

## ROODEPOORT-MARAISBURG LOCATION: A HISTORY

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The roots of Roodepoort-Maraisburg location reach back to the years immediately after the South African (Anglo-Boer) War of 1899-1902. Following the war the great majority of African mine labourers were enclosed and lived in single sex mine compounds. A minority, however, were allowed to occupy clusters of shacks and huts on mine properties along with their families. In addition a variety of other informal or 'irregular' (to use the official term) locations were dotted all over the Witwatersrand housing mine and other workers. The reasons for permitting this unusual lack of control were given by J.M. Pritchard, chief Inspector of the Transvaal's Native Affairs Department in 1902. 'Certain natives' he remarked

'who have worked for long periods on the mines and whose services are particularly valuable, have become married or "attached" to women and if they were not permitted to live with these females in some such place as these locations they would leave the mine.'

In 1906 Julius Wernher of Wernher, Beit & Company (forerunner of Rand Mines, Limited) endorsed this view and observed that such locations had already been established or had formed at West Rand Consolidated Mines and Witwatersrand Deep.<sup>1</sup> No mine location of this sort is referred to in the Roodepoort area but one such undoubtedly existed, and came to form the nucleus of Roodepoort West Municipal Location. This is clear from a Transvaal Colony Executive Council Resolution dated 14 August 1907 which recommended to the Governor of the Colony that Roodepoort-Maraisburg Council 'assume control over the native location on farm Roodepoort 43'.<sup>2</sup>

Personal testimonies from former residents of Roodepoort West location flesh out these bare bones of official statements and resolutions. According to Maswe Simon Mhlanga, what would later become the location area

'was bought from a white man called Dobson. It was bought by a mine, because there were many people on the mines and they did not have a place to live in. Then somebody bought this place from the mine and gave them sites. I do not know whether Mr Dobson came from the mines.'<sup>3</sup>

Soni Notlahla, whose father initially worked for the nearby Rand Leases Mine, makes a similar point, remarking

'When Roodepoort was built it was actually meant for mine workers who were working at Durban Roodepoort Deep, Rand Leases, but then industries sprang up.'<sup>4</sup>

Since J.T. Dobson seems to have been working at a nearby mine as compound manager in 1903, it seems highly plausible that he in fact gave the green light to the forming

of this informal location which the Council later took over.<sup>5</sup>

The location soon became known by the name of Juliwe. Constance Manana, another early resident of Roodepoort Location offers an account of how this came about.

'People came from the homelands to work here. There was a lady called Julia; she was a domestic worker. She got pregnant and was told to leave and go back home but she went to the Roodepoort Commissioner to ask for a place where she can build herself a shack [He allowed it] ... now when people they saw a shack many ... came and build their houses there. People followed Julia and built houses and the place was called "kwa-Juliwe"'<sup>6</sup>

Lebang Huma, whose father worked at Durban Roodepoort Deep, suggests a similar derivation recalling simply 'We called it Julia's place'.<sup>7</sup> In mid 1907 the surveyor E.H. Jones surveyed what seems to have been this early informal location on the farm Roodepoort 43. The ground was owned by T.S. Neft and others, and was leased (without cost) by the municipality, under a surface right obtained from the Department of Mines. Upon the granting of self-government to the Colony of the Transvaal in 1906, stronger pressure was placed by the new administration on mine managements to eliminate informal locations, and on local councils to establish tighter control over Africans living within their municipal boundaries.<sup>8</sup> The municipality of Roodepoort-Maraisburg, which had already taken steps to proclaim and control the informal mine location of Juliwe now introduced measures to require Africans living within the municipal borders to reside in the township if their white employers did not take out a permit to house them on their own premises.<sup>9</sup> It may be this moment that Doris Dlamini, another early location resident, is recalling when she observes

'Mr Bila (her grandfather) built a house for himself in Roodepoort. When they were removed from where they stayed they were just thrown in Roodepoort West.'

Mrs Dlamini then goes on to offer an alternative account of how the location got its name

'When they arrived there they called the place Juliwe, which in Nguni "kukuthi silahliwe" means "just thrown out"'.<sup>10</sup>

Evidently, the same name could have different resonances, for different people, for different reasons.

Little is known about the early history of 'Juliwe' after this initial moment of founding. It does not surface again in the documentary record until 19 , and the few remaining early personal reminiscences of the location begin in the 1920s. It seems clear, nevertheless, that Juliwe received many, if not most, of its early residents from the local mines. When the mines and the Transvaal Government had taken steps to stamp out informal mine locations in 1908, they had provided the alternative of married quarters on the mines for mine workers who had established families and homes in these areas. The Roodepoort mines were remarkable in this respect as their married quarters housed 584 men, 568 women and

407 children in 1913-14 and 1918, much more than any other mining centre on the Witwatersrand bar Boksburg.<sup>11</sup> The great majority of the miners living in these quarters either possessed particularly scarce skills or were educated mine clerks or other educated black mining personnel. Most of these came from the main centres of mission education in the Eastern Cape. A steady stream of such discharged married miners made their way, upon discharge or upon obtaining better work, into Juliwe location.

Practically every early resident interviewed for this study had a father who first worked on the mines:

'My mother came here in 1915 ... My father was from Moshwedi ... in Zeerust. He used to work in the mines for "Mtonono";<sup>12</sup> 'Mother came to be with father, Mahwitsa Simelane, who worked at Durban Deep.'<sup>13</sup> 'My father (Mr Majova) worked as a clerk at Durban Deep.'<sup>14</sup> 'My father worked as a clerk for Rand Leases Mine. His father was a Reverend who came from Kimberley. My mother was a domestic'.<sup>15</sup> 'My parents came from Colony, a place called Vovayise. He works in Johannesburg on the mines.'<sup>16</sup> 'My father worked at Durban Deep and also at Roodepoort coal mine.'<sup>17</sup> 'Xhosas came to work on the mines'.<sup>18</sup> 'Xhosa came to the mines, Durban Deep, Bottom, Rand Leases and then they met Xhosa women.'<sup>19</sup>

While Xhosa speakers initially may well have predominated in Juliwe, they were soon overtaken in numbers by Tswana speakers. The universal view among former location residents is that by the 1920s at least Xhosa and Tswana speakers comprised the overwhelming bulk of the population. George Menoe captures the popular perception

'For some strange reasons the entire population of Roodepoort West was Xhosa and Tswana - no Zulu, no Sotho. So anyone from Roodepoort spoke Xhosa or Tswana. ... My own father was Tswana ... . My mother was Swazi (but) she spoke Xhosa. I never heard her speak Swazi.'<sup>20</sup>

Lebang Huma makes exactly the same point.

'All of them spoke Xhosa and Tswana. My father was Pedi ... (my) mother Venda, but we all spoke Tswana. (My very first name) Lebang is Tswana.'<sup>21</sup>

'Even [in] the schools the vernacular taught was either Xhosa or Tswana', remarks Soni Notlahla, so, as it were, the children had no alternative but to be socialised in these tongues.<sup>22</sup>

The only other significant minority were Shangane or Zulu. Shanganes likewise came from the mines, like George Khosa, a former mine clerk, who opened up a general dealer business in Juliwe<sup>23</sup> or Doris Dlamini's father Ezekiel Pile who married his wife Sarah from the Eastern Pondoland (whose family also ended up speaking Xhosa). Zulu were few in number

and came by diverse routes.

This inflow of new residents into Juliwe nevertheless needs to be put in perspective. In 1915 only 392 Africans lived in the location compared to 347 occupying premises in Roodepoort town and 169 in neighbouring Maraisburg. The local mines of Durban Roodepoort Deep, Rand Leases and others by contrast housed 22 000 more, positively dwarfing puny Juliwe and its neighbouring West Rand towns.<sup>24</sup> Juliwe grew slowly but steadily over the following decade and by 1925 housed 768 adults and 475 juniors aged under 18, a total of 2 243, 'A continuous influx' began in 1926, after which the location's population grew at a faster pace. According to answers given by the Location Superintendent, J.T. Dobson, to a Native Economic Commission questionnaire in 1931 'Msuto mine males' brought wives and children in growing numbers to stay in the location for periods of up to 4-6 months, a percentage of which would take up more permanent residence. In addition immigrants came direct to Juliwe and Roodepoort town from the Tswana districts of Zeerust, Koster and Rustenburg and thereafter 'induced' their entire families to come. Some labour tenants brought their whole family in one seamless move, presumably fleeing the steadily deteriorating conditions with which they were confronted on white farms from the early 1920s, while a final slice of the location population was provided by the 'many farm natives sent to location schools by their relatives'.<sup>25</sup> This outline sketched by Location Superintendent J.T. Dobson is broadly confirmed by former residents. Thenjiwe Radebe recalls the location's Tswana speaking population being made up of 'people from Zeerust, Mafikeng, Kgatale, and Baralong', her own family having migrated from Zeerust, even though, for reasons which remain unclear but which would be interesting to know, they had migrated a generation prior to that from Tsomo in the Eastern Cape.<sup>26</sup> Several other Tswana families recall coming from the farms, while both Nkato Mokoetsi from Delareyville and Ida Mokoto arrived, in both cases unaccompanied, from the countryside, to reside with their sisters with the object of attending location schools.<sup>27</sup>

As the location grew a further change overtook it, in this case a change of name. In 1922, according to former residents known to Khaere Kole, a railway halt was built near to the location, and was given the name of Roodepoort West. This name (more often than not abbreviated to 'West')<sup>28</sup> gradually attached to the location as a whole. 'That was where Roodepoort West started' recalls Doris Dlamini, 'It was Juliwe; then it was later changed when a railway station was built at Roodepoort West'.<sup>29</sup>

Former residents recall life in Juliwe with considerable nostalgia. Like so many victims of forced removals this earlier existence has taken on the image of a golden age. For the better off, elite elements of the location's population, this opinion may have had some justification, at least in the period before serious congestion in the location arose. Virginia Matseke-Maxam's policeman father, for example, built a five roomed house which was

situated on a plot considerably larger than even the largest later allocated at Dobsonville. Not only were the rooms big but so was the yard. 'Most of us had big yards', she recalls. 'We had six oxen, a big vegetable garden, a fowl run on the other side of the house and a flower garden in front.'<sup>30</sup> Mrs Thenjiwe Radebe also grew up in a five roomed house owned by her father, Mr. Majova, while Ida Makoto's nuclear family stayed in relative comfort in her maternal grandmother's house.

