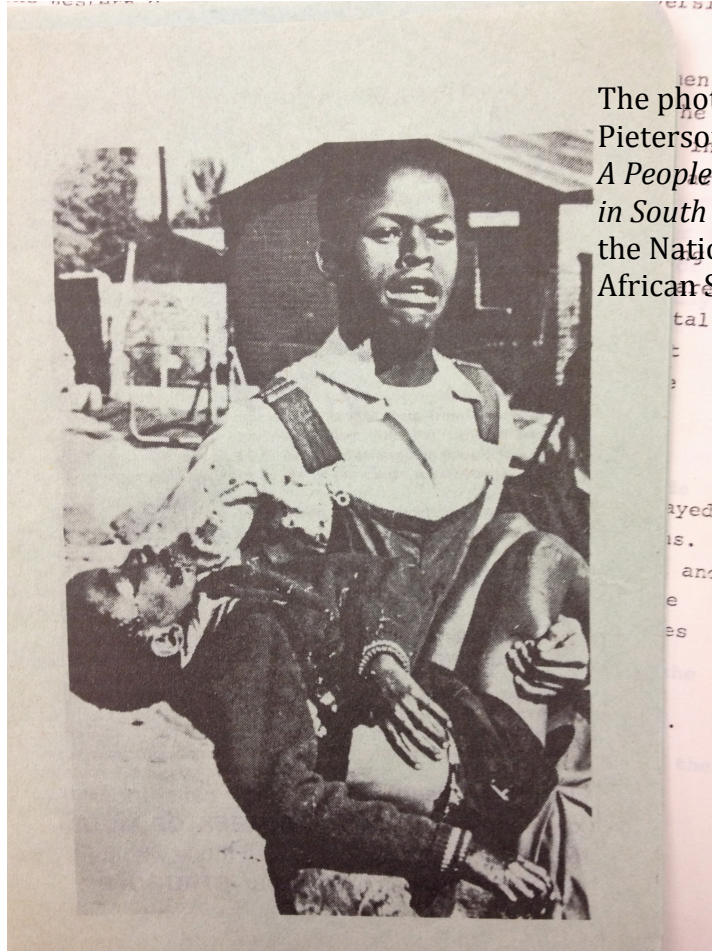
The events of 1976 illustrate the growing awareness of students to the constraints and oppressive foundation of apartheid education. As the National party insisted on maintaining a façade of calm, students identified education as a site of resistance against the apartheid system and the National Party government. Soweto's position as a catalyst to further, wide-spread action grew out of extensive student organizing that had begun to develop during the late 1960s and through the political awakening of students learning under the system.

By explaining the 1976 events at Soweto and their immediate aftermath, I hoped to shed light on student grievances and the scale of student protests against apartheid education. Furthermore, the uprisings showcase the willingness of students to put activism before their education in the vein of challenging the apartheid institution, which is deeply contrasted by the struggle efforts of teachers and scholars in the late 1980s. The Soweto uprisings as an example of student organizing also

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid

speak to the political awakening of students, a story which had the Black Consciousness Movement was at its core.



The photograph of Hector Pieterse, as reproduced in *A People's History: Resistance in South Africa*, published by the National Union of South African Students

### **Consciousness and Conscientisation**

The pedagogy of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and the impact of Paulo Freire on that movement reflected a different liberation ideology than the Soweto uprisings and their aftermath. BCM and Freire's theory of conscientisation influenced students to engage in the process of raising historical and political awareness as a step in the process of establishing themselves as activists. I included the Black Consciousness Movement and Freire's theory of conscientisation to illustrate student

efforts towards transforming education, both in the sense of schooling and in a more fluid sense, as a tool of liberation. Freire's theory of conscientisation, and the Black Consciousness Movement represent efforts by the people to challenge the manipulation of history and identity by the state. Walton Johnson argued that the conditions of African education contributed to low-self-esteem and a lost sense of self-identity for African children.<sup>64</sup> The Black Consciousness Movement directly countered that.

Student awakening to the political context and social conditions in South Africa came in various forms, and was a necessary first step to political engagement. This is where the linkage between effective history education, critical questioning, and social action defines itself. Political awakening happened both in the classroom and on the streets. In an interview with student activists, one interviewee threaded together The Black Consciousness Movement and political awakening in school. During the late 1960s or early 1970s, students "started sloganising Black is Beautiful, and Black this, and its powerful to be black and so on. And that was like a consciousness that started creeping into our school and into the community, into the church and into the youth movement," a student-activist reflected.<sup>65</sup> The infusion of this empowering slogan countered the characterization and silencing of blacks in the official historical narrative. "That was my first I think awakening to some kind of political thing

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<sup>64</sup> Johnson "Education: Keystone of Apartheid"

<sup>65</sup> *Trade Unions and Democracy*, Edited by South African Committee on Higher Education. Vol. Transcript. Johannesburg, 1985.

happening,” the student added.<sup>66</sup> For this student, awareness shifted when a teacher brought alternative historical narratives into the classroom, such as the French Revolution and the history of resistance against apartheid.

The experiences of these students-turned-activists reflected the pedagogy of the Black Consciousness Movement, which drew from Paulo Freire’s theory of conscientisation. The BCM fits well into the question of how effective teaching of history should demand questioning, and further, social action. Additionally, a brief analysis of the BCM places it into the cleavage between “liberation first, education later” and “education for liberation,” which more directly crafts the linkage between questioning and social action. The BCM challenged the legitimacy of the “apartheid institution” by deconstructing the messages promoted by apartheid ideology. The student-activist’s memory of saying “Black is Beautiful,” a slogan of Black Consciousness, directly contrasted the vilification and marginalization of blacks in the prescribed history texts, and at large, the image of blacks promoted by the National Government.

The movement and the concept claimed pride in identity, as well as it claimed access to consciousness. Where the “educational” institutions of apartheid discouraged critical inquiry and political and social consciousness, black consciousness required heightened awareness. Students involved in Black Consciousness lent a young, organized, intellectual element to the struggle. Also, because Black Consciousness

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid



referred to a movement, state of awareness, and stage of struggle, the banning of an organization could not suppress the intellectual investigation. A student-activist remembered that Black Consciousness organizations in East London were militant in their knowledge-seeking. “We had a scheme of actually reading, extensive reading and encouraging each other to take out library membership... reading many theoretical works. Of course mainly related to the Black Consciousness philosophy, of the Afro-American studies,”<sup>67</sup> he said. The student’s reference to “reading many theoretical works” speaks to the BCM’s challenge of prescribed history education. Collective reading groups and the promotion of library membership also speaks to the support of questioning. Students who became involved in Black Consciousness, and those who established the movement recognized that prescribed history education did not allow space for questioning, and undertook to create that space and develop a knowledge base from which to develop questions.

The Black Consciousness Movement drew from Paulo Freire’s theory of conscientisation. In Freire’s language, the concept of conscientisation refers to “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.”<sup>68</sup> Fhulu Nekhuwevha argues that Paulo Freire deeply impacted student struggles against apartheid education in the 1970s and

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<sup>67</sup> *Trade Unions and Democracy*, Edited by South African Committee on Higher Education. Vol. Transcript. Johannesburg, 1985.

<sup>68</sup> Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.

1980s, specifically, Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.<sup>69</sup> Steve Biko, who is credited with founding the Black Consciousness Movement, interpreted Freire's theory and expanded upon its meaning as he understood it:

“Conscientisation is a process whereby individuals or groups living within a given social and political setting are made aware of their situation. The operative attitude here is not so much awareness of the physical sense of their situation, but much more their ability to assess and improve their own influence over themselves and their environment... thus then ‘conscientisation’ implies a desire to engage people in an emancipatory process in an attempt to free them from a situation of bondage.”<sup>70</sup>

Biko's argument for the necessity of ‘conscientisation’ in the process of emancipation applies directly to “education for liberation” but is not lost in “liberation first, education later” in that both require an awareness of the disempowering conditions of apartheid institutions. Biko, drawing from Freire, articulated without naming the importance of history education as a site of contention during apartheid and historical consciousness as a tool of resistance. By referring to an “emancipatory process,” Biko raised the Freirean notion of the acquisition of knowledge and capacity for critical analysis as a connection between questioning and social action, which certain resistance organizations highlighted further.

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<sup>69</sup> Nekhuwevha, Fhulu. "The Influence of Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of Knowing" on the South African Education Struggle in the 1970s and 1980s." In *The History of Education Under Apartheid: 1948-1994*, edited by Peter Kallaway, 134. New York: Peter Lang, 2002. p. 134

<sup>70</sup> Woods, Donald. *Biko*. London: Penguin, 1968.

The theory of conscientisation formed the core of the correlative relationship between education and liberation. The Azanian People's Organization, borne out of Black Consciousness, carried this connection into the early 1980s. The AZAPO, similarly to Biko, further called for a causal relationship between consciousness-building, questioning and acting, fitted together into the theory of conscientisation. The AZAPO produced a statement in the early 1980s calling for activism based in consciousness:

“Education is a process towards liberation. Liberation is ultimately the humanization of man... The role of man is not a passive one. He participates in the creative dimensions as well as intervenes in reality in order to change it... In a state of oppression man is a dehumanized being, an adapted being. He has lost his ability to make choices; he is subject to the choices of others; his decisions are no longer his own: they result from external prescription.”<sup>71</sup>

This statement is problematic in its absolute assertion of the dehumanized and disempowered nature of the oppressed, but helpful in that it asserts the possibility of liberation through raised consciousness. The AZAPO used Freire's 'conscientisation' to define the purpose of their engagement with the struggle.

Students involved in the Black Consciousness Movement and the offshoot organizations subscribed to the notion that their struggle based in intellectual resistance could avoid isolated elitism. Black Consciousness itself grew out of students' awareness of the link between their education

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<sup>71</sup> Prinsloo, M. “Thinking Strategies in Education: The Political Limits of Paulo Freire's Perspective,” in Millar, C., et al. (eds.), *Breaking the Formal Frame: Readings in South African Education in the 1980s*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991 p.230

and the apartheid system. The imperative to share knowledge with the oppressed as a form of emancipation did not belong solely to organizational mandate. A student-activist spoke to the application of conscientisation from the perspective of a university student.

“We should be able to learn this struggle and try to simplify all the theories that we have come to learn in our universities... to simplify it so that the people in the townships, people who didn't have the privilege of going through the same material that we have used, should be able to understand. So my point is that we are the university educated people shouldn't be ivory tower intellectuals but we should be intellectuals of the trailing masses.”<sup>72</sup>

The student-activist's comments speak to the particular moment and ideological location of the intellectual resistance against apartheid. The comments, along with Biko's interpretation of Freirean theory and the AZAPO's statement, identify a shift from burning buildings to stepping outside of those buildings and taking a critical view to the physical, social and economic conditions which those schools operated within.

Though the Black Consciousness Movement and the Soweto uprisings were not directly about history education, these pieces of the student struggle fit in to the same story. Soweto and the BCM represent two facets of growing student awareness of and response to oppressive education specifically and the apartheid system at large. Certain educators and activists were able to factor history education into that same struggle by articulating the importance of democratizing history education for the overall democratization of education. If nationalism-driven history

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<sup>72</sup> *Trade Unions and Democracy*, Edited by South African Committee on Higher Education. Vol. Transcript. Johannesburg, 1985.

education designed to oppress and divide creates an unstable facade of uniformity, the Black Consciousness Movement and the Soweto uprisings granted students who had deviated from that uniformity a space to articulate their grievances and act against apartheid education. These two elements created space for students to demand of the state the questions such as, “what about us? where is our story?” and to refuse the oppression and subjugation of their identity.