'It was a very big house because they shared three rooms and we had three [along with] one room as the back occupied by a tenant [Mr Chakane]'.<sup>31</sup>

Soni Notlahla's father, who worked as a clerk at Rand Leases built a three roomed house for his sister, each room measuring 20 square metres,<sup>32</sup> while Lebang Huma likewise constructed 'a big house' consisting of two bedrooms, one sitting room and one dining room. 'Our kitchen was outside'. Lebang then goes on to provide an interesting slant on the bucolic tenor of location life at the time 'We were living like rural people ... . My mother used to smear mud on the floor, mud and dung from the kraal. There no polish then. It is a new thing.'<sup>33</sup>

This rural ambience was reinforced by the number of livestock and fowls that were reared by location residents. In theory, cattle and horses owned by location residents were supposed to be kept in a large cattle kraal situated on the West of the location immediately adjacent to the cemetery. Through most of the 1920s, about 100 of the residents' cattle were accommodated there, a figure which rose to 200 in 193 .<sup>34</sup> Even so, 'some people used to keep cattle in their yard [like the Mkhuhlane's and Molefe's]. The authorities were not so strict [Residents] had stables for horses right in their yards.' Soni Notlahla then goes on to recount a singularly South African paradox 'A white woman from the SPCA would whip people for abuse [whipping of] horses'.<sup>35</sup> Simon Molefe portrays a similar lifestyle. 'We had horses, cows and chickens', he recalls. Nkathlo Moeketsi who lodged in Mr Ndimande's house remembers Mr Ndimande keeping three horses in his yard. Many, others did the same thing.<sup>36</sup>

In 1931 the location was home to 254 siteholders who had built their own houses and 249 lodgers.<sup>37</sup> These figures reflect an absence of residential congestion and overcrowding. The social tensions and cleavages which accompanied such overcrowding elsewhere on the Rand, although generally a little later, were notably absent in Roodepoort at this time. Most families evinced little desire or need to rent out rooms in their houses to lodgers or at least lodgers who had no family relationship to members of the household. 'When I grew up', Mrs Radebe bluntly recalls, 'there were no lodgers.'<sup>38</sup> Amplifying on this point, Ida Mokoto observes, 'In this neighbourhood most tenants were family members because nobody wanted to take strangers.'<sup>39</sup> 'We had lodgers', George Menoe remembers, who contributed to the total number of 11 people living in the yard, 'but these were relatives, my mother's

brothers'.<sup>40</sup> Even a relatively poor family like that of Sophy Moyana 'did not rent to lodgers'.<sup>41</sup> Another striking feature of this period of the location's evolution was that it was 'rare to find people building shacks' in their yards.<sup>42</sup> Householders rather allocated and sometimes rented the relatively spacious rooms at the back of their houses to their relatives, while they typically lived in the rooms in the front.<sup>43</sup> While this was the typical pattern, stranger tenants also boarded with the householders of Roodepoort West. Even so, relative harmony seems to have prevailed, certainly at this point. 'We treated tenants as part of the family' insists Doris Dlamini. 'We only knew them as lodgers when we were moving to Kanana to build.'<sup>44</sup> An apparent ability to shift status from tenant to stand-owner probably contributed to this apparent social ease, 'Lodgers are constantly vacating rooms and moving into their own houses', reported the Location Superintendent in 1931.<sup>45</sup>

If social harmony generally prevailed, fairly substantial differences of income and social status can also be observed starting at the latest in the 1930s and probably before. Soni Notlahla, for example, identifies an easily overlooked but important social and economic marker which set apart the better off from the poorer residents in the location. Better class residents cooked on coal stoves, (some ultimately even getting electricity). The less well endowed utilised braziers made out of sanitary buckets, in which they punched holes, sold illegally to them by Bhaca sanitary workers.<sup>46</sup> Sophy Moyana paints a desperately bleak picture of what life offered to those on the underside of location society. 'When I was growing up', she recalls,

'my family and I were very poor ... We used to eat tripe and spinach and porridge. We didn't have shoes, even school uniform. My father worked grinding mealies at 'mochina' (the chinese shop). Our house was small with shacks. It was two big rooms. It belonged to my mother.

Things were rough in Roodepoort. Sometimes we would go to sleep without food, when our parents lost jobs. We would go and ask for peaches at Boer's houses. Sometimes they tell you to clean the house first. We would walk to Durban Deep over the railway and sell the peaches at the hotel. Then go to the dump to pick up dead chickens.'<sup>47</sup>

Maswe Mhlanga for a time suffered an almost identical fate in his youth. His mother was paralysed. He likewise scavenged for old oranges and dead chickens at the local dumping site.<sup>48</sup>

Besides the physical infrastructure of houses, a second level embraced the provisioning of basic services to the location. The five core services provided by the Roodepoort municipality (as was the case with other municipalities around the Rand) were water, sanitation, schooling, policing and health. Each was doled out in rather tight fisted fashion. Sophy Moyane remembers

'We suffered a lot in Roodepoort West. We didn't have water taps. We used to fetch and carry buckets of water on our heads. We used to queue for water.'<sup>49</sup>

Other women ex location residents interviewed for this study remember the drudgery of queueing for taps and loading buckets of water on their heads, which was especially the task of young girls. A typical school going day for a young girl in the location between the 1920s and 1930s would end queueing at one of the 16 stand pipes (serving 3 000 people) which were located at intervals along Kibasa Street, to collect water for their homes.<sup>50</sup> The daily grind nevertheless was lightened by the socialising that took place in the queue. A particular compensation mentioned was that 'we met boyfriends at the taps' [much as young girls in the rural areas met boyfriends while collecting water from the rivers].<sup>51</sup>

The location's sanitary service also left much to be desired, although it was probably marginally better than those provided in other African municipal locations along the Reef. From 1929 separate private sanitary closets were provided (in contrast to communal toilets elsewhere on the Rand) when residents agreed to an increase in rent to cover the improvement.<sup>52</sup> Pails were removed and emptied every second night alongside a tri-weekly rubbish collection service. In 1942, by which time the number of houses in the location had grown slightly, 350 single pail latrines/closets serviced 360 houses.<sup>53</sup> Sanitary pails were removed at night by Bhaca night soil workers, known to location residents all over the Reef as 'Sampukane'.<sup>54</sup> Because they worked at night, and because of the work that they did, an aura of mystery surrounded their activities and for younger children they assumed the status almost of a bogey-man. Both Ida Mokoto and Sophy Moyane tell stories strikingly similar to those told all across the Reef.

'We used to have sewage collectors who used to wear sack dresses. They usually worked at night using a horse carriage that had lights on [emptying] toilets called "thutha bucket". We were told that if you peep at them they would throw the bucket right at your door step.'<sup>55</sup>

By 1931 260 boys and 245 girls were enrolled in two schools in the location.<sup>56</sup> In those days, as Maswe Mhlanga remarks, 'schools were scarce, but they turned churches into schools during the week'.<sup>57</sup> As was the case throughout South Africa, black education was sub-contracted by the State to missionary churches. In 1931 four white and five black churches ministered to the population of Roodepoort location. By 1942 the enrolment of African pupils in location schools had massively increased. Now 12 churches catered to the location's spiritual needs, three of whom (Catholics, Methodists and Anglicans) ran schools. Out of 875 children of school going age, a massive percentage - 743 individuals, attended school.<sup>58</sup> This was a stunningly high number, which was not paralleled - even remotely - in any other African location in South Africa, and must go a long way to explaining the distinctive character of Roodepoort location life.

The standard of health was also apparently better in Roodepoort than any other location on the Reef. Rates of infant mortality, though shocking - 206 out of every 1 000 - in 1931, stood well below the regional or national average,<sup>59</sup> a point noted by a Conference of Reef Locations (an African Locations Advisory Board's initiative) in 1927. Better sanitation and drainage were credited for this achievement, the Roodepoort location being built on a slope.<sup>60</sup> From a relatively early stage - at least in the 1920s - the Council provided a clinic in the location staffed by two African nurses. Roodepoort West location also boasted the first black woman doctor - Mary Malahlela - to qualify in South Africa, who practised in Roodepoort.<sup>61</sup> Generally in the interwar years the incidence of preventable disease was reported as very low in the location while 'streets and stands presented a clean and orderly appearance.'<sup>62</sup>

Policing was, in many respects, a rather desultory exercise in Roodepoort location, partly or largely because its population was so incorrigably law-abiding, self-regulating and responsible. As Maswe Mhlanga put it, perhaps with a little over-statement,

'There was a police station, but we can find mainly one or two policemen. Their job was that they listened to each and every street. [Each] had a community eye [ ]. The only case that went to the police is when a person had died. Otherwise cases will be brought to the community eye. If they see that it is beyond them, they will take it to the police. Your sentence would be to work at the police station, but to stay at home. There were no holding cells [at the police station].'<sup>63</sup>

Civil guards, who made their appearance in the 1940s, were, according to Mrs Radebe, also called 'the eye of the town'.

By 1934 the location's population had climbed to over 5 000, 1 300 more than three years before. The composition of its population was also beginning to change. A much larger number of mineworkers and their families continued to reside in the location than was the case elsewhere. However, the Location Superintendant was now beginning to express worries about the difficulties he was experiencing about housing the 'influx of discharged farm labourers and their families' who had presumably been given notice by their employers during the previous years' devastating drought. The lodging population, who could not obtain houses for themselves, was also steadily mounting. In 1934, for instance, the number of dwellings in the location stood at 306 while the number of lodgers' rooms attached had climbed to 378.<sup>64</sup>

Co-incidentally, in the same year, the Roodepoort Council had made an application for a loan of £30 000 to the Central Housing Board, to finance individual loans 'to deserving Europeans'. The Central Housing Board gave an encouraging reply, but one which had a sting in its tail. The Act governing the sub-economic loan scheme, it declared 'also requires provision for the poorest section of people' including coloureds and natives who constituted a



primary part. 'Would the council apply for an additional loan for natives?'<sup>65</sup> The Council was thereby forced to face up to the gathering crisis of accommodation in the location, and in 1935 it made a further application to the Board for a £5 000 loan to build 50 houses in the location on a sub-economic basis. It would take another six years of snags, objections, counter-proposals and stalemate before the next phase of housing development in the location would occur.<sup>66</sup>

In 1936 the Transvaal Provincial Administration sanctioned a sub-economic housing loan to build houses in the location, a surface right permit applied for the year before was granted by the Mining Commissioner and the Central Housing Board requested the Roodepoort Council to submit plans and details of the scheme to the Board. In April 1937 detailed plans were submitted and these were returned by the Board for amendment and suggestion. In October representatives of the Board inspected the location, followed by the Regional Town Planner in May 1938. In October 1938 the scheme was laid before the Provincial Public Health Committee and was referred back for certain modifications. Two months later application was made to the Provincial Secretary of the Transvaal for an additional loan of £12 000 for the scheme. In February 1939 the Central Housing Board vetoed the application for the extra £12 000 loan because it was uncertain what funds would be at its disposal that year and recommended the Council go ahead with the original £10 000 scheme. In May 1939 the Central Housing Board threw its last spoke in the wheel of the scheme by informing the Council that it had now allocated all of its sub-economic housing funds for that year and advising that no money could be available before the next financial year.<sup>67</sup> A few days later the Board rubbed the salt further into the Council's wounds when the Department of Public Health informed the Council that it had changed its mind about the best design for the houses, and wanted additional changes such as the scrapping of macadamised floors in favour of ash or breeze concrete alternatives, the reorienting of the semi-detached section, a new latrine design, and discarding the idea of screen walls in the latrines, which it attributed to a surge of 'mock modesty' on the part of the Council's designers. At this point the collective patience of Roodepoort Council finally broke as it demanded to know of the Board 'whether the design now suggested can be regarded as being really perfect' and whether if 'the new suggestions [were] acted upon' ... it might again be the case that "flaws in the [amended] design may by then have come to light", which would entail further procrastination, regardless of the fact that the houses are urgently required'.<sup>68</sup>

Information on the new scheme slowly fades out of the Council's records from that point. Mention is made in Council Minutes of February 1941 to 'a new section of the location will be ready for occupation in the very near future' while Council Minutes of January 1942 allude to the 'Proposed Native Township - Haarlem' - the first time a name is attached to a new part of the location.<sup>69</sup> By 19 August 1942, when inspectors C.A. Heald

and D.S. Grant made an inspection, on behalf of the National Department of Native Affairs, they noted the existence of a 'new area' in the location on which 43 new houses had been built on 50 x 75 feet plots with the sub-economic housing loan of £11 000.<sup>70</sup>

Oral testimonies suggest that more than one extension was made to the location in these years, in what sequence it is not entirely clear. None, however, was particularly large. Soni Nontlahla records

'As it grew the Municipality built a new area called kwa-Maspala ... and the township grew more. Then the municipality built other houses, just next to the cemetery.'<sup>71</sup>

Nkathlo Moeketsi reverses the sequence, 'Later, as overcrowding started', he avers

'Kanana started, and later on there was a new area next to the office called Maspala. You couldn't have lodgers there, only relatives.'<sup>72</sup>

'Most of the people who lived in Maspala', Virginia Maseke-Maxam observes, worked for the Municipality. Their houses were clearly the more spacious sort recorded in Heald and Grant's inspection in August 1942. Kanana had one roomed houses built in rows or lines much like a train, as many ex-residents remember. Toilets for these houses were built outside.<sup>73</sup> The Kanana rooms were designed to house 'the excess' from Roodepoort West,<sup>74</sup> people who had just arrived in the location, mostly single ... and newly weds.<sup>75</sup> Thenjiwe Radebe was one of these. As she recalls

'Then we started getting married, now 'rona janung, ranyana' and another portion called Kanana was built on the east. I once lived there. It was young couples, because we were packed in our home where we were married ... . It was these train houses. One room. You would build a veranda.'<sup>76</sup>

As the population of the new area expanded it also acquired a new name or new names. Certainly nothing more is heard of the ephemeral Haarlem. A Soni Notlahla explains

'Now the location people or the Council never named these places. We named like 'Los My Cherrie' (Stay Away from my Girl) and Long Till ... [They] opened to get people out of the location who were lodgers. Then when they moved to that place there was a Municipal Police Sergeant ... called Sergeant Moses Mdlangadi.

When they moved they were led by him. Because his name was Moses, the place was called Kanana. He was taking them to Kanana (Canaan), and that means that name ... stuck.'<sup>77</sup>

Later (probably in 1953) another small area to the north-east of Roodepoort, also meant, like Kanana, for new-comers, is said to have been added. Its name was kwa-Mission.<sup>78</sup> As a result of another litany of obstructions and delays, no further areas were added to the location before its removal in 1956.

### THE DAILY RITUALS OF LIFE

Throughout this period, until at least the early 1950s, daily life in the location was punctuated and sustained by a variety of rituals - rituals of survival, strangely routinised rituals of opposition, rituals of subjugation and humiliation, rituals of relaxation as well as rites of passage from one stage of life to another. The illicit brewing of beer was one of the major strategies and rituals of survival in Roodepoort location (as it was in locations all over the Reef). Most women illicitly and clandestinely brewed beer; 'Husbands were live' explains Sophy Moyana, 'but we were poor at home.'<sup>79</sup> The poorer a household was, the more likely it was to brew on a large scale. Unmarried, divorced or widowed women were most likely to brew in large quantities, but the location was conspicuous for the sparseness of independent professional woman beer brewers (and notably women from Basutoland) compared to other locations on the Reef. Mrs Moloi, for example, whose husband had died, survived and 'sent almost all her children to college on the proceeds of beer.'<sup>80</sup> Maputsanyane and Maplaas likewise brewed because they did not have husbands, while Ntibiki Lekgeto's mother also obtained money to send Ntibiki to school by brewing 'kgadi, thothotho'<sup>81</sup>. The larger scale brewers sold beer to outsiders. Sophy Moyana's needy mother 'brewed a lot, even at home. Mine workers used to come and drink at my home. Sapongana people who used to pick up sewage at night. They will give us buckets in exchange for beers so that we can make "mbawula" (braziers). My mother', Sophy adds, 'was able to buy us clothes, sugar and mealie meal with the income this brought in'.<sup>82</sup> Ida Mokoto's grandmother, similarly, was described by Ida's mother as 'sitting on a bunk stool, selling beer to mine people called ama Pondo'.<sup>83</sup> Lebang Huma's aunt Christina brewed a potent hops-based concoction cooked from sugar, yeast and grain bought from the Chinaman's store. The clientele again here were mostly Mpondo from the mines.'<sup>84</sup> Among the more famous semi-professional beer brewers were Mopopu Makgadi, Mantumbi, Makidi Dikgole, Maspura, Mrs Makadlumbe, Mrs Mbhele, and Nombulolus mother 'who ran a big shebeen'.<sup>85</sup>

Location police, the Location Superintendent and the location's beer brewing women engaged in an almost surreal, pretend ritualised encounter in which the one went through the motions of control which the other imitated move for move by a charade of evasion. Each knew the steps they should make; each was well aware of the repercussions of a false move. Location Superintendent D.T. Dobson made his attitude on the liquor question and existing modes of liquor control clear in his responses to the Native Economic Commission in 1931, when he described it as 'a colossal farce'.<sup>86</sup> Subsequent location superintendents in Roodepoort Location (Marsh, Venter and Dobson junior) seem to have adopted a similar attitude. George Menoe captures the prevailing paradox well when he observes 'The major

activity of the Dobson administration was finding beer and spilling it without arresting.<sup>187</sup> 'Spilling without arresting' was indeed the main *modus operandi* of the location police as both they and the brewers made every effort to avoid open confrontation. 'Police named Mr Mdlangathi, Mr Sithole, Mr Toko; Mr Brown and Captain Maleki(?) used to raid for beer' remembers Ntibiki Lekgeto, 'we dug holes<sup>88</sup> either in the yard or in the street, and covered them up with ashes. The police 'used sticks to check for holes.' Unless a brewer could conclusively be connected to the hole and the beer, she could not be arrested, a stand off with which both sides seemed to be content.<sup>89</sup> As Virginia Maseke-Maxam explains 'when the Superintendent came the women ran away and if you don't find her next to the drum who could you say it belonged to? All they used to do was to spill it.'<sup>90</sup> Beer brewers 'had people working for them called hole diggers (or trench diggers) who dug holes to hide beer', recalls Mr Seane. 'They don't work; they are poor people. On Saturdays the blackjacks search for beer. The hole diggers provide look outs.'<sup>91</sup> In the relatively rare event of a beer brewer being caught unawares and arrested, they mostly accepted their fate, 'We respected the law', says Ntibiki Lekgeto, 'and you wouldn't dare argue. We just complied'.<sup>92</sup> Even once arrested 'fines were not heavy: they were affordable. If you pay a fine you didn't appear in court and [did not end up] in gaol for a few days. People avoided appearing in court because they feared having criminal records.'<sup>93</sup> Police in fact often discriminated. 'If [the beer] is home made and doesn't contain yeast, and they see you are struggling, they leave you.'<sup>94</sup> If a brewer had a personal connection to authority they could also escape detection and arrest.

Lebang Huma's mother

'brewed traditional beer. She dug holes and hid it. She was friends with location Superintendent [Dennis] Marsh. She did laundry for his family. March, Dennis' father, would say to my mother, Anna, there would be a raid. If you brew beer you know you will be arrested. She would hide drums in the veld at night.'<sup>95</sup>

Police came down much more harshly ('really harrassed') brewers of 'mbamba' (pineapple beer) and Barberton, which, as Mr Moeketsi points out was indeed 'a very dangerous and poisonous concoction.'<sup>96</sup> 'Mbamba' was made by blending and fermenting pineapple, brown sugar, bread and yeast. Yeast gave it its kick. Thenjiwe Radebe remembers 'a Xhosa woman; she is big built - ooh she brewed "mbamba". Many men from the mines (came to her place). When a raid was pending somebody from the office used to gossip "There is a raid today". The South African Police will tip here. They used to call that "Laat my maak skoen".'<sup>97</sup> This rather buxom Xhosa beer brewer, of whom Thenjiwe Radebe reminds us, combined all that was most provocative and offensive to the location police. She brewed 'mbamba', she was single and independent and she sold on a large scale to men from the mines. Occasionally she and her like got caught out, and again, the resulting stand-offs are revealing. As Mrs Radebe recalls

'My brother was told by one of the police [they raided this same Xhosa woman's house]. They knocked for a long time, ko, ko, ko. They knocked. She took off her clothes, stark naked. This lady, when they opened the door, she stood up. Yes, they all ran away' (laughs).<sup>98</sup>

Sophy Moyana tells a similar story of herself

'They used to come and arrest us and I would pour beer and fight with them and will throw myself for the ground and spin on the ground and they would eventually leave me.'

In her case, evidently, acting mad or demented accomplished the same goal as the monstrous disrespect that would have been involved in arresting a naked woman.