Student resistance to apartheid in the form of massive protest had hit a tipping point in the mid-1980s. They had effectively begun to question, and were finding ways to conceptualize the connection between their questions and social action, but the government response to the protests cost students their physical freedom and their lives. In 1984, at least 65,000 students took part in boycotts led by COSAS.<sup>73</sup> Many other students boycotted as well, and many were detained. The United Democratic Front (UDF) had been calling on students, workers and communities to make the country “ungovernable” as a strategy of resistance.<sup>74</sup> While this strategy did represent a linkage between questioning and social action, it came at great cost to those participating. Teachers, parents, communities and organizations perceived this sort of resistance as ineffective and dangerous, as demonstrated by their attempts

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<sup>73</sup> Motala, Shireen and Salim Vally. "People's Education: From People's Power to Tirisano." In *The History of Education Under Apartheid: 1948-1994*, edited by Peter Kallaway, 174. New York: Peter Lang, 2002.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

to shift the focus of resistance to apartheid education during the second half of the 1980s.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: “PEOPLE’S EDUCATION FOR PEOPLE’S POWER” THE SHIFT TO EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION

In 1987, a member of the National Education Crisis Committee synthesized the purpose of revising South African history curriculum: “since education as we have known it has been used as a tool of oppression, People’s Education will be an education that must help us to achieve people’s power.”<sup>75</sup> This chapter seeks to consider how teachers, academics and activists (the three circles often overlapping) took on this task of shaping history education into a tool for liberation instead of oppression. During the second half of the 1980s, educators and activists worked to confront apartheid education and ideology through the model of education for liberation. This confrontation occurred through the challenging of historical scholarship and classroom curriculum – separate but overlapping processes of resistance against apartheid. History education as a site of resistance to apartheid found space at the crossroads between the struggle for democratic education and the struggle for democratic historiography.

This chapter contributes to the argument of the thesis by explaining how different actors identified history education as political and worked against the historical narrative promoted by the National Government. In this chapter, I explore the roles of educators, activists and scholars in challenging history education and historiography under apartheid. This

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<sup>75</sup> Eric Molobi quoted in van der Heever (1987): 2 (Weldon 103)

chapter draws substantially from interviews with people who taught history during apartheid, and their experiences highlight the political facet to their work. This chapter examines the importance of networks, the role of teachers unions, the creation and intentions of the National Education Crisis Committee as well as the National Government's response to the NECC, and the two-layer curriculum that teachers employed in their classroom. In the main, this chapter examines the negotiation between democratic education and an authoritarian state.

Parents and teachers recognized that to convince students to return to school the classroom environment and content of the lessons would have to change. Students shied away from history education because stories they heard made them feel submissive and they did not want to listen to the propaganda.<sup>76</sup> Students had the capacity to decipher that history education took the form of propaganda, and therefore avoided this subject. Some students, such as those engaged in the Black Consciousness Movement, sought out truthful history for themselves, but otherwise that history was not readily available to them. The boycotts and stay-aways were, in part, the next step after identifying propaganda in schools. Therefore, teachers and organizers sought, during the second half of the 1980s specifically, to create a classroom environment conducive to and content relevant for students to question and draw connections between inquiry and activism. In this vein, teachers established opposing history

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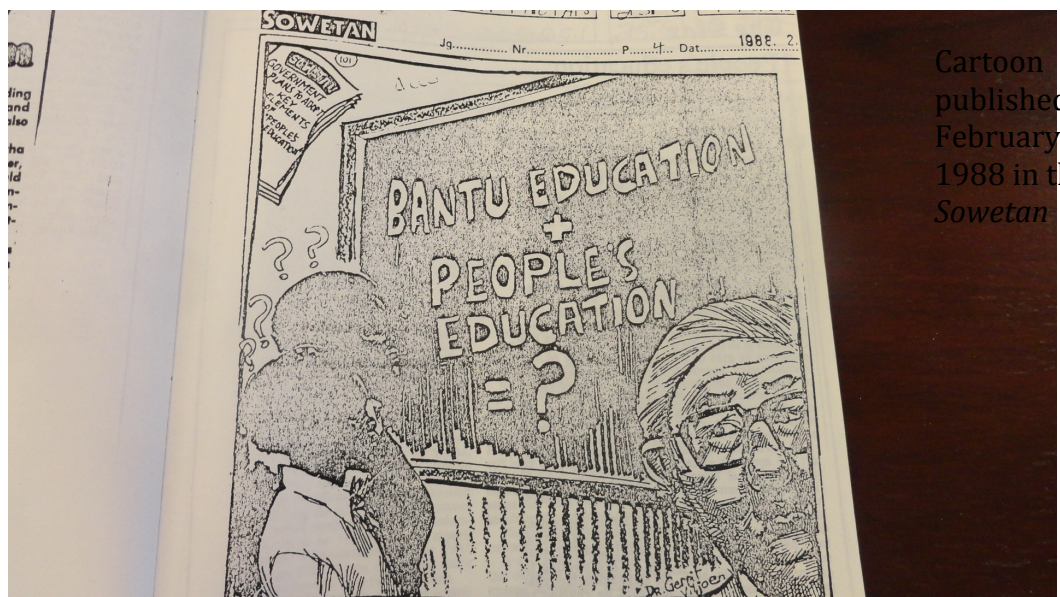
<sup>76</sup> Ruby Tena, interview by author, Cape Town, South Africa, January 10, 2013



curricula in their classrooms and organizations produced resources to teach against the prescribed curriculum. Simultaneously, scholars and activists inside and outside of South Africa worked to revise South African historiographical practice. To that end, the oral testimony of teachers, along with examples of alternative curriculum materials highlight a push on the part of educators to lessen the presence and impact of apartheid education in classrooms, especially in terms of history education. However, their testimony also highlights educators' grappling with how much of the struggle to let into their classrooms, and to what extent the critical inquiry could transform into activism.

The limitations of the "education for liberation" approach were two-fold. For one, the connection between questioning and activism could be weak. But the more constrictive and perplexing limitation was the contradiction of liberatory education operating within an oppressive political structure. In 1988, the Sowetan published a cartoon of a classroom blackboard, with the words "Bantu Education + People's Education = ?" written in chalk on the board. In the image, a newspaper (The Sowetan) had been tossed in air, with the headline: "Government plans to adopt key elements of people's education." This cartoon raised the question of how a democratic system of education could exist within an authoritarian political structure. The easy answer is that it could not. Despite probably being aware of those contradictions, teachers still often tried to provide their students with a multi-layered classroom experience.

The cartoon also sheds light on the further purpose of democratizing the education system from within – to prepare students for a post-apartheid South Africa. In 1988, when this cartoon was published, but even in 1985 when the National Education Crisis Committee was formed and during the 1980s as teachers taught against the apartheid curriculum, the national educational climate was in a state of flux. Educators, politicians, and communities recognized that apartheid would not hold for much longer, and to provide a democratically-inclined education to their students served as a mode of preparing them to exist in post-apartheid realities.



According to its supporters, alternative education had the potential to “prepare students for citizenship in a non-racial democracy,” drawing direct linkage between classroom content and activism.<sup>77</sup> Introducing alternative education into the classroom, regardless of its actual impact, made teachers feel like they were doing something worthwhile, framing

<sup>77</sup> “Education for Citizenship.” *The Cape Times*, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1988.

their teaching as a form of resistance against the apartheid system.<sup>78</sup> Educators and activists constructed alternative history to refute and deconstruct the stories prescribed by Christian National Education, and to engage students in the process of interpreting and examining their own history along with the history that was fed to them. During the second half of the 1980s, whether in preparation for post-apartheid democracy or to combat the apartheid education system, educators and organizations built a body of literature to provide alternative history education, along with political and social education, to students and communities. Alternative education took the form of both individual and collective action, from teachers providing opposing historical narratives to organizations constructing and mass-producing alternative materials.

The activism of history teachers should be examined within the context of radical and revisionist historiography occurring simultaneously throughout the country. Their decision – where circumstances allowed – to bring counter-memory into the classroom relied heavily on support systems. Collectivity and networks were key to finding space to question, challenge and eventually confront government-mandated history education. At the same time, organizational resistance to apartheid education served to buttress educators by producing materials teachers could bring in to the classroom, and by supporting teachers' efforts by providing a network or advocacy for their work. Communities within

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<sup>78</sup> Peter Kallaway, interview by author, Cape Town, South Africa, January 9, 2013.

schools formed the most immediate source of support for teachers, and provided the most foundational source of collectivity, as reflected in teachers' accounts of their experiences teaching against the curriculum.

### **Collectivity and Networks**

This section fits into the chapter by speaking to teachers' actual experiences of teaching against the history curriculum and in consideration of whether this was a wide-spread form of activism. The teachers' accounts emphasize collectivity and support as key factors in their ability to teach counter-curriculum.

As a student in a township school, Rob Glenn recognized a sense of camaraderie among his teachers. Networks among teachers, especially at a particular school, provided both support and protection. Weldon, Jacobs and Johnson all referred repeatedly to schools at which they taught, and schools they knew of, where teachers collaborated to teach against the curriculum. For a school itself to become a physical and intellectual site of struggle, teachers within the school needed to collaborate to be able to make their teaching a form of activism. While at many schools teachers and administrators collaborated on the basis of shared purpose, and the implementation of "education for liberation," at other schools administrators enabled their teachers despite having different motivations. James and her fellow teachers were able to teach against the curriculum because their principal was English and supported the United Party instead

of the National Party. “She protected us, because even though she didn’t agree with what we were doing she didn’t want to give us up to them [National Government],” said James.<sup>79</sup> She also spoke about the “community of history teachers” who were all “teaching against apartheid,” who communicated with and supported each other in this work. James’s reference to this community is reflected in the use of “we” by the other teachers. When the teachers discussed teaching against the curriculum, “I” was rarely used. After telling the story of her demotion, Jacobs was quick to point out that her experience was not isolated. “There were lots of individual sacrifices,” said Jacobs. “I’m not the only person.”<sup>80</sup>

Jacobs’s reflection that she was “not the only person” speaks volumes in regards to teachers’ organizational capacity to resist apartheid education. Though teachers’ unions and educational organizations are not necessarily directly relevant to the content of history education, they are important to consider for this thesis because such organizations and unions often involved themselves in or even committed themselves to changing the educational landscape of South Africa. And the actual behavior of such organizations spoke to the connection between questioning and activism. Their premise of questioning the dominant historical narrative and calling

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<sup>79</sup> James interview, January 2013.

<sup>80</sup> Jacobs interview, January 2013.

students to action to deconstruct the apartheid system constituted the linkage between intellectual resistance and active resistance.

Teachers' unions active in South Africa during the second half of the 1980s illustrate that that experiences of the teachers interviewed here were not exceptional or isolated. Teacher unions such as the Teacher's League of South Africa (TLSA), Cape African Teacher's Association and Transvaal African Teacher's Association (TATA) all rose to prominence during the early 1900s as the political and social climate shifted towards nationalism.<sup>81</sup> Teachers engaged in radical organizing on a larger scale than previously witnessed within the country.<sup>82</sup> Though not all of the unions leaned the same way politically, the left-oriented unions did engage in both intellectual resistance and activism against apartheid education. Teachers' unions organized and wrote against the apartheid regime from the onset of Bantu Education. The TLSA, for example, was founded by a group of leftist intellectual "coloured" South Africans in 1913 and began to publish the *Educational Journal*, its literary arm, the same year. The journal, which is still published, provides intellectual analysis and historical contextualization of political issues concerning education.