The same game-like quality of the contest between beer sellers and the police emerged nowhere more clearly than in Ntibiki Lekgeto's account of smuggling in 'white' beer from Newclare:

'We would buy beers and put them on our backs and pretend that we are carrying a child and we would even put a cap on top so that it looks like a baby wearing a cap on your back [laughs]. These times were tough.'<sup>99</sup>

One last well known figure in Roodepoort West's substantial cast of beer brewing characters was 'Mr Ntamela, who came with the recipe from Durban Deep Mine. Mr Ntamela apparently ran a legal brewery on behalf of the council well before the municipal monopoly of beer brewing was implemented on the Reef in 1938. Ntamela's beer was so good and so well known that eventually beer of this kind was known by his name, 'That is why we named it after him', remarks Mrs Lekgeto, 'when they were drunk, they used to sing a song, 'Umaka, Ntamela, ukusenhlapela'.<sup>100</sup>

The whole process of brewing illicit beer became periodically and perhaps latterly more oppressive for the women beer brewers in Roodepoort. This was especially where the South African Police were involved. Their presence prompted Advisory Board member, Khosa to protest bitterly at a Board meeting in March 1939 about 'the harsh treatment by police when arresting people in the location in the last raid', which he claimed might make the residents rise against them as had happened in Vereeniging in 1937.<sup>101</sup> Such raids, however, only became a serious grievance in the 1950s.

Not all relationships between the authorities and the location's population were so cosy or accommodating and a distinct hardening of racial attitudes can be discerned with the advent of apartheid and the arrival of a new cohort of authoritarian 'Bantu Affairs' officials in 1948. Certainly, some parts of white officialdom, notably that at the pass office, seem to have set out quite deliberately to crush the spirit, to dehumanise and to stamp out the self respect of the many location Africans that passed through their hands. These engaged in a different order of ritualised behaviour, the ritualised routine of enforcing a racial etiquette of

unconditional racial subservience, intended to inculcate an attitude of inferiority and submission in its racial objects, and to affirm in every tone and every gesture the racial superiority of whites. M.S. provides us with a chilling self-deprecatory account of what this could be like.

` If you want a pass you go to the Commissioner ... . When you arrive there you will find [a] white man. You must take your hat off, put it down and stamp on it and ask to speak to the King.

... they will tell you which office to go to because you have stamped on your hat. You stand at the door. They will tell you to enter. You must be obedient and not sit down ... and you say "My King, I'm here to ask for a pass because I want to get a job' ... They will call you to ask you your name: "What is your name?" and you will say "I am Hopkins'. They would ask you "Why do you say Hopkins?" and say "no, no. There's nothing like that. You are speaking rubbish.

Your name is ... let's look at you", and say, "You are Koos". You only thank them (clapping). Thanks, thanks, thanks, boss.' If you say "No boss, I am not" (they respond), "you are saying the Boss lies, you are saying the Boss lies?" And you will say, "No, I am not." They will tell you to sit and write a letter for you to go outside ... Then call you in. "Take this letter to one of the offices" ... You will find a room full of whites. You give them the letter. (They) beat him up, hit him ... They will call you to go there. When you enter you will find a Boer with lots of body hair. Big guys standing there. They will say, "You are disobedient." They will beat you to a pulp, even break your ribs."

` When you go back to the first office, you would say your name is "Death" if it is fine with them, say, "I've forgot." He will say, "Your name is Beaten Hole [whole?]. Yes Boss, yes Boss." They write on your pass "Beaten Hole".<sup>102</sup>

Sophy Moyana provides a similar grim vignette of black experience in the white town. One of her first jobs was as a domestic in Curry Street, Roodepoort

` The woman of the house used to put my plate outside next to where she put her dog's plate, and in the morning when dishing out porridge she would tell me to bring my plate and the dog's plate. We used to drink tea out of a condensed (milk) tin.<sup>103</sup>

Sophy lasted only two weeks, then quit. She next worked for `Boers' in Windsor Street with whom she got on very well. ` When you knocked off from work they give you food that they kept for you the previous night and you will take that back home.'

These particular `Boers' in Roodepoort probably help explain why South Africa did not erupt in uncontrollable racial violence. They provide the human face to white South Africa, as indeed did Ida Mokoto's first employer.

'I worked at a dry cleaner's ... I went to the Afrikaner owner (Roodepoort mayor). I told him my father had passed away and I must come. He allowed. I worked from 1940 to 1963.'<sup>104</sup>

### rites of passage

Among the most important rites of passage that location residents passed through were those associated with marriage and death. For many location residents a lengthy process of negotiations between the families of the prospective bride and prospective groom preceded the ceremony that sealed the bond. A Mrs Radebe recalls

'They (the groom's family) would send somebody to father and say we would like to see you on such and such a day. They come on Sunday and say "Our son says he has seen". Then the uncles are invited. They are the ones that spoil everything for a bride. They say, "we spent money, she is educated" and raise the price. It doesn't end in one day.'

The subsequent handing over of bridewealth, as Mrs Radebe underlines, marked a sea change in the life of the future bride.

'From the day bridewealth has been paid you don't get out the gate ... You are no longer a girl and boys can't be dragging you in the street.'<sup>105</sup>

The preliminaries to the wedding were also formal and complex. Sophy Moyana recalls

'When there was a wedding we would always prepare and rehearse songs for the bride before the wedding and how to dance. We would sleep there overnight and at 12.00 we would knock at every door carrying dishes on our head and we would wrap the bride with a blanket. We sang a song called 'ditsa la tsogang labone Naledi yamasa' and persons in (each) house would give us a dish (or) money.'<sup>106</sup>

For young men initiation and circumcision represented a critical moment and transition in life. For Roodepoort youth it generally took place on the Boria's in the Wilgespruit mountains.<sup>107</sup> Little of this has been captured in the interviews.

The final transition made by any individual in life, is of course death. Death, in most societies, reveals the deepest values and attitudes about life. Roodepoort West was no exception. In death the extent of the interpenetration and fusion of old and new values among Roodepoort West location's population was clearly revealed. Under both Christian and African ancestral rites, the deceased's bodies were buried. The location's burial ground was consequently a site of huge social significance and cultural convergence. As shall be indicated later in this study, the now abandoned cemetery of Roodepoort West retains that significance today, and was indeed the trigger for embarking on this research. From the 1950s at least, the burying ground at Roodepoort West has gone by the name of cemetery, but as one oral testimony gathered in this study reveals, that is not an entirely value free

term. Like so many words in the South African lexicon it is in fact racially loaded. As Goehetwe Seane corrected - with a touch of reprimand - its use in a question by interviewer Sello Mathabatha

'We had a small graveyard - not a cemetery. We called it a graveyard. Isn't the cemetery those beautiful ones for whites?'<sup>108</sup>

As a last resting place for Roodepoort West's population, the cemetery was both a treasured and hallowed place. The cemetery was situated on the west side of the location, with the cattle kraal located a little way from its location side. The graveyard must have been provided early in the location's life. The first reference to the graveyard that this research has uncovered was made in Advisory Board Minutes for March 1927 when one member raised the question of the cleaning of the graveyard and the Board chair (the Location Superintendent) promised that this would be done.<sup>109</sup> As early as October 1929 the Advisory Board expressed worries about the shortage of burying ground in the graveyard and reminded the Council that it had previously consented to the use of it as a public burying ground.<sup>110</sup> The continuing importance of the graveyard in the public consciousness of the location can be gauged from the fact that the well supported location Ratepayers' Association (boasting 250-300 members) which also fielded candidates in Advisory Board elections, demanded a small subscription from any individual wanting to take out membership which moneys were used to pay for the cleaning of the graveyard.<sup>111</sup> Early in 1939 another Advisory Board member, P. Sebidi, was complaining that 'The graves have now extended to the stony place where it is not easy to dig', while later that year members requested the digging out of gum trees among and on top of the graves.<sup>112</sup> The Council itself apparently registered the shortage of land in the cemetery and requested permission from the Administrator of the Transvaal to purchase a portion of farm Roodepoort No. 5 for that purpose.<sup>113</sup> It is not clear what the outcome was to this request, but if any were added, it was not nearly enough, and by 1952 the Location Advisory Board was again complaining of 'the acute lack of land for burial purposes'. Such was the pressure on space by this point that the Advisory Board demanded 'a policy' on the issue. The suggestion they advanced point was that 'all who work in the area and have relatives who will bear burial costs' should get 'private ground'. The 'unknown' for their part would be buried in 'communal graves'.<sup>114</sup> A report of June 1959 records 2 000 adult graves in which 3 000 bodies had been interred, along with 2 635 infant graves.<sup>115</sup> By this stage all new interments had ceased, Mrs Mazanya being remembered as the last.<sup>116</sup>

Funerals punctuated the life of the location but were not frequent events. 'Because the people were not many' recalls Nkathlo Moeketsi. 'The cemetery was not very big. Once a week or a month there would be somebody buried.'<sup>117</sup> Funerals were a key moment for the expression of public or communal solidarity. Two to three days usually elapsed between death and the interment of the body,<sup>118</sup> allowing distant relatives some time to attend, and for



the coffin to be built.<sup>119</sup> 'People used to build their own coffins,' recalls Constance Manana, 'They will buy wood and black material to cover the wood'.<sup>120</sup> Timber was purchased from the local firm, Lumber and Woods ('Lumbering Woods').<sup>121</sup> A day or two ahead of the funeral preparations would begin 'We would slaughter. We cook porridge and meat. People would come and contribute food and money. Children will cut their hair off.' On the evening before the funeral a night vigil would be held, which elders attended. Funerals themselves were not attended by children in those days.<sup>122</sup> 'Ministers from different churches would come' in a display of communal solidarity. 'Younger ladies peeled vegetables.'

According to George Seane 'You had to go to pay at the office. Then the grave was dug. That was when a person was dead.'<sup>123</sup> Lebang Huma recalls 'the grave being dug the same day. When the corpse was already in the graveyard.'<sup>124</sup> It would seem that relatives could dig the grave or a grave digger would be hired. According to Soni Notlahla there was a grave digger in the cemetery called 'My Seven'. He also makes the same observation as Lebang Human, 'A grave would not be dug until somebody is already dead - not as now.'<sup>125</sup> It seems likely that it was this service (of grave-digging) that was charged for at the Location Office. Certainly a report written in 1942, which spoke of a well kept, fenced and supervised cemetery on the west of the location, stated quite clearly that no charge was made for burials', while another of May 1958 submitted by the Director of Parks confirmed that no fees were charged provided it was registered occupiers who were interred.<sup>126</sup> For poorer residents a relative would dig the grave. 'A man will wake up early in the morning and dig the graves.'<sup>127</sup> Later that morning male relatives would carry the coffin to the cemetery where they did not have a hearse, 'on their shoulders - not like the thugs in 1976'<sup>128</sup> or it would be carried by horse and cart. A large number of people interviewed for this study remember the community spirited generosity of Rev. Maake, who headed the Zionist or Ethiopian African Anglican Church. The Rev. Maake owned a flourishing business selling firewood and coal, and offered a mule and cart free to carry coffins to the graveside. 'If you couldn't afford undertakers', recalls Mrs Radebe (among a host of others) 'his cart (Malahle) would carry that person'.<sup>129</sup>

On that day, if not before, 'Ministers from different churches would come ... (and) all church denominations would unite. Church and traditional people all attended as well.'<sup>130</sup> That afternoon 'The community will come to the home of the deceased.'<sup>131</sup> Any residual sense of ethnic chauvinism would be suppressed, Xhosa would cater for Tswana tastes and vice versa (cooking 'mugushi', for example).<sup>132</sup>

A degree of social embarrassment was associated with not being buried by a minister. 'People would go to church', Nkathlo Moeketsi recalls, 'because they want to be buried by a minister ... they would fear otherwise that if they didn't go to church they would have no-

one leading the funeral.' Nkathlo himself remembers the confusion and sense of social stigma that could result

'One burial, my friend ... his father was not attending. It was difficult for us to get the corpse out of the house because nobody was leading. We went to the graveyard on our own carrying the coffin. When we got there, there was nobody to say put it down, put it in. There's not even a priest.'<sup>133</sup>

As a place of final resting, the graveyard or cemetery thus loomed extremely large in the consciousness of the community of Roodepoort West. In the negotiations over the removal of the residents of Roodepoort West to the new township of Dobsonville in the 1950s and 1960s it became by far and away the most contentious issue.

### **SOCIAL STRESS: JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AND CRIME**

Roodepoort West has a reputation for harmonious and law abiding behaviour among its former residents. As Mrs Radebe recollects, 'Everybody knew everybody. People were not a bit ethnic exclusive.' 'Roodepoort West was very nice,' remembers Ida Mokoto, 'there was no noise at night when we were all asleep.' 'We as children did not just respect parents, but each and every parent you came across, no matter [where] they are from,' recalls Doris Dlamini. 'The community of Roodepoort was a unified family ... we were sharing what we have and eat.' 'Everyone knew each other,' observes Mrs Radebe, 'so those men knew whose child did what and they would go to his home.' Virginia Matseke-Maxam, in a sense, sums up the collective view when she concludes 'There was discipline in Roodepoort West.'<sup>134</sup>

Juvenile pranks or even juvenile delinquency were, however, not as entirely absent from the location streets and gathering points as some now recollect. As early as 1927 Asdvisory Board member G. Khosa moved a motion in an Advisory Board meeting that 'something be done to prevent children running loose at night', a concern which the chair (J.T. Dobson) endorsed, referring to 'recent serious offences such as shop-lifting'.<sup>135</sup> Ten years later the Advisory Board was drawing attention 'to the situation at Roodepoort West halt and stat[ing] that unless someone is put in charge serious occurrences may be expected owing to the misbehaviour of children.'<sup>136</sup> The following year a G. Khosa raised the question of 'the misbehaviour of children in the location ... . They gathered round shops and behaved rudely there. Parents were opposed to corporal punishment.'<sup>137</sup>

As the last quotation suggests, collective parental discipline slackened under the influence of the huge influx of new immigrants into the location, and as the intense congestion in the location, discussed earlier, began to corrode family life. By the end of the Second World War, and more especially in the 1950s new kinds of youth sub-cultures, which became known across the Rand as that of the tsotsi, emerged in the location. Even then, one

retains the powerful impression from oral testimonies and official reports that location life was not nearly as riven and disfigured by violence as it was in locations and townships across the East and Central Rand.<sup>138</sup> From some time around this point, nevertheless, the location became informally divided along Khosa Street which ran down its middle. Above Khosa Street was the area known as 'bakodimo' (or in isiXhosa 'Mazanzi'). Below lay 'bakotlasi' or 'Maphezulu' in isiXhosa. Bahodimo which contained the schools, seems to have been more the sphere of the girls. Bakotlasi, by contrast, which housed the football grounds and the community centre where movies were shown, was the sphere of the boys.<sup>139</sup> 'Cross over', says G. Seane, 'and you are in trouble.' 'Gangster movies', Ida Mokoto recalls, 'they were for boys, and they were high up there. Kohodimo was for us girls.'<sup>140</sup> At the highest point of the location was kwa-March. Most of the boys who were involved in boxing were from this area.<sup>141</sup> Rival gang territories also seem to have intersected at Khosa Street, the one, under the leadership of Bra-Mandla Mkholongo, another under Daringdaals. Bra Mandla seems to have led the male section of 'Spook Ranch', but may have acquired an ascendancy and displaced the rival group since Lebang Huma remembers it 'dominat[ing] the whole township. It was supposed to fight strangers', such as those from Pimville and Newclare.<sup>142</sup> A powerful parallel female branch of Spook Ranch also operated in Roodepoort West under the leadership of Delekile Mabele and Makgobo Huma. Other prominent figures in the female Spook Ranch were Mbuyi, Machaki, Nonduli and Mapula. According to Khaera Kobe

'Delekile wore her father's trousers. Every night we followed her forming a line. We said "styf gaat, styf gaat" (hard hole) going up and down. We were just playing, looking around people who mess us up, and wasting time.'<sup>143</sup>

Thenjiwe Radebe may have fallen into this category. Like other daughters of the location's elite she went to school. 'They', on the other hand, 'didn't attend school. When we pass they will sit on the pavement, and they will start to (unclear) you, and you must shut up and walk. If you can try and fight you are in trouble.'<sup>144</sup>

A favourite target for Spook Ranch was a Randfontein women's gang named 'Bitch Never Die'. 'Those women were tough, when they liked you as a man they forced themselves.'<sup>145</sup> Mrs Radebe also remembers another gang who operated by the station. Nkathlo Moeketsi recalls alighting from the station on Sunday afternoon and being chased by such a gang. Later Nkathlo 'noticed another gangster called 'Dead End Kids', people like Ntakota Kwango Lekgetho, Crystal Mabhelane.'<sup>146</sup>

'The Dead End Kids', Nkathlo Moeketsi recalls, 'as being a large group [but] not very destructive. They did not pick on everybody. Their victims were mainly people coming from Sophiatown and Newclare.' According to Nkathlo 'a big man, older than them gave directions - called Big Joe Manqindi. He used to fist fight, even armed gangsters.'<sup>147</sup>

Sophy Moyana confirms Joe Manqindi's fearsome reputation

'He used to beat people a lot. He beat people a lot. He beat amaMpondo people when they came to drink liquor at the bar. ... People were fighting and beating amaMpondo when they came to drink in our area. They didn't want them in the township because they used to wear blankets and would carry 'ingulu', made of wire, dangerous. If they stab you, you don't bleed.' [Inqulu were made of bicycle spokes.]<sup>148</sup>

Gang membership overlapped in some instances with that of football clubs. Marine Brothers, for example, was a football team formed by school teacher Machau, but several players such as Crystal Mabhalane belonged to Dead End Kids.<sup>149</sup>

Generally residents of Roodepoort West depict these gangsters as not being too violent and destructive. Most agree that they did not carry guns - some even disavow the use of knives at that time. 'Our boys were not gangsters', says Khaera Kole, somewhat confusingly. 'They were thugs.'<sup>150</sup> At some point nevertheless jungle and tomahawk knives were widely employed. Most gangsters, according to ex-residents 'did not steal from people, only in Roodepoort.'<sup>151</sup>

There are hints in the interviews that gangster behaviour grew more anti-social under the pressures of the 1950s. Krebe, (called bra-Martin in English) may have been one of this more evolved sort.

'He stole from big shops owned by Bucket and Marie. Those were big shops. He also robbed OK.'

But Krebe was also a well known rapist.<sup>152</sup> Other notorious anti-social gangsters (thugs?) were the Mangala boys - the twins Gqumqum and Kawa Kawa, also known as Pretty and Shorty.<sup>153</sup> They stole from people at the shops and even on the trains; and a man called Monde who used to rape older girls at knife point.<sup>154</sup>

In response to this change in the social environment of Roodepoort, the Location Advisory Board began petitioning the Council, the chief Magistrate and the District Police

Commissioner for the appointment of Civil Guards to protect residents from 'the ever growing menace of tsotsiism and hooliganism'.<sup>155</sup> The agitation for such a move soon extended across the West Rand. By January the next year, the location Superintendent was persuaded that such civil guards should be allowed to operate pending official recognition.<sup>156</sup> This is apparently what happened as a month later the Superintendent was reporting that their actions were becoming 'a source of annoyance to many innocent residents who complain of ill-treatment at their hands'.<sup>157</sup> In April a major collision occurred between civil guards and 'the youth of the location', as a result of which several individuals were hospitalised.<sup>158</sup> This prompted the suspension of the civil guards which apparently permitted 'the criminal element' to resume their activities unchecked.<sup>159</sup> Almost a year later the authorities finally relented on the issue directed the Advisory Board to submit 'a list of approved citizens' from whom to select 24 special or part time constables, which finally happened in July 1953.<sup>160</sup>

## POLITICS

Little in the way of political turbulence seems to have ruffled the generally placid surface of Roodepoort West's life. In mid 1927 the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union held meetings on the edge of Randfontein location, causing a momentary panic among government officials when it recruited hundreds of Mpondo miners from neighbouring mines, and at around the same time an 'unauthorised ICU' meeting was held outside of Roodepoort West location one Sunday in June. Advisory Board members and local dignitary G. Khosa reported that 'something was spoken about permits and pass laws'.<sup>161</sup> Aside from one location resident named Amelia stopping paying rent after joining the ICU,<sup>162</sup> nothing came of the ICU's fleeting passage past both locations, as they both reverted to the introverted politics of the parochial. The main issues of 1929 were the forced entry of detectives into a location house in the absence of its residents, indifferent treatment at the pass office, the nuisance of vicious dogs, and the excessive rowdyism of 'drunk and noisy women' when visiting brass bands played in the location on week-ends and the shortage of burying ground at the graveyard.<sup>163</sup>

Narrow as they were, nevertheless, local politics could often become intense. Advisory Board elections in the early 1930s became steadily more hotly contested. Votes cast between 1927 and 1935 clearly reflect this pattern.