The TLSA and the *Educational Journal* provide a direct example of a disconnect between questioning and action. The Journal is, and has always been, highly critical of government structures, the apartheid

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<sup>81</sup> Hyslop, Jonathan. "Teacher Resistance in African Education from the 1940s to the 1980s." In *Pedagogy of Domination*, edited by Mokubung Nkomo, 93. New Jersey: African World Press, 1990. p.93

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

system, education policies, and curricular content.<sup>83</sup> However, the Journal and the TLSA itself do not have a history of militant activism and this has garnered the union intense criticism.<sup>84</sup> In the 1980s, young teachers frustrated with what they perceived as the lack of militant activism on the part of the TLSA founded organizations such as the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA) and the Western Cape Teacher's Union (WECTU), and later South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU). Those unions engaged more actively in anti-apartheid activities. WECTU was aligned with the United Democratic Front (UDF), while TLSA was aligned with the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). For these teachers, to teach against apartheid was a matter of both professionalism and political activism. Teachers' unions fit into the conversation about history education because the strength and political direction of a union could determine whether its members would be supported in teaching against the curriculum or in engaging in other types of anti-apartheid activism, officially or unofficially. Additionally, unions such as WECTU formed as organizational space for teachers who were already engaging in educational resistance, such as teaching against the prescribed history curriculum.

### **Creation of the National Education Crisis Committee**

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<sup>83</sup> Educational Journal

<sup>84</sup> Helen Johnson, interview by author, Cape Town, South Africa, January 10, 2013

The premise of the National Education Crisis Committee directly conflicted with the premise of Christian National Education, but to evaluate the plausibility and effectiveness of alternative education as a means to resist apartheid, the creation of the NECC needs to be examined. The NECC is an essential part of the story of history education as a site of resistance against apartheid because the NECC set out to transform history education specifically, and education in general, into a tool for liberation. The National Government's response to the NECC is also vital to this story because by trying to separate education from politics, the National Government solidified the connection between the struggles for democratic education and national liberation.

The National Education Crisis Committee set out in 1986 to define education as a necessary condition for power, therefore transforming the way students thought about schools.<sup>85</sup> The NECC also tried tirelessly to transform the educational landscape of South Africa and to bring alternative education into schools, as documented by various South African newspapers between 1986 and 1988. The NECC was at its core a highly political and highly contentious organization. In 1985, the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee organized a conference for individuals and delegates to “deliberate, in the spirit of the People's Congress exactly thirty years earlier, about one specific issue: the national dimensions of the

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<sup>85</sup> Motala, Shireen and Salim Vally. "People's Education: From People's Power to Tirisano." In *The History of Education Under Apartheid: 1948-1994*, edited by Peter Kallaway, 174. New York: Peter Lang, 2002.



struggle in Soweto against Apartheid education.”<sup>86</sup> The “national dimensions of the struggle” refer to the context and circumstances of education in South Africa at that time. Attendees of the conference recognized a need for a “non-racial democratic educational system that would serve the liberation struggle.”<sup>87</sup> The National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) was organized out of this need and first met in March of 1986.<sup>88</sup> Also in 1985, the NECC coordinated the National Consultative Conference, chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu at the University of Witwatersrand. Under the slogan, “People’s Education for People’s Power,” the conference involved the South African Council on Higher Education (SACHED), the Council for Black Education and Research (COBER) and the South African Council of Churches (SACC).

The NECC sought to transform history education within South Africa as part of the political struggle for national liberation. Drawing from Freirean theory, the NECC tried to provide an alternative to apartheid education. The Committee identified history textbooks and curriculum as particularly problematic parts of the apartheid education system, especially due to the absence of African history in prescribed syllabi.<sup>89</sup> People’s History in South Africa was the offspring of the

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<sup>86</sup> Bredekamp, HC and EA Messina. "IHR History Week 1989: Liberatory History and the Struggle in South Africa." University of the Western Cape, 1989. P. 3

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

<sup>89</sup> Weldon p.103

radicalism of People's Education and the local oral histories from communities.

The National Party took a position on the NECC that combined vilification with a floundering attempt at pacification. In May of 1986, *Business Day* reported that in some schools, "pupils presented papers illustrating the type of history left out of conventional textbooks."<sup>90</sup> The same article quotes the Department of Education and Training Liaison Officer Peter Mundell, who said that people's education had an "arbitrary structure" and that students were being used as political bait. The Department, according to Mundell, had "'grave doubts' about the credibility of political groups trying to render the schools ungovernable."<sup>91</sup> Though Mundell tried to frame the work of the NECC in a negative and radical light, he portrayed their work somewhat accurately. In July of the same year, the Dr. Viljoen, Minister of Education and Development, spoke to the Afrikanse Studente Bond. Viljoen importantly argued that historiography had shifted from white-centric to a "wide spectrum of views" in recent years, in an apparent attempt to assuage the alternative educationalists and those who were just questioning.<sup>92</sup> However, Dr. Viljoen went on to vilify the NECC: "There had been an overreaction and a switch to socialist and Marxist interpretations of history in some circles,"

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<sup>90</sup> Tuch, Thelma. "When the Pupils Rule." *Business Day*, May 28 1986, 1986.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid

<sup>92</sup> South African Press Association. "Prof's Plea on History Syllabuses." June 1, 1986, 1986.

he said.<sup>93</sup> Again, though his words are meant as an alarmist reckoning with the alternative education movement, he quite accurately evaluated the historiographical style of people's history. Dr. Viljoen promised that the State would oppose the implementation of People's Education "as it led to revolutionary education, the promotion of violence and disorder, the political brainwashing of pupils and the passing of educational control from professional educationalists to politicized community organizations."<sup>94</sup>

Dr. Viljoen's threat reflected the government's awareness of the power of democratic education and resistance-focused history education. If history education were taught honestly and with an opposing political agenda, the NP recognized, it could be extremely dangerous to the political status quo. Dr. Viljoen's association of democratic education with revolution and socialism directly draws the connection between the struggle for democratic education and the struggle for national liberation. His fear illustrates the importance of government control of history education. The socialist history to which Dr. Viljoen referred is the historiographical practice at the base of the People's History movement. Though South African academic adopted the People's History movement in the 1980s, the movement itself was rooted in Cambridge, England. To situate the South African incarnation of the movement, it is helpful to step

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid

<sup>94</sup> Ibid

back into England, post-WWII. The National Government's response to People's Education highlights the government's awareness that to lose control of history education would lead to further fragmenting. The pedagogy of the NECC was rooted in the people's history movement, which activists and scholars had applied to the South African context.

### **People's History in South Africa**

The adoption of the People's History movement in South Africa adds an international and scholarly dimension to the argument of this thesis. Counter-memory did not just occur in secondary school classrooms – local, vernacular histories constituted a political movement, geared directly towards using history as a source of empowerment.

The British Communist Historian's Group first employed the term "People's History" in 1946, taking a socioeconomic approach to historiography. As a transnational movement, People's Education took on this approach. At Oxford's Ruskin College in England, history workshops were held in response to student frustration with exams in 1966.<sup>95</sup> The workshops had working class roots and were intended to be "local, community-based research endeavors."<sup>96</sup> Internationally, the movement found its footing in a variety of places. Howard Zinn's famous 1981 *A People's History of the US* was among many others published, around the

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<sup>95</sup> Bredekamp and Messina..p.4

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

same time, regarding other countries and localities. Social history took root in the resistance against apartheid even before academics and activists began to apply the phrase, “People’s History.”

According to social historian Leslie Witz, the notion of “people’s history” has roots in South Africa in the Afrikaner historiography that the People’s Education movement sought to deconstruct. In the 1930s and 1940s, during the construction of the official Afrikaner historical narrative by the National Party, Boer struggles and perseverance were highlighted instead of the deeds of the British, who possessed colonial control. “Trekking” who did not have immense political power, formed the core of this historiography.<sup>97</sup> Revolutionary education activist Neville Alexander argued that the volksgeskiedenis represented fascist conservative reactionary people’s history, unlike the radical social history of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>98</sup> The differences between volksgeskiedenis and the “history from below” produced by those resisting apartheid are myriad, but the main fault line is between their political and social agendas. Where Afrikaner historiography sought to glorify Afrikaner ethnicity, the 1970s and 1980s people’s history sought to explore counter memory and silenced narratives, broadening, instead of narrowing the scope of historical record. Where volksgeskiedenis supported a limited, ethnically based citizenship

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<sup>97</sup> Witz, Leslie. "History of the People, for the People, and by the People: A Brief Examination of the Development of People's History in South Africa, 1977-1988." *South African International*, January 3, 1988, 1988.

<sup>98</sup> Bredekamp and Messina p. 20

framework, the people's history movement supported a transformation of that framework. Both were, however, reactionary. Afrikaner historiography reacted to British colonial oppression and the need to oppress the African population in South Africa, while the people's history movement reacted to Afrikaner historiography and the apartheid system.

The People's History movement, which drew from local oral histories, fit into the counter-history developments of the 1980s along with radical revisionist history mostly emerging out of the United Kingdom.<sup>99</sup> In her dissertation, Weldon points out that though the radical revisionist history did take a "top-down, western white-driven interpretation of the past," that same work constituted the major intellectual resistance to apartheid.<sup>100</sup> Weldon also considers the impact of that radical historiography, which did not directly challenge the structure of apartheid education. However, as illustrated by the history teachers with whom I spoke, some educators were able to draw from and synthesize the radical historiography for their classrooms. Weldon carefully distinguished between radical revisionist historiography and the actual People's History movement in which the National Education Crisis Committee was situated.

The revisionist history occurring within academia in South Africa during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s challenged the notion of a

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<sup>99</sup> Weldon p.101

<sup>100</sup> Ibid

completely detached radical academic history tradition. The revisionist historiography happening inside of certain South African universities simultaneously perpetuated and disrupted structures of power and knowledge sharing in academic history. While the scholarship was written from within people's history framework, and took an anti-establishment viewpoint, history workshops were not always open to the public and academics filtered information before sharing it with working class communities. Between 1978 and 1987, the University of Witwaterrand held four History Workshops, in which historians came together to share their own work. The workshops were only open to academics, who were primarily "liberal radical social scientists." On the last day of the workshop, the academics would synthesize and simplify their findings and hold an "Open Day" for community members, specifically residents of the surrounding townships. Though the workshops were based on a common understanding that history should be re-evaluated and accessible to all, the workshops maintained an elitist structure. The work of the academics should not be minimized or discounted, though, for their work did complicate class and intellectual stratification, as well as challenging the Afrikaner nationalist narrative.

The way in which People's History was carried out by scholars in South Africa illustrates the negotiation between maintaining existing power structures and challenging institutional systems. That negotiation was inherent to the contradiction of democratizing education in an

authoritarian state, and represented efforts to solve that contradiction. The activism within that movement also reflected the work of teachers working on a smaller scale to counter the official historical narrative in their classrooms.

### **Political Awakening of Teachers**

Integral to the narratives of teachers was their own experience of conscientisation, whether through a particularly thought-provoking history teacher or a political awakening. Their experiences speak to the importance of good, honest history education and, for teachers, the importance of content knowledge and historical awareness in effectively teaching history.

For high school teachers to be able to provide opposing history curricula to their students, or even to be politically and historically aware in the first place, they had to have gone through some sort of political awakening themselves. The teachers I spoke with all referenced some sort of consciousness-raising moment or process of becoming aware, even without prompting. Their awareness also contributed to their commitment to history education, and specifically to what they perceived as honest history education. Kallaway attended small rural schools run by the church as a child, but his father, a British ex-pat, was highly skeptical of Afrikaner historiography. This skepticism within the family taught him to not take for granted what his teachers, often clergy, provided as historical content. What truly politicized Kallaway, though, was when, while he was



at university, his friends who attended Fort Hare were being sent to prison for engaging in the same sort of questioning and activities that he engaged in. This did not make sense to him, and thus he began to seriously question the political status quo. Kallaway's story threaded together the process of learning to question and, later, taking action against that which he questioned. His transformation from rural student to teacher/intellectual activist demonstrated the importance of questioning early on – as his British father encouraged – to enable academic resistance to transfer to activism.