### Roodeport West Advisory Board Elections - Votes Cast

1927	76
1928	138
1929	Old Board re-elected
1930	179

1931	Only 3 nominated
1932	323
1933	428
1934	551
1935	762 <sup>164</sup>

This reflects an extraordinarily high voter turnout not remotely paralleled by any other location on the Reef and an exceptionally sustained interest in local issues. Each year, as the Location Superintendent informed the Town Clerk in December 1933, 'canvassing becomes more intense'.<sup>165</sup> Through the late 1930s the Native Standholders' Association ranged itself against the Ratepayers' Association (who boasted a remarkable 250-300 members).<sup>166</sup>

Since the Transvaal ANC was largely ineffective and dormant until the mid 1940s, this insularity is not entirely surprising, and the sole mention of an ANC presence in the area in the 1930s was a request submitted to the Location Advisory Board by the ANC that it be allowed to arrange a meeting in the location.<sup>167</sup> The ANC only surfaced as a more significant political force in the 1950s. Even then its impact was limited. George Menoe believes that the relatively low level of national political consciousness in the location was because it was so cut off from the outside. As he notes

'The white town had shops, factories. Because of this we were limited in scope going towards Newclare, Western (Native Township) and Johannesburg. We really had everything in terms of shopping in the township. We had little reason of going to Roodepoort and Luipardsvlei. That is what limited us in becoming politically active because there was no influence from outside Roodepoort West. The only reason we ventured outside Roodepoort was that some boys had girl friends in Krugersdorp and Randfontein.'<sup>168</sup>

Doris Dlamini bluntly proclaims 'There were no politics to Dobsonville.'<sup>169</sup> This, however, is only partly correct. Nkathlo Mokoetsi was among the more politicised minority in Roodepoort West, probably because of the influence of his considerably older elder brother Jo who was prevented from going to study overseas, was arrested for ANC activities and 'skipped' to Lesotho. Nkathlo's closer connection with the ANC made him aware of ANC members visiting Roodepoort from Newclare to politicise and recruit, and he himself worked with a Mr Koape who 'used to train us to go about at night stacking pamphlets for meetings' (which never were held in Roodepoort because it was so small and easy for the police to surveil). Other ANC activists in Roodepoort remembered by Nkathlo were Jacob Matlala, Mr. Sebigi, and Mr. Walter Raborife.<sup>170</sup> Ida Mokoto recalls Sydney Hashe and the Selokalo family, Virginia Matseke-Maxam, a Mr Moelwa and Khaera Kole a Mr Bongo Notlanhla.<sup>171</sup> Mr Seane adapts a view not dissimilar from Doris Dlamini - he 'wasn't aware of men', in the Roodepoort ANC.<sup>172</sup>

Seane's comment may well illuminate important features of Roodepoort's ANC. The parent ANC seems to have made a minimal impact on the life and politics of the location. What seems to have left some impression was the Textile Workers' Union, of which, Nkathlo Moeketsi was a member, and who remembers mounting a strike, with the help of Johannesburg organiser Don Mattera in the Roodepoort factory of Woolknit in 1956,<sup>173</sup> the ANC Women's League and momentarily the Youth League as well. The ANC Women's League seems to have been particularly active in Roodepoort. Its most illustrious and best remembered leader was Violet (Viola) Hashe, but other prominent figures in the Roodepoort branch were Londi Balfour, Mary Mashaba, Mrs Mbgadi, Mrs Thari<sup>174</sup> and Mrs Huma. Lebang Huma remembers his mother going on womens' marches to Johannesburg and Pretoria in opposition to the imposition of women's passes, in which action Violet Hashe played the prime leadership role. He also recalls the Location Superintendent, Dennis Dobson, urging his mother to take out a pass in the late 1950s claiming that the Hashes had taken out a pass or how else could they have got a licence for a shop.<sup>175</sup> Mrs Radebe recalls a curious vignette when Mrs Hashe led a group of bigger girls and women singing and chanting in front of the Superintendent's office. 'The new Superintendent, Dennis Dobson, stood in front of them and saluted them. Then they went to the grass not far from the office for a meeting.'<sup>176</sup>

Viola (Violet) Hashe was probably the best known member of the ANC living in Roodepoort West, male or female. She rose from humble beginnings as a domestic worker to become a qualified teacher. Aged only 30 years she was elected Secretary General of the South African Clothing Workers' Union (SACWU) in March 1956. She also held the positions of Assistant Secretary of the Chemical Workers' Union and the Dairy Workers' Union. In 1960 she was elected Vice President of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), quickly earning respect as a 'distinguished and fearless leader'. Hashe represented SACTU at various Wage Board hearings and public meetings and at the 1959 conference of the International Labour Organisation in Geneva. Around 1953 and 1954, Hashe was elected onto the Transvaal Provincial Executive of the African National Congress and as the chairperson of the West Rand Region, to become the Congress' first woman regional chairperson. In this position she led the West Rand women's campaign against women's passes. Hashe was banned from all trade union activities and was placed under house arrest in Dobsonville in 1965. She passed away in 1977 and is buried at the Dobsonville Cemetery.

The ANC Youth League also seems to have had some kind of a presence in Roodepoort. Nkathlo Mokoetsi joined and remembers Jerry Zembe, Mr Seabela, and Mr Mokoena being members. Both Nkathlo and George Menoe speak of the Youth League also attempting to organise a campaign against the removal of Roodepoort location to Dobsonville

which, however, fizzled out.<sup>177</sup>

The relatively poor showing of the ANC in Roodepoort - the women aside - may well have opened space for the PAC, as it did elsewhere in the country. George Menoe remembers the moment of his recruitment well.

'I was recruited to the PAC by Mdaniso Mvulu. The PAC had this thing about driving the white man into the sea because they came by the sea. To me that was perfect - Izwe Lethu ... Poqo meant "Pure black, not white". I was unemployed then in late 1962, 1963. He approached me. Then I recruited Kehle, Maxam, Virginia's younger brother (a close friend) and Caps Mokoetsi (three Mokoetsis in all) ... Motsoko Pheko was in the chair. Moflwa was our Secretary.

Mvula and one Peter Mokoetsi used to go to Lesotho learning how to make bombs to support it.

We met other Poqo (people) in Meadowlands, Victor Mayekiso and Mkoni, (Mvula and Peter) were arrested around Easter 1963 on the banks of the Caledon River. We were arrested too, Katz defended us.'

George and the others got off as there was no conclusive evidence to incriminate them. They then skipped the country via Zeerust to Lobatse and then on to Lusaka, helped by Todd Matshikiza. Later George went to Nairobi to further his education. He stayed there for 20 years.<sup>178</sup> After these setbacks the PAC in Roodepoort/Dobsonville also withered on the branch.

## REMOVING THE LOCATION

Even before the building of the new section of the location in 1940/1941, it had been recognised that a comprehensive replanning and extension of the old portion of the location would be required. At this point the Council was inclined to extend the existing site, at least until there was a realistic possibility of building a new mega-location in the South. This was less easily said than done. The existing site of 90 acres was held free as surface rights from the land and mineral rights holders Messrs Hefdt and others. However, in 1942 and possibly earlier the Mining Commissioner of the Witwatersrand had already indicated that it was no longer policy to make further 'free grants' of land under the surface permit system, which meant that Roodepoort Council would have to buy any additional land that it required for location purposes. This the Council was prepared to do, at an appropriate price, and it settled on a policy of acquiring a portion of 49 acres on the northern side of the location, and a further 25 acres on the west.

In August 1942 an inspection was carried out by members of the Departments of Public Health and of Native Affairs of the land proposed as an extension to the Roodepoort-Maraisburg location. This signalled a sharp change of course on the part of the central



government authorities who were grappling with the implications of the massive urbanisation which had taken place over the previous half dozen years. In marked contrast to the inspections of the mid 1930s, it found that 'the conditions under which at least 90% of the natives are living in the old location can only be described as deplorable.' No doubt conditions had indeed deteriorated in the interim as a result of the steady increase in population, but one wonders whether they had undergone to such a radical change as the inspectors suggested, and it seems what the report also reflects is a pronounced and much broader ideological shift on the question of black urbanisation. Adding the population figures of the location and the town, based on 1938 calculations, the report found that the additions of land that the Council contemplated purchasing would only accommodate 4 800 persons, leaving 2 300 still to be housed, even without taking the immigration in the interim into account. The inspectors contended that only three possible courses of action to remedy the situation were worthy of consideration - extending the present location to accommodate all 'natives' in the area for all time, acquired an additional site in the eastern portion of the municipal area, and abandoning altogether the existing site and establishing a new and larger site elsewhere. Solution one it considered out of the question as not enough land was available. Solution two, it somewhat luke-warmly considered a possibility, and solution three could not be considered because it involved 'too many [new] factors'. That said, the inspectors clearly and implicitly favoured the third option.<sup>179</sup> Upon reading this even the blinkered and bemused Roodepoort Council must have realised that a new era had suddenly hove into view. To its mounting alarm the Secretary for Native Affairs also weighed in, in support of the inspectors, observing that 'the necessity for making adequate provision for the future cannot be too strongly stressed, as it has been the experience that on the Reef development expansion (has) overtaken in a few years provision that was originally estimated to meet all needs for *thirty* (his emphasis) years or more.'<sup>180</sup>

The Town Council had no intention of taking these admonitions lying down and bluntly insisted that 'it will be impossible to make provision for 30 or 40 years', and stating that until there was a massive scheme developed in the South 'for all natives in this area' there were 'urgent needs which must be attended to for this purpose it [was] essential that land adjoining the present location be acquired.'<sup>181</sup>

Partly or largely due to the exigencies of war this proposal was shelved. No housing development for black urban communities took place until after the end of World War II. By then the Council had reluctantly acquiesced in the dominant urban planning and 'native affairs' orthodoxy of the times that a new mega-location had to be built. Partly conditioning their change of attitude was the massive industrial and population explosion which had taken place in Roodepoort in the decade between 1936 and 1946. In population terms Roodepoort was the fastest growing town on the Reef, expanding by a massive 73% between 1938 and

1946.<sup>182</sup> Numbers of residents in the location had not grown so fast, rising from 3 233 in 1938 to 4 516 in 1947, but it was enough to sabotage the viability of previous schemes. Worse still was the sharply rising curve of the white population of the town, which had doubled between 1937 and 1947, and which had prompted the owners of the land on which the Roodepoort West location stood to propose that a white township (later named Horizon) be built in the immediate vicinity of its site. By the time the next inspection of sites for Roodepoort-Maraisburg location was conducted in 1947, the Council had adopted what the inspectors called 'a praiseworthy, far sighted policy to remove the whole location ... to a new site.' This both the Council and the inspectors believed would require an area of about 300 morgen, capable of accommodating 3 300 sites and housing a resident population of 17 000. Two sites were accordingly settled upon, Witpoortjie No. 10 situated on deproclaimed land about two miles West of Roodepoort Township, owned by Die Kopersbond Beperk, and Vogelstruitfontein No. 12, owned by Durban Roodepoort Deep, Limited and located on proclaimed ground two miles south of Roodepoort Railway Station proper.<sup>183</sup>