The process of conscientisation differed for white and black teachers because while white South Africans could be protected from the harsh realities of apartheid, black could not avoid that daily life. Weldon's awareness of counter-narratives came from her experiences as a student, as a result of teachers "becoming very uptight about being forced to teach what they saw as the Afrikaner narrative."<sup>101</sup> Her political education was a product of the politicization of her own teachers, and in turn, when she herself was a teacher she tried to provide a similar education to her students. For two white South Africans, neither of whom are Afrikaners, a political education and opening up to the realities of apartheid was necessary and a sort of coming-of-age, or, of awareness, that they considered relevant to mention. The teachers with whom I spoke who were categorized as black or coloured under apartheid did not provide as

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<sup>101</sup> Gail Weldon, interview with author, Cape Town, South Africa, January 10, 2013.

many stories about their own awakening to the problems of the Afrikaner narrative and apartheid policies.

For black teachers, personal political awakening did not form as foundational of a narrative as that of a teacher who demonstrated a commitment to opposing history curricula. Rob Glenn, a “coloured” history teacher in the southern suburbs of Cape Town had history teachers who taught against the curriculum when he was a student. “I had the blessing and the privilege of having a history teacher who... encouraged us to think critically in spite of the fact that the curriculum didn’t allow that kind of thought. But he did it anyway. I was always taught that there were a number of perspectives on any matter,” he recalled.<sup>102</sup> For Ruby Tena, the truth came from her parents. “I loved history from long ago,” she said, “because my parents told me the truth.”<sup>103</sup> The ramifications of Tena’s story reach beyond her own experience. Tena’s story, along with her accounts of her own students’ reluctance to learn history they perceive as propaganda illustrates the importance of honest teaching of history. With awareness of the “truth,” young people, especially those in townships, who were excluded from the rights of South African citizenship, could find purpose in historical knowledge.

### **Conditions that Allowed for a Counter-Curriculum**

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<sup>102</sup> Rob Glenn, interview by author, Cape Town, South Africa, April 26, 2012.

<sup>103</sup> Tena interview, January 10, 2013.

This section expands upon the brief introduction to the dangers of teaching counter-curriculum in the second chapter. In this section, I examine the risks of teaching against the curriculum alongside the lengths to which teachers went to teach what they perceived as honest history. The risks associated with teaching against the curriculum further highlight that history education is political – and made so by the presence of multiple vantage points. Julie Jacobs’ experience of demotion makes a point that is relevant to the thesis overall. History education is political, but to deny that it is political is more dangerous than to embrace the questions and controversies that come with multiple perspectives.

Kallaway argued in 1991 that there had always been “considerable latitude for teachers with initiative and ability to explore issues and perspectives that are outside the strict confines of the syllabus.”<sup>104</sup> However the stories of teachers did not always reflect that statement. Political awareness and commitment to the subject of history did not guarantee the ability to use history classrooms as sites of resistance. Surveillance of teachers posed a considerable risk. Apartheid education can be characterized as oppressive because the physical space of the school, the content of the curriculum, and the actions of the teachers were all controlled by the National Government, by way of the Education Departments. Therefore, teaching against the curriculum could be dangerous and even virtually impossible in many scenarios. The

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<sup>104</sup> Kallaway p.6

oppressive conditions of the apartheid education system, through silencing of dissent, highlight the importance of teaching against the curriculum and towards questioning wherever possible. The National Government considered teaching against the curriculum as an act of political rebellion. During the 1950s Dr. Eiselen and Dr. W. de Vos Malan, who was the superintendent of schools in the Cape, publicly threatened teachers who engaged in politics.<sup>105</sup> The National Party considered the presence of social-democratic education and revisionist history in the classroom to be an overtly and therefore dangerously political move – not to be tolerated.

During the 1980s, while working in private schools where the students were white, teachers had much more leeway than teachers did in black schools primarily in townships. White teachers fared less government surveillance. Kallaway, Dr. Gail Weldon and Susan James all explained that they were aware of the white privilege that allowed them to teach what they chose. If you were teaching in black schools, Kallaway explained, “It would be said that you were being political in the classrooms... It was much more charged in black schools, in case there were informers in the class. You might find yourself in jail if you were a teacher and you were too strident with what you were saying.”<sup>106</sup> Beyond the standard oppression of apartheid education policy, the National Government had tightened surveillance and security in township schools

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<sup>105</sup> Hyslop

<sup>106</sup> Kallaway interview, January 2013.

in reaction to boycotts and protests. For Weldon, being in an independent school enabled her the space to teach what she wanted until the matriculation exams. James benefitted from teaching at a girls' school. "We didn't get into trouble because it was a girls' school. Because all boys, at the age of 18, got sent to the service. And a lot of teachers were detained who refused to teach cadets."<sup>107</sup> The education of girls, James implied, was less monitored. She added that being a white woman also protected her. "We were never really in danger because if you were a white woman, unless you had guns and were part of the ANC underground, you didn't get into trouble."<sup>108</sup>

During this same period in "coloured" schools, surveillance was not as high as that in black schools but teachers had to remain more vigilant than those in white schools. Johnson and Jacobs spoke to the certainty of student spies in their classrooms. Jacobs stated simply that she knew the student spies were placed there. Johnson told her students that she would know if they informed on her. "I would see it in their eyes," she said with a steely and disarming glare.<sup>109</sup> She was never caught, and is confident that she could always tell if students were informers. Jacobs, however, was not so lucky. She relayed a story, with some help from Johnson, about being forced to give up her post as head of the history department.

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<sup>107</sup> Susan James, interview by author, Cape Town, South Africa, January 11, 2013.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid

<sup>109</sup> Helen Johnson, interview by author, Cape Town, South Africa, January 10, 2013.

“I had made copies of the relevant literature, and I would distribute it, and one day I was called into the office and the inspector asked me, ‘Is this the type of history you are teaching your students?’ And I still tried to deny, but of course I realized that the students must have given him the copies. It was all these extracts from *300 Years of South African History*, the role of the missionaries in conquest, all alternative sources, which were absolutely banned by the apartheid government.”

“These guys who were now in these roles as inspectors by the apartheid government were *enforcing* the apartheid government’s view on history,”

Johnson cut in angrily.

“Yes yes yes,” Jacobs continued. “Not only on history but on every subject. Then of course I pleaded guilty and I remember him saying, ‘You’re so beautiful and we still like your family and I can’t believe you’re teaching the students this, this is not history this is politics,’ (Jacobs hit the table before continuing) I said but history has got different perspectives! And I am trying to bring all the perspectives to the students so they can make up their mind! It wasn’t good enough. The principal asked me, you’re either going to follow the textbook or you’re gonna resign your post.”<sup>110</sup>

Jacobs’ story touched on many facets of the experience of teaching oppositional histories. Her use of alternative materials, her confrontation with the real risk of being caught, and the negotiation concerning her position all speak to the challenge and risk of engaging with oppositional histories in the classroom. Jacobs’ insistence that history has different perspectives, and therefore is inevitably political, directly challenged the state-mandated curriculum and silencing of inquiry. In her teaching and in her argument with the inspector and the principal, she exposed the faulty logic in trying to separate history and politics. Her experience exposed the implications of working against the prescribed curriculum – demotion, damage to your reputation, etc.

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<sup>110</sup> Julie Jacobs, interview by author, Cape Town, South Africa, January 10, 2013.

## Two-Layer Curriculum

In Njabulo Ndebele's short story "Fools," the young teacher Zani interrupts a history class to entice the students into the struggle. "You will know from your history that on the sixteenth of December, 1838, there was the Battle of Blood River when the Boers killed thousands of our people," Zani began.<sup>111</sup> "When evil becomes a philosophy or a religion, it becomes rational or spiritual malice: the highest forms of depravity. Do you hear what I'm saying? Do you understand what I'm saying?" he asked the students.<sup>112</sup> Zani is a tragic, radical teacher in this story, but his speech to the students is deeply poignant and relevant to this thesis. His suggestion that the students question the dominance of Afrikaner history reflects the work of teachers who, at that time, invited their students to question interpretations of the past. Zani's lecture to the students in Mr. Zamani's class outlined the ideological foundation of oppositional history education. Teachers and students bristled at a narrative which celebrated the slaughter of people who looked like them, the legacies of the motives of this slaughter carried into their lives over one hundred years later. Zani's insistence that the students question what they had been told also demonstrates the use of the classroom as a space for inquiry and doubt – and his attempt to involve them in the struggle speaks to the connection between that questioning and political activism.

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<sup>111</sup> Njabulo Ndebele "Fools" in *Fools and Other Stories* 1983

<sup>112</sup> Ibid

The work of teachers during the 1980s in creating a safe space for questioning in their classrooms is directly related to the connection between challenging the Afrikaner historical narrative with engaging in the struggle for national liberation. The teachers' efforts to turn their classrooms into politically and conversationally dynamic spaces represented a form of political activism. The teachers' assertion of their work as part of a process of challenging the official narrative situated their teaching as part of the struggle for national liberation even when they did not directly label it as such. Therefore, teaching two curricula did constitute, I argue, activism. Their work can also be considered political activism because the National Government framed it as such.

The teachers with whom I spoke never fully abandoned the prescribed curriculum, instead creating educational environments in which counter-curriculum existed alongside curriculum. Teachers continued to prepare students for matriculation exams while encouraging them to question the status quo. Thus, teachers were continuing to prepare students for apartheid realities while also, I argue, providing them with safe space to practice for democracy. To teach against the curriculum, students and teachers had to be in agreement, and teachers needed content knowledge and/or access to materials that would provide a narrative that challenged the textbooks. Teachers provided two history educations for their students - one according to state-mandated curriculum, and the other, a safe space



for questioning the official version of history. Two curricula existed and competed in the classroom.

For the teachers who managed to bring “politics” into their classrooms, history lessons would be characterized by multiplicity of narrative and tacit understanding between students and teachers. This notion of teaching both the prescribed history and a counter-history illustrated a change-from-within model of democratizing education, which came with both benefits as well as creates limitations for itself. The teachers with whom I spoke who taught against the curriculum worked mostly in white and coloured schools, so they did not operate under the conditions of Bantu Education. However, their classrooms did exist as functions of apartheid education. Teachers taught their students to maneuver two different systems of historiography. Teachers taught students to exist and excel under the parameters of apartheid education, while also teaching them relevant and multi-perspective narratives. Teachers exposed their use of opposing curricula most vividly in explaining how they continued to prepare their students for the matriculation exams. Teachers recognized that students were safe to question in some spaces but not in others – and thus provided those safe spaces to their students, but also prepared them for the spaces in which it would not be appropriate to question.

Teachers did not doubt student capacity to learn and analyze the information presented to them through a two-level narrative. Students

were equipped and eager to learn material and content not provided by Christian National Education, as demonstrated by Tena's students refusing to learn history they perceived as propaganda.<sup>113</sup> Kallaway argued that in terms of material, there was enough available, "to have a good healthy critique of what was in the textbooks. And it was not beyond the students' ability to understand."<sup>114</sup> He defined his actions as an effort to teach against the curriculum. By defining his actions as such, Kallaway situated his own teaching as a form of activism, drawn in contrast to the apartheid state. While Kallaway's point about the students' capabilities makes sense, his point that material was accessible is deeply rooted in his circumstances, as part of a liberal group of academics and historians, who were all white, and had minimal surveillance of their activities. To ensure that he would be able to continue to teach, and to make sure that his students would have the tools to function outside of school, Kallaway would switch gears to prepare his students for the exams. "When it got time for the matric, we said, don't get fancy, just do what you are expected to do," Kallaway said.<sup>115</sup> Kallaway taught his students to question and criticize the same power structures that he trained them to maneuver within.