Roodepoort Council favoured Vogelstruisfontein No. 12 'as being most centrally situated' but this was almost immediately objected to by Rand Mines, Limited and the Government Mining Commissioner on behalf of Durban Roodepoort Deep Limited, so beginning years of wrangles over a possible site for the new location.<sup>184</sup> Upon receiving these replies, the Council settling back almost too easily into its former position, and resolved to extend the existing location by expropriating land to its north and its west.<sup>185</sup> It was now the moment for Rand Rietfontein Estates, Limited to weigh in. They owned part of Witpoort No. 44 abutting on land owned by Die Kopersbond Beperk to the north and west of the location, and now indicated both an intention to establish (improbably) a European Township and a mine, as well as a servitude on their and neighbouring properties which prohibited them from being leased or in any way assigned to blacks.<sup>186</sup>

By the end of the 1940s the Roodepoort-Maraisburg Town Council finally despaired of its 'unsuccessful attempts over years' to find land on which to build a new African township and sometime in late 1950 or early 1951 it appealed to the Department of Native Affairs to help it find a solution.<sup>187</sup> As it explained shortly afterwards to the Land Tenure Advisory Board, the location's population had now climbed to 5 596 and it was 'grossly overcrowded.'<sup>188</sup> Even now the Council still entertained hopes that it might purchase the Kopersbond land on Witpoortjie 10, but this idea was firmly and finally squashed by a typically adamant Minister of Native Affairs, H.F. Verwoerd. As he bluntly informed the Council 'the Kopersbond land is not acceptable to the Minister' largely because of its 'encroachment into a predominantly European area'. More constructively, however, as Secretary for Native Affairs, W.W.M. Eiselen, informed the Council, Verwoerd was not

convinced that sufficient land on Vogelstruisfontein No. 12 could not be made available to location purposes and instructed that further investigations be made into this option 'as a matter of extreme urgency'.<sup>189</sup> Two months later nothing had been done and the Council had reached the end of its tether. A new letter was despatched to the Secretary for Native Affairs 'stressing the extreme urgency of a speedy decision', and pointing out that 'in view of the agitations in respect of land at Vogelstruisfontein, the longer a decision is delayed the more difficult the situation becomes.'<sup>190</sup> This time a quick response was forthcoming from the Director of Native Affairs and the matter was referred to the Land Tenure Advisory Board for investigation. The Board was instructed to bring three areas under its consideration - the deproclaimed areas of Vogelstruisfontein 12, the unproclaimed and de-proclaimed sections of Witpoortjie 10 and the unproclaimed sections of Rietvlei No. 9 in Randfontein district.<sup>191</sup> The Council's preference, as it made clear to the Board, was the 617 morgen of land pinpointed at Vogelstruisfontein which it had 'felt for some time would be most suitable for location purposes'. Failing that, it would settle for the 818 morgen at Witpoortjie 10 even though it was too distant from Roodepoort. Least acceptable, indeed unacceptable, was Rietvlei 9, situated deep within Randfontein district.<sup>192</sup> The LTAB finally undertook its investigation early in October 1951, but it soon transpired that it and the Department had now extended its gaze to land on the farms Meadowlands and Doornkop 10.<sup>193</sup> The Board held further hearings and listened to further representations between 11 February and 26 February 1952, and following yet another deputation from the Council to the Minister, in May 1952 the proposal was accepted that the Council approach Durban Roodepoort Deep, Limited to purchase 240 morgen of land on the farm Doornkop No. 10 (adjoining Vogelstruisfontein No. 12) and to negotiate for a 60 morgen portion of Vogelstruisfontein No. 12 from Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company Limited.<sup>194</sup> As a result of these initiatives the Mentz Committee which was appointed by Verwoerd in 1952 to demarcate locations and Group Areas across the Rand found itself happily relieved of having even to consider the issue. After some wrangling about the price of the land, both deals were sealed in 1954, the land being bought with a £52 353 loan from provincial economic housing funds.<sup>195</sup> In February 1956 the Provincial Administrator of the Transvaal approved a loan of £107 290 for the first phase of a location building and development programme, in which 400, four-roomed houses were built (51/6 ) along with a hostel for 900-1 000 inmates.<sup>196</sup> Four hundred and fifty serviced plots were also made available for temporary site and service structures. In December 1957 3 000 circulars

were distributed in Roodepoort West location and the town, warning residents of the impending removal, and the first phase of the move began in the course of 1956. Added impetus was given to the programme in late 1956, early 1957, when a second phase of the Dobsonville housing project was unveiled. In this the Council together with the National Housing office and the Department of Native Affairs agreed to construct a further 500 NE 51/6 houses of which 100 would be allocated to owner occupiers who would purchase them, while a further 600 serviced stands would be made available which would be located on alternate sites to the built houses.<sup>197</sup> By mid 1957 £189 000 had been accessed by the Council from the Government Economic Housing Funds.<sup>198</sup>

This phase of removal from the location embraced 100 of the old location's house owners who set their compensation payments against the purchase price of a new house in Dobsonville, 189 sub-tenants from the old location and 320 out of the 900 African families occupying backyards in the white area of Roodepoort. Both of the latter were accommodated initially on serviced plots where they were presented with two options. A tenant could either erect a one-roomed structure himself, under the supervision of a Council official which would serve as a kitchen for the future completed dwelling, or he could build a temporary structure in one corner of the plot which could 'later be easily demolished' and the materials used for the construction of the main building.<sup>199</sup> Since the redemption period for loans with which to build the temporary structure was five years (as opposed to 30 years for the houses proper) rentals on these plots were prohibitively and absurdly high (£2.1.6. for one-room, compared to £1.13.0. for a four-roomed house).<sup>200</sup>

A further burst of development was contemplated in 1958. Late in 1957 the Manager of Non-European Affairs recommended securing a further housing loan of £105 285 for 1 000 additional site and service sites over three years as well as additional funds for 800 NE 51/6 houses and 200 NE 51/9 (two-roomed) houses on a letting/selling scheme, and 500 temporary houses (in effect rooms).<sup>201</sup> The project appears, however, to have stalled, presumably because of lack of money and by early 1959 only the removal of lodgers in the location and backyard dwellers in Roodepoort township had been completed. Two blocks of shops had also been constructed along with a Native Administration Office.<sup>202</sup> Now the pace of removals slowed sharply. Compensation to house owners in the location was agreed (apparently) at £160 367 by both the Council's evaluator and location residents, and the Council now anticipated a five to seven year period before removal would be complete.<sup>203</sup> A major stumbling block apparently was that only £25 000 - £40 000 a year was available for several years to cover the costs and only 1/7 of the population could be removed each year.<sup>204</sup>

Finally in June 1959 the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development and the National Housing Organisation, approved a new housing scheme for 2 000 dwellings, and a plan was approved for reducing the old locations to 100 plots and 200 families.<sup>205</sup> This was

accomplished in 1961.

Roodepoort followed the same 'method of removal' as other municipalities. To be moved 'without delay' were those living in backyard dwellings in white areas, and those living in peri-urban areas. Next, lodgers were to be moved, and finally everyone else, preference being given to 'natives in regular employment'.<sup>206</sup> The provisions of the Natives' (Urban Areas) Act of 1945 were used to demolish dwellings deemed a 'health hazard', and unfit for human habitation. Under this law, no compensation needed to be paid to lodgers or standholders (white or African) when the lodgers were removed and their wood and iron dwellings demolished. The Officer of Health signed the orders for many such premises to be demolished. The most urgent removals were those from farms in the area, which were declared a Health Hazard.<sup>207</sup>

A spate of licensing now followed whereby white house-owners and farmers obtained permission to house a certain number of Africans on their property. In 1956 white home owners were informed that 'they should send their female servants to obtain the necessary permits in terms of section 10(2) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act from the Registration Section.'<sup>208</sup> The aim of this exercise was to control the influx of African women, and to find out where they were staying so that they could later be moved to the location when housing became available for them. This was not an entirely popular process, partly because of the fee of 5/- payable to the Department of Native Affairs. This unpopularity was acknowledged by the Town Council, and it was agreed that 'should the necessary co-operation of the public not be forthcoming, a certain amount of compulsion will eventually have to be used.'<sup>209</sup>

Some municipalities faced more of a challenge with regard to the numbers of Africans that needed to be removed from white and peri-urban areas before the residents of old locations could be evicted and the old locations removed. Roodepoort did not appear to have confronted as big a problem as other municipalities in this regard. In 1956, in response to a circular issued to Africans residing and employed in the area, a relatively small 354 non-location residents registered a desire to hire houses in the new location, while 26 non-location residents requested permission to hire site and service stands.<sup>210</sup>

By the mid 1960s the old location's population had been reduced to a fraction of its former size. It was 'sad and traumatic' to be one of those left behind to witness its decline.<sup>211</sup> Some people stayed behind by choice, some because they were at the bottom of the waiting list, and some did not qualify to live in Dobsonville. Kgatitswe Raborife, who only moved to Dobsonville in 1966 or 1967, was one of the last to leave. His experience seems to have been particularly unsettling.

'... I was, you know, going back to school and staying [there] for six months and coming back. You can imagine, a vibrant town ... You come back again it's all

ruins, and everybody's gone. You know one house there, you find another one there.<sup>212</sup>

It was a drawn out lingering end. In January 1963 an article appeared in *The World* as early as four years before the final residents were moved, which already conveyed vivid descriptions of the 'ghost town': January 1963 which contained vivid descriptions of the 'ghost town':

'At the moment the condition of the location is appalling. Grass is growing on the footpaths, remaining houses are surrounded by debris of demolished houses ... Since the mass removal of the residents to Dobsonville last year [1962] the Old Location, as it is popularly called, has fallen terribly down in communal amenities. From a distance it looks like a bombed town after an air attack.'<sup>213</sup>

Kgatitswe Raborife recalls:

'almost everybody was gone, there were about thirty houses left and they were far apart. And we used to be scared going through these ruins.'<sup>214</sup>

such fears were not unfounded. The location was no longer the safe place it had, apparently, once been. *The World* article reported that:

'remnants of bulldozed houses are dangerous at night for they harbour criminals, who rob and harm residents and outrage women.'<sup>215</sup>

Besides Government Group Area policy the major pressure exercised on the existence of the old location was the continued massive economic and demographic expansion of Roodepoort-Maraisburg. In the 1950s Roodepoort-Maraisburg underwent a boom in residential development. In August 1955 as many as five new European townships were in the course of being established, while building activities in Roodepoort-Maraisburg were the third highest on the Reef.<sup>216</sup> Horison Development Company was clearly missing out financially, and it was with the suggestion of this financial loss that the Council approached them in July 1956 to request a contribution towards the costs of removing the Old Location. As they helpfully pointed out

'... the existence of the Roodepoort location has the effect of depressing the value of the remaining portion of the company's land ... and it is common knowledge that no Township's Board would approve of the establishment of a European township adjacent to the existing location, so that the whole area surrounding the location is dormant to the prejudice of the Company.'<sup>217</sup>

Horison Development Company did in fact want to lay out a European township (Horison Park) on the land on which the Old Location stood, but withheld this information during the negotiations over who should contribute what to the cost of its removal. Each had a point. While the Council did not want to have to shoulder the brunt of the costs of removal itself, the Company did not want to risk huge financial losses if the removal of the location was

delayed. The establishment of a township required a large capital outlay and this did not make the business of township development as attractive as is commonly thought by persons not experienced in the commitments which township owners have to undertake.<sup>218</sup> Instead, according to the Company, it was the Council who would reap the benefits of removing the Old Location.