An understanding between teachers and students needed to be in place for teachers to be able to bring the "hidden curriculum" into the

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<sup>113</sup> Kallaway interview, January 2013.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

classroom. This understanding could be explicit or implicit. Johnson remembered telling her students, “This is what the textbook and the curriculum expect you to know. And I will expect you to know it because you’ve got to pass. But this is the other history,” in which she presented the guidelines for participating in history education against the curriculum.<sup>116</sup> Weldon echoed Johnson: “There was always a two-level curriculum. We would say, this is how the story is, but this is what you have to write.”<sup>117</sup> James stated that she explained to her students that there were differing versions of the past, a simple yet politically charged statement to make in the context of apartheid South Africa. To teach that differing versions of the past existed constituted, according to the National Government, counter-curriculum and therefore political education.

Student cooperation, therefore, was essential to the sustainment of counter-curriculum history education in the classroom. On their end of the bargain, students had to refrain from informing the wrong person about their classroom activities and to also work hard to prepare for the matriculation exams. Jacobs related a story of her students forming a study group to prepare collectively, outside of school, for the exams. The students would meet in a garage for three or four hours every afternoon to study without a teacher, she explained.<sup>118</sup> Johnson recalled a similar story

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<sup>116</sup> Johnson interview, January 10, 2013.

<sup>117</sup> Weldon interview, January 10, 2013.

<sup>118</sup> Jacobs interview, January 2013.

of her students. Both of the sisters' stories took place in the waning years of apartheid.

Counter-curriculum efforts were entrenched in questions of professionalism. While for teachers bringing honest history education into the classroom could come as a relief, and feel worthwhile, it could also pose a challenge to the ethical training and instincts of teachers. Providing a two-level curriculum required teachers to step outside of the boundaries of conventional professionalism. Jacobs admitted to acting in betrayal of her training as a teacher to teach against the curriculum and simultaneously prepare her students to pass the exams. "Not only I but quite a number of us, did what our educational consciences did not allow. We prepared sample answers to the main questions and themes in our subjects. And we would give it to the students and hope they would study," she said, clarifying that she has no regret.<sup>119</sup> Her students did study, as evidenced by her story about the garage-groups.

When teachers could find ways to teach against the curriculum, various structures had to be in place and teachers needed to have access to certain systems of knowledge and resources, often contingent on their access to systems of power and privilege in the apartheid state. Because the National Government had banned organizations and the spread of materials that countered the regime, some teachers provided their students

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid

with anecdotal counter-memory in lieu of physical resources.<sup>120</sup> When available, though, alternative sources enabled teachers to bring honest history education into the classroom and make it accessible to their students. C.N.E. textbooks did not cover recent South African history, thus limiting the purview of history education, and opening up space for students and teachers to search for answers and evidence of life outside of the classroom.

Weldon recalled finding people who could provide banned video material to show her classes. The parent of one of her students traveled frequently would bring back news programs to show, and she met a camera man who would film on the Cape Flats and give her the raw footage to show to students. James would travel with colleagues to Zimbabwe for material, and the teachers at her school collaborated to hide banned material. “We had a lot of banned video material,” she said, explaining, “The librarian was also a lefty. The security police used to come from time to time but they couldn’t find it. It was hidden in the library locked in a box.”<sup>121</sup> The acquisition and protection of materials also speaks to the danger of teaching against the curriculum and the collaborative nature of activism. Weldon also tried to engage her students in acting as sources both in terms of history and current events. Weldon observed that though the students in her school were from various

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<sup>120</sup> James interview, January 2013.

<sup>121</sup> James interview, January 2013.

different “race groups,” they did not discuss what was going on in their communities. She had the students interview each other about what was happening in the townships. “A white kid said, ‘I didn’t know this was happening. My parents didn’t tell me.’ Kids coming to the private schools talked about being targeted by the kids boycotting.”<sup>122</sup> In addition to providing the students with a structure to open up each others’ eyes to their everyday realities, Weldon hoped to help the students to understand how understanding the past can help to understand the world today. “I think history needs to be viewed in the framework of how do we understand the world today by understanding the past.”<sup>123</sup> She tried to make the notion that “History is not over there, it impacts the world today,” accessible to her students.<sup>124</sup>

Teachers also often had to find ways to adapt their methods to work outside of the classroom, responding to student demands for “stay-aways” and to stay relevant and avoid being perceived as hostile by the students. Jacobs brought a lecturer in to talk about how Afrikaans played a role in the struggle for liberation. “Now remember, that was very provocative because Soweto was against Afrikaans. And yet the first fighters for liberation in this country were Afrikaans speaking, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. So he put that perspective on it.”<sup>125</sup> When students refused to sit

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<sup>122</sup> Weldon interview, January 2013.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid

<sup>124</sup> Ibid

<sup>125</sup> Jacobs interview, January 2013.

in the classrooms, teachers engaged in alternative education on the sports fields. Jacobs had her students act out *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and a play by Brecht, to challenge Marxist theory that the ideas of the society, and the historical record, are the ideas of the ruling class.

By finding ways to introduce multi-layered historical knowledge and expand their students' historical consciousness, these teachers challenged the government-mandated history curricula. The connection between the struggle for democratic education and national liberation situates the actions of those teachers as political activism. The National Party used history education to further state goals, specifically to perpetuate and reproduce the apartheid system, thus to interrupt that history education by introducing counter-memory constituted resistance against the apartheid system and the National Party. That opposing history curricula characterized classrooms complicates the interrupting-power of counter-curriculum as activism, because the teachers were also maintaining the status quo by virtue of their engagement with the matriculation exams and the apartheid education system. However, the success of their activism does not define whether or not it counts as political resistance and does not diminish its impact.

In encouraging their students to challenge the static, obviously biased prescribed narrative, teachers were raising the historical consciousness of their students and encouraging them to consider socio-political realities beyond the parameters of apartheid. During the second

half of the 1980s, organizations such as the NECC engaged in a similar process of envisioning post-apartheid South Africa through a re-examining of the country's history. Jacobs referred directly to her involvement with the NECC, and the other teachers spoke about using alternative materials, but none spoke specifically of the SACHED documentaries, though James did explain her time working for the organization. SACHED and the NECC, along with the materials they produced, represent a body of organizational and literary resistance to apartheid education.

### **Envisioning Democratic History**

During the second half of the 1980s, the National Education Crisis Committee and SACHED both created alternative texts for history study that envisioned history education in a democratic society. The materials produced to counter the textbooks tell history from multiple perspectives and engage multiple sources, acknowledging the politics of history education and making that part of the conversation. The materials produced by organizations such as SACHED and the NECC illustrate the people's need to control their past to control their identity.

Teachers drew from materials produced by organizations such as the NECC to challenge the Afrikaner nationalist narrative whenever possible. The NECC and SACHED (South African Commission on Higher Education) along with other smaller cohorts created counter-curriculum textbooks to contribute to and inspire questioning of the Afrikaner nationalist narrative and the apartheid system in general. In addition to



providing a lens into African history and local history, the texts equipped students with the skills to take part in historiography and encouraged students to question the writing of and take ownership of the past. In 1987, the NECC published *What is History? A New Approach to History For Students, Workers and Communities* as supplemental material to be used both inside of and outside of classrooms, to teach revisionist, struggle-aligned history. The book is organized into sections such as “Conflicting Evidence,” “Analyzing a Newspaper Article,” and “Whose History?” to implore students to think critically about not just the stories themselves but the practice of writing and creating historical record. The book provides historical content as much as it provides access to skills of analysis and inquiry.

The content in *What is History?* similarly to that in books produced by SACHED, is geared specifically towards raising political and historical consciousness. Therefore, the book engaged directly with the struggle against apartheid. The introduction of *What is History?* outlines the importance of studying history:

“History, as a subject, is not just a collection of dead facts about the past. It is the story of how the world of today came to exist... History – properly taught – should not just tell of deeds and sayings of people in authority; it should recover and comprehend the doings and thoughts of ordinary men and women. It should identify the historical sources of dispossession, oppression, and exploitation, and should examine the ways in which these were resisted.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> National Education Crisis Committee. *What is History?*. Johannesburg: Skotaville Educational Division, 1987. P.1

In contrast to the Afrikaner nationalist narrative, counter-curriculum materials found the correlative relationship of oppression and resistance at their core. Additionally, the counter-curriculum texts demanded questioning of authority and the status quo, as well as promoted the legitimacy of subjugated knowledge. Unlike the volksgeskiedenis, writers of the material often took a simultaneously critical and glorifying lens to past tactics of resistance. And, completely unlike the Afrikaner nationalist narrative, authors framed this new material as the groundwork for a new, post-apartheid, democratic and inclusive South Africa.<sup>127</sup>

*What is History?* is an example of a whole body of literature that ranged from the revisionist to the radical. What each of these books did have in common was their confrontation with silencing and victimizing narratives of Africans in prescribed textbooks. The texts are, for the most part, examples of the people's history tradition and sought to apply social history to the South African context that Dr. Viljoen so feared. Neville Alexander wrote, "People's history in our context relates to the spotlighting of popular resistance to colonial-imperialist conquest, capitalist exploitation and oppression. It foregrounds the popular struggles against racial and class oppression for full democratic rights."<sup>128</sup> Educators who wrote and taught against the curriculum, therefore, had Alexander's contextualization in mind. Counter-curricular materials highlighted the

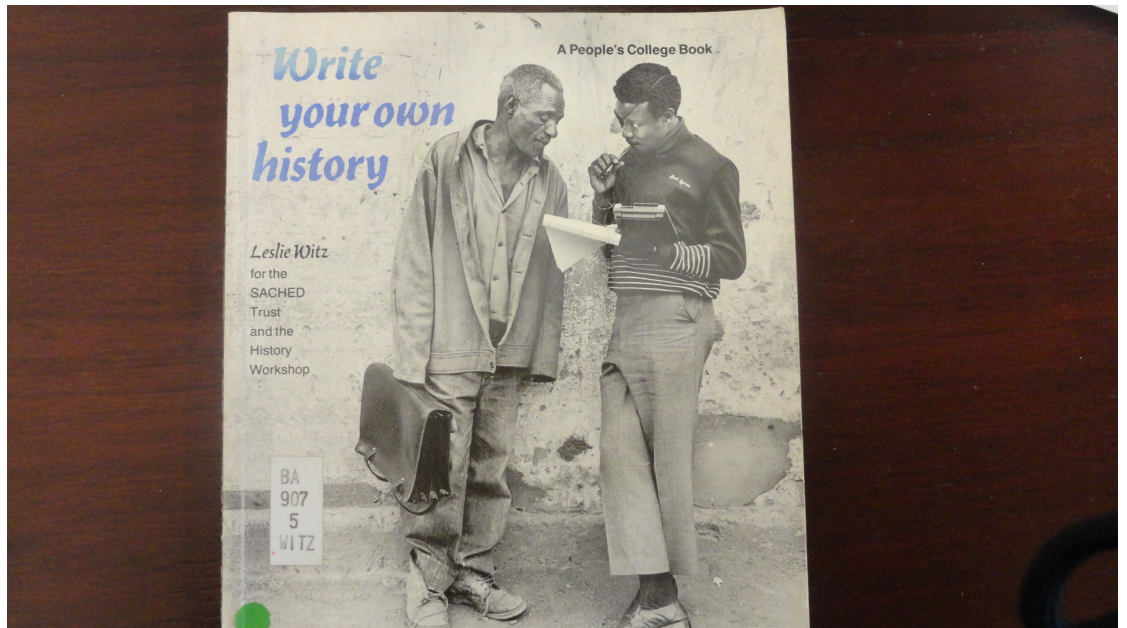
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<sup>127</sup> Ibid p. 1

<sup>128</sup> Bredekamp and Messina p. 20

history of struggle in South Africa to historically ground and contextualize the contemporary resistance against apartheid. To convince students that history was worthwhile, historians, activists and educators wrote a number of materials on the struggle, showcasing tactics and strategies to reveal an empowered, active narrative of African history invisible in the prescribed textbooks.