'... As it will make the residents adjacent to the location happier, the development of a new township will add to the population and prosperity of the town; assessment rates and other income will accrue to the Council; increased trade will be possible in the area on account of the additional purchasing power of the new members of the community; additional schools will be built and general progress and development of the whole area should be possible.'<sup>219</sup>

This first exchange between the Council and the Company was a fairly standard opening gambit in that each party suggested to the other that the burden of costs should be laid on the party that would benefit the most. But there was one other issue that the Company raised, and this was to become a major stumbling block for the rest of the negotiations, so much so that by 1960 a letter addressed to the Town Clerk from Horison Development Company read:

'May we remind you that as far back as 1956 these negotiations were commenced and yet at the end of 1959 we appear to be no further.'<sup>220</sup>

The root of the problem lay as far back as 1956, in the Company's first letter to the Town Council. While not made explicit, the Company indicated two of the conditions on which its co-operation with the Council would stand. The first condition did not represent a major obstacle:

'When the location is moved the Company considers that it would be in the interests of the whole community for all buildings to be demolished so that a new modern and attractive township can be built. Any location houses if left on the site would depreciate the whole of the area surrounding them and discourage proper development.'<sup>221</sup>

The next line was to become a major problem:

'The location cemetery likewise is a discouraging factor and the Council is urged to consider its removal also.'<sup>222</sup>

After momentary reflection the Council agreed. This soon proved to have been a major mistake. The removal of the cemetery, like the removal of the Old Location, was never discussed with those who would be affected by it on a personal level. In June 1958 the Council had resolved to take immediate steps to close the cemetery.<sup>223</sup> Once the cemetery had closed, rumours began to fly. It was indeed through rumour that the residents of Roodepoort Location first heard about the proposed sale of their cemetery to Horison

Development Company, and the possible exhumation of the bodies of their dead, which would then be re-interred in a mass grave.<sup>224</sup>

The response of the residents indicates the importance of the cemetery to the entire Roodepoort location community. The full significance of the removal of the cemetery is suggested in the memorandum submitted to the Town Clerk from the Advisory Board towards the end of 1958. This read,

Generations, forebears of the residents, rest in that cemetery, and the cemetery has come to be regarded as a most sacred institution among residents. The great veneration with which the residents regard their "DEAD" [their emphasis] is common knowledge.<sup>225</sup>

The Advisory Board specifically asked for certain assurances to allay the fears of the residents. They requested:

1. That the present restriction, barring the residents from burying their dead at the cemetery, be lifted until the remaining piece of ground be exhausted.
2. That the cemetery shall be properly enclosed and left intact as a sacred memorial institution.
3. That, in the event of the removal of the residents from the Location, the residents shall always be accorded the right to enter the cemetery and pay homage to their dead.
4. That the ground of the cemetery shall not at any time in the future be converted to other use.<sup>226</sup>

It was perhaps the final paragraph of the memorandum that most influenced the Town Council's response to the pleas of the Advisory Board. Its chilling ring may have added to the trepidation the Town Clerk may have felt as the body responsible for ensuring the peaceful removal of the Old Location. This read,

... we would respectfully urge that unless such assurance is given by the Council, a grave and permanent sense of injustice and wrong would be bred, that would pass from generation to generation and would never be forgotten.<sup>227</sup>

The concern of the Council was the 'preservation of the goodwill of the residents' which it considered a 'very important factor in the removal of a location.'<sup>228</sup> The Council took the Advisory Board's memorandum very seriously and forwarded it to Horison Development Company in March 1959 for them to consider. In the Company's reply a month later 'it showed no concern for the sentiments of the Board and the location residents and insisted upon dealing with the financial aspects of the matter.'<sup>229</sup>

The Council was now coming to the conclusion that there would be no such removal. They requested a report from the Medical Officer of Health and the Legal Advisor on the health and legal implications of removing the cemetery. According to Section 79(3) of the



Local Government Ordinance of 1939 the Council could close cemeteries, but, according to Section 2 of Ordinance No. 7 of 1925, if the Council wanted to remove and re-inter the bodies they needed the consent of the Administrator. And the Administrator, 'may impose such conditions as he deems desirable'.<sup>230</sup>

These conditions, contained in Sections 58, 61 and 62 of the Council's By-laws promulgated by Administrator's Notice No. 922 of 28 October 1956, were as follows:

58. No person shall, unless authorised by a written order under the hand of the Magistrate or the written permission of the Administrator of the Transvaal, exhume or cause any body to be exhumed.

61. The grave from which any body is to be removed shall be effectively screened from view during the exhumation and a shell shall be kept in readiness at the grave.

62. No exhumation or removal of any body shall be made by any person unless the medical officer of health is present.<sup>231</sup>

There were 2 000 adult graves in which approximately 3 000 adults were buried, and 2 635 infant graves. Exhuming and re-interring them would cost approximately £20 000.

After considering this information, the Council informed the Company that it was not prepared to remove the cemetery at the Old Location. An alternative to the removal was offered. The graves would be levelled, numbered pegs 'of standard design' provided at each grave, the cemetery covered with grass and fenced. In return the Council would forfeit the £5 000 that the Company had agreed to contribute towards the removal of the cemetery. The Company's reply was blunt - it would not agree to the deletion of the removal of the cemetery from the agreement with the Council.<sup>232</sup>

After more wrangling over details and costs, the Company finally relented. The cemetery would not be removed, instead a 6ft wall would be built around it and the area was to be kept clean by the Council.<sup>233</sup> This the Council undertook to do, as part of its promise to the Company and also out of obligation to the white rate-payers who would soon live in close proximity to the old cemetery. But the upkeep of the cemetery was also an ongoing concern for the residents of Dobsonville, as reflected in the numerous enquiries made by the Advisory Board and UBC over the years as to the state of the old cemetery.

While in some ways the residents of Roodepoort West and Dobsonville were victorious in their protest against the removal of the cemetery, the victory had more than a touch of bitterness. The dead were not exhumed and reburied in a mass grave, the graves were not bulldozed, and the land was not turned into a park for the new inhabitants of Horison View, but the residents of Dobsonville would not visit the graves of their ancestors as long as Group Areas wrought an invisible cage.

Experiences of removal varied, but in many instances bore little resemblance to the

processes described in the cold bureaucratic prose of official documents. Tenants, who had previously crowded into inadequate location rooms were often pleased to make the move. 'Tenants were happy', recalls Thenjiwe Radebe, 'because they were going to get houses.'<sup>234</sup> 'We were removed in 1958', George Menoe observes. 'The mood was sombre. We were disarmed spiritually because we were getting four-roomed houses which is better than the shacks we were living in.'<sup>235</sup> Nkathlo Moeketsi concurs.<sup>236</sup> 'Lodgers were the first persons to be removed', remarks Doris Dlamini, 'then Kanana together with Masipala.'<sup>237</sup> A major problem experienced by the first batch of location residents that were removed into Dobsonville was that the houses were not ready. 'They built small shacks just to bribe us to live there', remembers M. Mkhlongo. The houses were built afterwards. While the houses were being built we lived in shacks.<sup>238</sup> Doris Dlamini makes the same point, 'They removed people in a rush before they ever finished building houses - a one-roomed house with no roof or floor.'<sup>239</sup> Ida Mokoto also remarks on the unfinished state of the houses into which they were moved. 'The house is an eggshell. Bricks some broken. Houses had grass inside, no plaster on the bricks; holes in the house, so you can get snakes getting in.'<sup>240</sup> Even schools were not built so that school children initially had to commute back to Roodepoort West.<sup>241</sup>

Standholders in particular complained of being duped into accepting the move. Ntibiki Lekgetho's family kept cows in the location kraal. 'My mother sold them to our Superintendent, Mr. Cronje. He retired from the police force and became our Superintendent at Witpoortjie ... We were not allowed to bring them when we moved here. They promised to give us new houses. They tricked us. We couldn't 'juya' - even chickens.'<sup>242</sup> Council records suggest the possibility of exaggeration here, since the new location's regulations contained provisions for building fowl sheds in which a maximum of 25 chickens could be kept.<sup>243</sup>

A sense of impending troubles is conveyed in an account of a description of the location Superintendent, Dennis Dobson's, last words to the location residents. 'Dennis called the parents. He told them he was retiring. He was going to move to Durban. The area would be taken by the Boers and you will be moved to Dobsonville. You will no longer be under my rule. You will be forcefully removed.'<sup>244</sup>

Perhaps the most disturbing and cold blooded part of the removal was the absence of notice residents received. Numerous ex-residents tell a similar tale.

'The municipal would just arrive in the morning as we are sitting regardless of what we are doing and say "Gloria Mafane, you are moving today." They will bundle you. It was terrible. When your husband comes home from work he will find that his wife has been moved to Dobsonville.'<sup>245</sup>

Ida Mokoto had a similar experience:

'I was 17 when removed. It was not nice because you would see people being loaded onto a tractor, or if [you had] plenty of goods, a tractor and lorry. Because they would come early in the morning and tell you that your house number has come out. Imagine, the children are at school and your father is at work and it is just mother at home. The fire is burning. The stove is hot, but it must be packed in the tractor.'

Ida's mother in fact successfully resisted the demand and managed to defer the move to the next day but variations on the same tale are told all over.<sup>246</sup> Eventually though a four roomed house would be built, 'and you had electricity and everything.'<sup>247</sup> Doris Dlamini agrees, 'The houses at Dobsonville were the best compared to other parts of Soweto. They had divided rooms, toilets, also electricity supply. We were the first township people,' she adds, 'to have lights and tarred streets.'<sup>248</sup>

Yet as all ex residents also agree the move was highly disruptive. 'We all lost friends,' says Ida Mokoto. 'They lost friends, neighbours because they placed them where they like,' confirms Lebang Huma.<sup>249</sup>

'Even the gangsters scattered', recalls M. Mkhlongo.<sup>250</sup> As Mrs Thenjiwe Radebe sums up, 'They were not happy to be moved.'<sup>251</sup>

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