The organization SACHED produced a range of materials to aid in the struggle against apartheid, challenging both curricular content and systems of school governance. *Write Your Own History*, published in 1986 as a collaboration between the Write Your Own History Project and SACHED, invited and instructed youth to engage with their communities through collecting local history. The book asked students to question the history they had been taught, and to seek out different sources of historical knowledge. This book suggested youth and communities take ownership over their own histories and make the process of historiography more democratic. *Write Your Own History* also pointed, though indirectly to sources as a contentious space in South African, and by extension, African historiography. SACHED also produced a number of documentaries during the late 1980s for educational use, such as “Trade Unions and Democracy” and “Unwritten Sources of African History.” To bolster the usability of the documentaries, user-guides were provided, so that whomever was showing the films knows what kinds of questions to ask to further challenge the viewers.



Write Your Own History, written by Leslie Witz and published by the SACHED Trust

The title of “Unwritten Sources of African History” leaves little to the imagination. The transcript of the documentary debunks the claims of early European historians that Africa south of the Sahara had no history because people did not express themselves in writing.<sup>129</sup> The documentary turns Eurocentric notions of legitimate history completely upside down, thus effectively teaching history towards questioning. Beyond asking students to create their own historical record, though, SACHED does not implore students to deconstruct apartheid education as a system of oppression. The documentary, and the organization in general, do

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<sup>129</sup> *Unwritten Sources of African History*, Edited by South African Committee on Higher Education. Vol. Transcript. Johannesburg, 1986.

however dramatically confront the Afrikaner nationalist narrative and Eurocentric historiography in a thoughtful and effective way.

Not all revisionist history texts were as radical as the SACHED documentaries or the NECC's *What is History?* and not all were intended to constitute forms of political resistance. Peter Kallaway and Jean Bottaro's *History Alive* series were meant as supplementary, unbiased materials for history classrooms. However, the historical timeline of the series did not go beyond 1976 and did not highlight resistance or oppression. Where *What is History?* aligned itself directly with social history and the struggle for liberation, *History Alive* presented a more moderate approach to revisionist history texts.

### **The Banning of the NECC**

The National Government did respond to the people's frustrations by acknowledging that history education was somewhat biased and that there was a crisis of schooling, but could not actually cede any power of education to democracy. The government ultimately banned the NECC and alternative education in schools to prevent losing control of the country by virtue of relinquishing complete control of the education system. The National Government banned the NECC in 1987 to prevent the struggle for national liberation to enter the schools, though of course this attempt was ultimately too little and too late.

The National Government dropped all façade of implementing alternative education piecemeal in 1987. In August of 1986, *The Citizen* published an article entitled “People’s Education a Subtle Threat,” which, following its name, took an alarmist position against democratic education. The article began: “Everybody knows that South Africa today is threatened by forces outside the country with sanctions and divestment. But one of the threats arising inside the country is of a more subtle type and is a new phenomenon to South Africa.”<sup>130</sup> The implied threat was the implementation of People’s Education. The author directly associated People’s Education with communism, writing:

“The system contains the usual familiar clichés one might expect to find in a communist system of education, as, for example, the creation of a ‘classless society’ and the suppression of ‘elitism’ ... People’s education is a stimulus to unrest and violence in the schools and, by implication, the country as a whole.”<sup>131</sup>

The author’s words shed light on the real potential of a transformed education system to transform the political landscape and parameters of citizenship within the country. *The Citizen*, along with *Business Day*, provided alarmist but startlingly accurate depictions of People’s Education, in attempts to paint the movement in a negative light.

During January of 1987, summer vacation for young South Africans, the Commissioner of Police banned the National Education Crisis Committee, freeing up any previous promises on the part of the

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<sup>130</sup> “People’s Education a Subtle Threat.” *The Citizen*, August 8, 1986.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*

National Government to implement parts of alternative education.<sup>132</sup> The Commissioner of Police had consulted the Department of Education and Training before implementing the ban, which effectively criminalized activities associated with people's education. To this effect, schools in townships which had been renamed with figures of the resistance: Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu; were painted over in black paint, physically silencing any nod to historic association with the struggle.<sup>133</sup> Hope, on the behalf of educators, activists and communities, for large-scale education reform was essentially crushed. However, the banning of the NECC and people's education in general did not signify complete failure in terms of educational change and progress towards national liberation.

In the midst of teaching, writing, and organizing against apartheid education, educators, activists and communities had undertaken to prepare young people for a post-apartheid, democratic South Africa. Teachers exposed students to the political realities of the country, which were already defining their lives. By encouraging students to write their own history, or to ask what constituted history, educators and activists had equipped students with the skills to question oppression, challenge the status quo, and recognize authoritarianism vs. democracy. Nadine Gordimer built a water-tight argument when she pointed out, at her

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<sup>132</sup> "Ban on People's Education" *The Sowetan* January 1987

<sup>133</sup> Laurence, Patrick. "Swabbing Out the Township Past." *Weekly Mail*, January 22, 1987, 1987.

graduation address to the University of Cape Town's School of Arts and Music in 1986 that

“National issues have not ‘invaded’ the campus, as the national newspapers often report, they are there. Embodied in every one of you, they have been there since your birth was recorded, according to your skin colour on the forms of the Population Registration Act.”<sup>134</sup>

The National Government's rejection of People's Education on the basis that it politicized students lost ground against Gordimer's words. Every South African student had a political identity, and during the second half of the 1980s, educators and activists fought to harness that political element and encourage students to question their place in the political landscape of South Africa. Weldon's initiative to have her students interview each other is just one example of teachers preparing students to exist in a politically and socially transformed South Africa.

People's Education was perceived as the answer to the question of what sort of education could both propel forward and provide structure for the democratizing of education in South Africa. Newspaper reports and political rhetoric of the danger of People's Education only spoke to the power of liberatory education, and history education specifically, to interrupt the political landscape.

During the second half of the 1980s, as it became more and more clear that the center would not hold concerning the apartheid state, educators, students and activists challenged apartheid education from all

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<sup>134</sup> Gordimer, Nadine. "People's Education Will Deal with Future Realities." *The Cape Times*, December 23, 1986, 1986.



sides. History education's role as a site of resistance against apartheid education resides in its political nature. Resisters recognized the political function of apartheid education, and recognized that that political function directly opposed the protection of their own identities. People recognized that the government was using history education as a form of control, and refused to be manipulated. They used history education, politically, to demand questions of the official story and therefore to deconstruct the narrative which buttressed apartheid.

## CHAPTER FIVE: “APARTHEIDED OUT” THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING APARTHEID HISTORY IN 2012

If the history classroom reflects the struggle between state-mandated memory and questioning of the official version of history, then the teaching that goes on inside the classroom must constantly negotiate that struggle. Teaching history in 2012 is still a contentious and challenging pursuit and a constant negotiation. While the political context has changed, and students in high school currently were born after 1994, the legacies and history of apartheid are a quotidian encounter for everyone. Students and teachers alike face obstacles and are reluctant to delve deeply into the apartheid past in the classroom. Today, teachers must navigate a different landscape of oppositional history with their students. When students bring the baggage of their families’ experiences with and stories of apartheid into the classroom, teachers must prepare students to exist in the “rainbow nation,” emphasizing unity and amity through historical narrative.

The absence of a named past corresponds to the element of transition theory that insists that for negotiations to be successful, “major social questions” have to be kept off the table.<sup>135</sup> Issues of resources, wealth, and land distribution would be considered “major social questions;” thus, the foundational policies of racial separation in South

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<sup>135</sup> Foner, Eric. *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2002.p. 95

Africa, such as the Land Acts of 1913 and Education Acts of the 1950s and 1960s fall into this category. The absence of the word “apartheid” in Mandela’s speech can therefore be read within the context of the political compromise at the foreground of the transition.

The political compromise of 1994 blurred the lines between apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa and thus the line between the struggle for liberation and the National Party-led Government.<sup>136</sup> In 1994, political compromise stipulated the creation of the Government of National Unity. Instead of the National Party completely leaving power, they would share power with the African National Congress, with Mandela leading the government and country. The oppressive regime that had implemented apartheid policy and the liberation movement were to lead the country together, blurring the lines between past and present, and apartheid and democracy in South Africa. *That is grey area.* The compromise thus complicated the connection between the struggle for democratic education and national liberation by inserting the struggle into power, thus creating a façade of liberation and of a now unnecessary resistance. Questioning of the government lost its obvious necessity.

In 1994, the political agenda shifted dramatically to emphasize non-racial unity and multiculturalism, articulated in the notion of the “rainbow nation.” Nationalism and civil religion as themes of historical

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<sup>136</sup> Mngomezulu, Bheki. "UWC South African and Contemporary History Seminar: In Defense of History: A Focus on Post-Apartheid South Africa." University of the Western Cape, 2005.

narrative carried over into the post-apartheid political landscape. Teachers engaging in a counter-curriculum during apartheid taught directly against the apartheid system and ideology and therefore against the state, engaging in education-based activism to disrupt the political system. Post-apartheid, teachers' stories speak to the new political agenda, and when they focus on historical depth, the conversations are complicated. Apartheid is now a burdensome history and its legacies permeate classroom walls. Immediately post-apartheid, history education was de-emphasized in favor of the maths and sciences, which did not require engagement with the complicated past. In the early 2000s, history was re-emphasized in favor of deeply reckoning with the past to more effectively move forward. Now, there is fear that the ANC is highlighted as the main facet of anti-apartheid resistance and that the organization is problematically glorified today, still ignoring the complexities of history. History, therefore, remains a contentious subject to teach.

The renaming of the Anglo-Boer War to the South African War is a revealing example of the political motivation behind post-1994 historiographical shifts. Post-apartheid, historians expected that democracy would in turn emancipate history and South Africans would be able to “uncover innumerable pasts.”<sup>137</sup> The renaming of the Anglo-Boer War is one example of that effort to emancipate the past. The politics and

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<sup>137</sup> Witz, Leslie, Ciraj Rassool, and Gary Minkley. "Who Speaks for South African Pasts?" University of the Western Cape, South African Historical Society, 1999, 1999.

eventual impact of this renaming also reflect the limits of history written to serve political purpose and the limits of transformation in the context of political compromise. The Anglo-Boer War was renamed the South African War to incorporate the many black Africans who fought on both sides of the war (100,000 for the British, 10,000 for the Boers).<sup>138</sup> However, during the centennial commemoration of the War, the presentation did not focus significantly on black participants. For example, the events were planned with the ultimate goal of serving the purpose of unity within South Africa in 1999-2002, by emphasizing the unity between white South Africans after the war.<sup>139</sup> Leslie Witz, Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rasool argue that “there is little doubt that these attempts to add blacks into the war are related to the political moment in South Africa where the discourse of 'many cultures' and rainbow nationalism is prevalent.”<sup>140</sup> Witz, Minkley and Rasool pointed out that the commemoration activities had the support of national and provincial governments, and the government had claimed that the events would “bring together the people of the country in peace and reconciliation.”<sup>141</sup>

However, as Witz, Minkley and Rasool stress, historical commemoration in South Africa, situated messily in the context of the political compromise of 1994, is a complicated endeavor. In terms of the

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid

<sup>139</sup> Ibid

<sup>140</sup> Ibid p. 5

<sup>141</sup> Ibid p. 5

South African War, and on the national scale, monuments to Afrikaner nationalism and Boer perseverance are juxtaposed against much newer, modern installments to celebrate unity and multiculturalism and the struggle against apartheid. Monuments have not been taken down, but many have been put up. Memories, then, remain constant neighbors in public parks and walkways. The new South Africa's emphasis on reconciliation renders historical understanding inherently and perpetually unstable, just as the apartheid-era historical narrative did. The context and circumstances have changed, but teachers and students still need to negotiate political and historical agendas inside and outside the classroom.

Nelson Mandela's inauguration to the presidency of South Africa exemplified the compromise of the transition from authoritarianism to democracy, and the new political agenda of the Government of National Unity. During the event, military planes flew overhead and a flock of doves was released to counter the image of the planes and to symbolize the "reconciliatory achievement of the new Government of National Unity."<sup>142</sup> In his inauguration speech, Mandela said, "We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world."<sup>143</sup> Mandela, as highlighted in this

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<sup>142</sup> Evans, Martha. "Mandela and the Televised Birth of the Rainbow Nation." *National Identities* 12, no. 3 (2010): 309. p. 317

<sup>143</sup> Evans

excerpt, emphasized unity and reconciliation as essential building blocks to constructing the rainbow nation. The term “covenant” sanctifies citizenship and civic responsibility of South Africans. In just that sentence, Mandela promoted unity and suggested a new definition for citizenship in the South African state: one that is not defined along and against racial lines. Importantly, during the inauguration Mandela never used the word “apartheid.”<sup>144</sup> Though he spoke of oppression and conflict, he never named the past.

Both the imagery and the speeches of the day functioned to articulate the goals of the GNU, and by extension, the parameters for collective identity in the rainbow nation. This is important to note in contrast to the parameters for citizenship and collective identity laid out by the previous government, and against the resistance by individuals and organizations to those parameters. While the National Party government was defined by its exclusionary and racialized policies, the new government would seek to characterize itself as unified through multicultural identity. This also provides context for history education, in relation to the state, both during apartheid and post-1994. Whereas teachers were able to teach against the limited definition of citizenship laid out by the National party, this became more complicated when the definition of citizenship is expanded and bias is less clear.

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid

South Africa's identity as a "rainbow nation" was established by Archbishop Desmond Tutu during the 1994 National Thanksgiving Service to further articulate the country's political agenda of unity. During a broadcast of the service he announced, "We are the rainbow people of God. We are free – all of us, black and white together," emphasizing unity in non-racialism, but also in strategically familiar terms. The freedom that Tutu referred to suggested emancipation from both the oppression of the apartheid system and the binding chains of history. Free from the divisive structures of the past, and free to move forward together. The rhetoric of South Africa's rebirth as the "rainbow nation" is embedded with biblical reference. The "rainbow" serves as a multipurpose metaphor, both religiously and as a visual indicator. The rainbow is a reference to God's deliverance of Noah from the flood, a symbol of God's forgiveness of human fallibility and of better, more peaceful times ahead. The past – before the flood – is a lesson, but it has been wiped away and a new country has been granted. The symbol is from the Old Testament. Without having to name the past, this imagery can signify a new chapter in South African history. The proverbial rainbow is also a visual indicator of unity through multiculturalism, coupled with non-racialism, which was an aesthetic political goal of the GNU. The use of the rainbow symbol in public political rhetoric is an example of civil religion. Just as Christianity was used to legitimize Afrikaner nationalism, religious rhetoric and symbolism was not forsaken in the political transition.



The GNU's choice to focus on reconciliation also reflected in their representation of current events. In 1994, the year South Africa became a democracy, Rwanda was also in the midst of a genocide and Bosnia was experiencing ethnically-based atrocities as well. The rhetoric centered around the "rainbow nation" and unity through non-racialism indicates that the GNU was actively working against genocide or other racially-based atrocities within South Africa.<sup>145</sup> After the genocide in Rwanda, a moratorium was placed on the teaching of history in schools, and action that suggests the power that is assigned to history education to divide based on historical identity.<sup>146</sup> That a moratorium was placed on the teaching of history speaks directly to the role of history education as a site of resistance. Though Rwanda's moratorium was more extreme action than South Africa's de-emphasis on historical controversy, those steps are connected by motivation and purpose.

In the years between 1994 and 2012, South Africa's education system underwent multiple revisions in national curriculum, initially de-emphasizing history for a number of reasons and later attempting to give history value. In this chapter, the curriculum is not my concern. Instead, I am interested in the challenges teachers face in bringing apartheid into their classrooms in terms of personal obstacles, student reluctance, content

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<sup>145</sup> Foner

<sup>146</sup> Weldon "A Comparative Study of the Construction of Memory and Identity in the Curriculum in Societies Emerging from Conflict: Rwanda and South Africa."

knowledge, and support, and how those challenges reflect the context of the political compromise in 1994.

Eighteen years after South Africa ostensibly became a democracy, all students in high school were born after the transition. Thus, their knowledge of apartheid as a legal system exists in terms of narrative and oral histories, references, and what they learn in school. However, the legacies of apartheid pervade their daily life, impacting where they live, go to school, their family's economic situation, and general perception of the state of South Africa. Teachers are not immune to those legacies, but they also have the experience of living through apartheid. Importantly, teachers are teaching under the context of a new definition of citizenship and a new political agenda. They have to teach towards unity and reconciliation and de-emphasize differential experiences, as opposed to teaching towards division and cultural difference.

All of the teachers whom I spoke with were connected in some way to Shikaya, and so they had all been through the teacher development programs and used the materials produced by the organization. Thus, I had to consider the reason why certain themes came up in all of their interviews and why those themes were on their minds. However, some of those themes carried over, though transformed and not always easily recognizable, from the stories of teaching during apartheid.

For many history teachers today, the primary challenge to talking to their students about apartheid is coming to terms with their own experiences of the system. Shikaya's main focus is on teacher development and support, mostly accomplished through workshops geared towards helping teachers unpack their own pasts. Many teachers who lived through apartheid never had the chance to talk about and work through their own personal suffering.<sup>147</sup> Glenn connected that to its implication in the classroom. "If we, as educators, don't have the space to deal with our issues, we are never going to be able to deal with the issues our kids bring," he said. Wray explained that Shikaya anticipates that there will come a time in most history classrooms when students will begin to ask teachers about their experiences and decisions in the context of that system. That resonates for teachers of all apartheid-era racial classifications, and extends beyond the victim/perpetrator dichotomy. To be able to address the apartheid past in the context of the rainbow nation, teachers sometimes struggle with creating a classroom environment not infused with anger.

Former history teacher Lwando Mahamba recognized that in the classroom, he was glorifying the resistance without scrutiny. He was transferring his anger about apartheid over to his students. "The radical side of what I felt," Mahamba said, "was that all whites were racist."<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Nates, Tali. "'but, Apartheid was also Genocide... what about our Suffering' Teaching the Holocaust in South Africa - Opportunities and Challenges." *Intercultural Education* 21, (2010): 17. P.22

<sup>148</sup> Lwando Mahamba, interview by author, Cape Town, South Africa, April 11, 2012.

There is an element that is overlooked in that ideology, Mahamba explained in self-reflection, and that is that he was not looking at individuals. He was raised in the tradition of radicalism, and brought that passion and upbringing and residual resentment into the classroom. Mahamba recognized this as a problem, and connected with Shikaya. Through the workshops, he became more self-aware about what he was doing, and saw that students are affected by what he brings into the classroom. Wray mentioned a story of a teacher he knows who was tortured by the police during apartheid. This teacher is among many who were victims of violence during apartheid. “Every time is his teaching issues of torture he is remembering his own,” Wray pointed out.<sup>149</sup> Which Wray considers makes this teacher very courageous. History teacher Anna Gibson echoed Mahamba: “I must say it, I think a lot of black teachers continue their struggle that they had with the previous system, they’re stuck in that. I don’t think it’s always fair on the children to transfer that.”<sup>150</sup> Her statement reveals both her own prejudices, and her association with Shikaya. This line about “continuing their struggle” and what is “fair” to transfer on to the children is very wrapped up in Shikaya’s ideology of unpacking the legacies and baggage of apartheid before addressing it in the classroom.

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<sup>149</sup> Dylan Wray, interview by author, Cape Town, South Africa, April 17, 2012.

<sup>150</sup> Anna Gibson, interview by author, Cape Town, South Africa, April 23, 2012.

The implications of whiteness under apartheid carry through to classrooms today, and carry with them assumptions about roles played during the struggle. To avoid dipping into their own history, Wray explained, some teachers graze over apartheid very superficially. “They don’t want to get to those discussions in the classroom where the students start to say, ‘what were you doing during apartheid?’ or, ‘who did you support?’” said Wray.<sup>151</sup> This can be an issue for people who were perpetrators, victims or bystanders, Wray argued. From his perspective, many white people supported the National Party because they recognized that the NP would provide what was essentially a safety net to white South Africans. They saw the NP giving them what they perceived as a good standard of living, security, and job security, according to Wray. “What we sit with now is teachers who may have supported apartheid, who may have been party members, may have voted for apartheid. It doesn’t necessarily mean they were racist or are racist today,” he said.<sup>152</sup> Teachers, even more than their students, are still painfully close to apartheid. Teachers might express that closeness in shame, anger, or guilt, and have trouble addressing the causes of those feelings in their classrooms, especially before addressing those feelings within themselves.

The notion of “grey area” and complicating the prevailing images of apartheid identities can turn into a slippery slope. On the one hand, oral

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<sup>151</sup> Wray interview, April 2012.

<sup>152</sup> Wray interview, April 2012.

histories of those who resisted the system can add depth to the historical narratives of apartheid and allow students to access the unwritten parts of the past.<sup>153</sup> When Dennis Goldberg, who was imprisoned in 1963 for his involvement with Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed struggle of the ANC, and his participation in the resistance against apartheid, spoke to a group of students in a township school, many of the students initially assumed he had put Mandela in jail. After speaking, the students asked why he gave up his privilege as a white South African to participate in the struggle. Wray emphasized the importance of highlighting stories like Goldberg's to illustrate for students that there could be white South Africans who resisted, and black South Africans who were perpetrators. However, Mahamba was uncomfortable with that idea.

While Mahamba found himself more self-aware after he considered his own prejudices and personal challenges in thinking about and teaching apartheid, he struggled with the notion of a grey area. He did not like to say that perpetrators were victims of propaganda, and criticized the emphasis on grey area as an “apologetic way of teaching history.”<sup>154</sup> For this reason, he left history education, and is no longer closely associated with Shikaya. A New York City middle school principal shared Mahamba's trepidations with the message in Facing the Past's content. “It puts too much emphasis on people being duped by propoganda,” he said, “as opposed to propaganda consolidating and directing pre-existing

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<sup>153</sup> Wray Interview, April 2012

<sup>154</sup> Mahamba interview, April 2012.

bigotry.”<sup>155</sup> The immediate danger, the principal pointed out, is that his students often leave the classroom thinking that “good Germans were manipulated into hating Jews by the Nazi propaganda machine,” which is not what he wants students to take away.<sup>156</sup>

The “apologetic way of teaching history” speaks to both socio-political context and Shikaya’s effort to give students access to the history of ordinary people. In the South African context, to teach students to blur the lines of victim and perpetrator and recognize a grey area might be construed as serving the goal of reconciliation and coexistence. Wray characterized the notion of grey area as an understanding that sometimes someone is a bystander and sometimes someone is a perpetrator and that those labels can be fluid and in reaction to contextual factors, but at the end of the day students should come away with a clear vision of how to avoid stepping into either of these two roles. “You want kids coming out of the class saying, ‘I’m going to stand up to racism, I’m going to stand up to prejudice and do something about these things.’”<sup>157</sup> To help students get to this place, the brave acts of resisters and the effects that perpetrators had on victims are used to demonstrate that the impact of each of these roles. Dennis Goldberg’s story is used as such an example.

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<sup>155</sup> David Getz, interview by author, April 2013.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid

<sup>157</sup> Wray interview, April 2012.

Teachers can run up against walls trying to relay recent South African history to their students, who express reluctance to engage with that past. In explaining the general mood among her students when the subject of South African history is raised, Harriet Brown used the phrase “apartheid out.” James said that she finds her students think apartheid has been written to death. Wray echoed this perception of students, suggesting that students start learning about apartheid too early in school, or because they constantly hear about it at home, by the time it is introduced as part of the high school curriculum, they have had enough. This is where case studies can be useful to start talking about themes and feelings, but also through their reluctance to delve deeply into apartheid in the classroom reveals the reach of apartheid’s legacies.

Students’ reluctance to talk about apartheid can reach back again to the role of opposing narratives in their lives. Children grow up being told two stories: this is what apartheid was like for our family and our community, and this is how you are supposed to behave in this new country. And how they are supposed to behave is as a member of a multicultural, reconciled, unified state – a rainbow nation. Just as students during apartheid were taught a two-layered story of the Afrikaner historiography and then the realities of both past and present, and taught to exist and operate in the apartheid system while also being able to question and subvert that system, students today are told what their parents or families or communities experienced, and then taught a different story in



school. Wray framed this as a sort of table to classroom pipeline. When students go home from school, they hear very different narratives at their kitchen tables. “One of a victim narrative, where they polarize South African society. Another dinner table will hear about how the country’s gone to ruins and apartheid wasn’t so bad and it gave people a better standard of living.”<sup>158</sup> While students bring those perceptions into the classroom, they also bring their own issues, Wray added, pointing out that the students are individuals as well.

Parents play a major role in determining what baggage and stories students bring to the classroom. “They say things without thinking about what they are saying,” said Weldon about how children might pick up ideas from their parents.<sup>159</sup> James also pointed out that a lot of students’ parents will deny that they benefitted from apartheid, and this denial is passed on to their children. Jonathan Jansen, the Vice Chancellor of the University of the Free State, has authored a number of books and articles on education in post-apartheid South Africa. When he tries to bring up apartheid with his white university students, their resounding response is generally that it was not their fault, it was the previous generations, and it should be left in this past. Albert Grundlingh, a professor of history at the University of Stellenbosch, said that his students echo this sentiment. He attributes the decline in interest in history education at the university level

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid

<sup>159</sup> Gail Weldon, interview by author, April 2012.

post-1994 in part to student not wanting to be blamed for apartheid. “Students do not want the sins of their forbearers put on them,” Grundlingh reasoned about why white students shy away from talking about apartheid.<sup>160</sup> Black students are not always eager to talk about apartheid history either. When the first national education plan, Curriculum 2005, was being written after apartheid, curriculum reforms sought to answer the question of whether to rewrite South Africa’s history or to “let bygones be bygones.”<sup>161</sup> To rewrite/re-interpret South Africa’s history posed the risk of infuriating at least one group of people.

For students and teachers, racial boundaries may seem impenetrable, which contributes to animosity between and silencing of students. James relayed a story of a white student who never spoke in class. The girl was completely silent during class discussions, so one day James pulled her aside and asked what was going on. The girl’s family had been chased off their farm in Zimbabwe, and this had made her hate black people, she said. She knew that this was not an appropriate feeling, so she wouldn’t speak. This anecdote speaks directly to the challenges of teaching history. When issues of land rights and distribution (and redistribution) come up in class, this student is silenced by her hatred and a feeling she knows is inappropriate. This anecdote also touches on the notion of opposing narratives. In South Africa today, students are taught to

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<sup>160</sup> Grundlingh interview, January 2013.

<sup>161</sup> Mngomezulu

transition between the stories and opinions at home and within their communities to the political correctness of the “rainbow nation.” Teachers still seek to provide their students with safe spaces to question and to dialogue about their criticisms of the government and of society, while simultaneously preparing them to function in that society.

## CONCLUSION

Teaching apartheid history in post-apartheid South Africa is politically and emotionally fraught terrain. The challenges faced by teachers within the classroom mirror the politics of memory that museums and public sites grapple with daily. Shortly after the Apartheid Museum opened outside of Johannesburg, museum authorities chose to restrict access to exhibits by age. After running pilot visitor programs, the authorities realized that young patrons came out of the exhibits harboring interracial animosity, reportedly a result of learning the stories of the past they were too young to live through.<sup>162</sup> Museum authorities decided to prevent young people from visiting the exhibits in an attempt to isolate them from what they considered the most traumatic and atrocious parts of apartheid. "In the process," Bheki Mngomezulu argued, "some aspects of South African history were deliberately silenced for the sake of reconciliation."<sup>163</sup> The silencing of certain aspects of history, along with confusion over what is appropriate to display, has typified sites of public memory in South Africa for the past 19 years. The Company's Gardens in Cape Town are a visual example of that historiographical conflict.

The Gardens bloom against the backdrop of Table Mountain and are most beautiful on a cloudless day. Tourists and locals share the park with a robust population of pigeons. The park is a vestige of colonial Cape

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<sup>162</sup> Mngomezulu

<sup>163</sup> Ibid

Town, initially constructed to serve European settlers in the 1650s, and the buildings that line the gardens all served some colonial government purpose. The park stretches from the University of Cape Town's arts campus, right below the wealthy, white Kloof neighborhood, to Waal Street, which is the central hill of the "coloured" Bo Kaap neighborhood. It is convenient to pass through the garden to get to Cape Town's most popular museums, most of which are connected to the Iziko Foundation. Through the dynamic between the content of these museums and the park's history and monuments, we can see the complexities of teaching and thinking about South Africa's history post-apartheid.



The front of the South African National Gallery, from the interior of the Company's Gardens.

The Iziko Museums are housed in the colonial buildings and therefore line the exterior of the garden, so it makes sense to walk through the various gardens to arrive at each museum. The Iziko Slave Lodge on Adderley Street, for example, is housed in an old slave lodge and tells an interactive history of slavery in the Cape region. The South African National Gallery is an art museum, and houses exhibits on art made in the vein of anti-apartheid resistance alongside modern works and European pieces. The South African Museum is a natural history museum with a legacy of incorporating ethnography and anthropology, visible in the rooms dedicated to the Khoi and the San people of southern Africa. In the South African Museum, a sign reads: “Welcome to Iziko: South African Museum where knowledge is presented from African perspectives,” a complicated invitation because the exhibits on African peoples have been criticized for portraying groups from an arm-chair anthropologist point of view. Additionally, the exhibits promote a static, tribalistic vision of these groups who are still alive and well and dynamically existing today. Post-apartheid, the South African Museum’s curators placed type-written signs throughout the museum asking visitors to contribute to the revitalization of the content. The signs invited the criticism of visitors:

“Out of Touch? This gallery was constructed in the 1970s and since that time approaches to exhibiting African cultures have changed. Do the exhibits create the impression that all black South Africans live in rural villages, wear traditional dress and use only hand-made utensils? What about those people who live and work in towns and travel abroad or become industrialists? Do they not challenge

the conventional ethnic stereotypes? African culture is not static. Why, then, are many labels in the gallery written in the present tense, as if time stood still?"<sup>164</sup>

The South African Museum's attempt to modernize through becoming historically accurate was not an isolated move, as museums around the country felt the pressure to do the same.

If the museums' interiors represent a complex vision of identity in flux, the walkways of the garden are similarly layered. Towering statues of Jan Smuts and Cecil Rhodes, two of the most legendary figures of South African colonial conquest, stand solidly as a diverse array of pedestrians wander by. The confusion and conversation apparent in public history speaks to the challenges of teaching apartheid in classrooms. The most glaring, fundamental difference between the Afrikaner historical narrative and the narrative of the "new South Africa" is that there is now a multicultural focus, and the multi-layered past is in full view to the public. However, nationalism and unity are still encouraged over questioning. Another glaring difference is that unity now is inter-ethnic instead of intra-ethnic. The visibility of Jan Smuts and Cecil Rhodes and other vestiges of the apartheid past does not have to be intrinsically negative, I argue. But if colonized peoples must walk amongst perpetual statues of colonial figures, than those figures must be regarded, publicly, nationally, and institutionally, with critical inquiry and dynamic questioning.

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<sup>164</sup> Witz et al.

Jan Smuts and Cecil Rhodes, along with the policies of apartheid, must be remembered alongside those killed at Sharpeville and Soweto and the Gugulethu seven. The past needs to be constantly considered to understand the contemporary political and socioeconomic landscape of South Africa, but those histories should be questioned and their legacies addressed, instead of silenced. This analysis of South African history education demonstrates that the government has not been able to encourage historical questioning, because this would undermine its political authority and nationalist agenda. Alternately, that questioning needs to come from below – whether that is within academia, or high school classrooms, or community groups. Gail Weldon was part of the curriculum writing committee in 1996, and pushed for the inclusion of apartheid in school history. Now, she doubts whether it was too soon. “The more I’ve thought about it and written about it, the less sure I am that it was right to put it in the curriculum in 1996,” Weldon said thoughtfully.<sup>165</sup> “But you can’t deny the past,” she added.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Weldon interview, April 2012.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid





Statue of Jan Smuts in the Company's Gardens.

Some educators fear that if emphasis in the history classroom is entirely placed on apartheid and glorifies the resistance without scrutiny, recent South African history will occupy the same historical and educational space as the Great Trek.<sup>167</sup> This is the risk of government-prescribed history education in South Africa today, as politicians and curriculum designers negotiate new terrain in history education. The question of what history education should do beyond provide historical knowledge, in democratic South Africa, is up for debate. Jacqueline Dean pointed out that historically, history education in South African schools was not linked with promoting democratic values, but questioned whether history education should be used to inculcate values, or to “further

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<sup>167</sup> Bonner, Philip. "History Teaching and the Apartheid Museum." In *Toward New Histories for South Africa: On the Place of the Past in our Present*, edited by Shamil Jeppie, 140: Juta Gariep, 2004.

political, cultural, racial, or social aims?"<sup>168</sup> Phillip Bonner considered a related question concerning how apartheid history should be taught, from the standpoint of the Apartheid Museum. "South Africa confronts one additional dilemma: members and descendants of the communities that both executed and suffered from apartheid policy continue to co-exist in the same national space," Bonner wrote, adding: "How can their motives and experiences be simultaneously engaged without perpetuating polarization and re-igniting hatred? Are the more difficult and disturbing parts of this history not best left alone?"<sup>169</sup>

Bonner and Weldon can argue that history should not be denied or circumvented because they have no political motivation for manipulating the past. Teaching and acknowledging history in South Africa today is still shaky political ground and is inextricable from the legacies of apartheid education. This is because the conflict between the state's need to control the past to control the future and the people's need to control the past to own their identity is unceasing. As long as the government has vested interest in a political goal such as unity or division, the people will be responsible for challenging the manipulation of history in state-constructed narratives. The teachers who worked against the curriculum provide an example in teaching complex history from multiple perspectives and sources of memory. Thus, bringing apartheid history into

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<sup>168</sup> Dean, Jacqueline. "Doing History: Theory, Practice and Pedagogy." In *Toward New Histories for South Africa: On the Place of the Past in our Present*, edited by Shamil Jeppie, 102: Juta Gariep, 2004

<sup>169</sup> Bonner p. 141

the classroom does not necessarily just pertain to the content of a lesson, but to the resistant manner in which it can be taught.

In 2009, New York Times Reporter Barry Bearak covered the annual celebration of the Day of the Vow, during which Afrikaners gathered at a monument near Pretoria to celebrate their ancestors' trek across the country. Their celebration of the massacre of 3,000 Zulus, and the religious meaning to their ethnic identity, is in correlation with their current rejection of the historical narrative promoted by the ANC government. Their rejection of the official historical narrative, and their use of an oppositional, Afrikaner narrative, represents a reversal from the roles of apartheid. The gathering also speaks to the enduring legacy of the historical narrative constructed by the National Party. Their rejection of the official history signifies that there will always be a group of dissenters – that history education is inevitably political.

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