Ashwin Desai and Richard Pithouse

"What stank in the past is the present's perfume": Dispossession, Resistance, and Repression in Mandela Park

> What they [the ANC] have done to put the economy on a right footing, is, I think, almost miraculous.
> —Pamela Cox, Former Head of the South Africa Division at the World Bank
>
> Mandela has been the real sellout, the biggest betrayer of his people. When it came to the crunch, he used his status to camouflage the actual agreement that the ANC was forging with the (white) South Africa elite.
> —Trevor Ngwane, Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee

The Men with Guns

As this essay goes to publication, Max Ntanyana and Fonky Goboza, activists in the Mandela Park anti-eviction campaign, are awaiting trial under bail conditions designed to make political life almost impossible.[1] In 2003, in an interview, they discussed the government evictions in Mandela Park:

> In September 1999 the sheriffs came to Mandela Park with dogs and teargas and guns. On the first day they came to confiscate our goods. On the second day they came back to evict us from our homes. There were a lot of police, in Caspirs and in small vans. It was as if they

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> were at war. They cordoned off one street at a time and started to evict people. The whole area came out, as well as neighbouring areas, to try and prevent the evictions. We stood up to them. No one told us to resist—it was spontaneous. People were beaten with batons, shot at with rubber bullets and bitten by police dogs. Teargas blew everywhere. A lot of people were injured and it is lucky that no-one was killed. The police were only able to evict 13 families on that first day. And the community put many of the people who were evicted back in their houses. Later we got in touch with the Anti-Eviction Campaign in Tafelsig through the Anti-Privatisation Forum and then linked with people in Athlone, KTC, Valhalla Park, Gugulethu, Delft, Tambo Square, Mfuleni and elsewhere.[2]

Mandela Park is on the edge of Khayalitsha—a massive township that sprawls along the bleak plains of the Cape Flats outside of Cape Town. *Khayalitsha* is Xhosa for "new home." In its latter years as it increasingly struggled to seek legitimacy the apartheid state gave the townships, where it sought to keep its workers and poor, names that ring with childlike optimism. Nearby *Gugulethu* means "our treasure." These are extraordinarily alienating environments. But if you walk down to sea you can, on a crisp day, see Robben Island, where Mandela was imprisoned.

Apartheid was undone bit by bit by endlessly multiple acts of resistance and lines of flight. By the early 1980s people were moving from the rural Transkei, where apartheid sought to keep them, to Cape Town in such numbers that the state lost the capacity to regulate the borders between its two opposed zones. Around the country people who were taking control of new spaces gave those spaces names. And the people who moved to the edge of Khayalitsha defiantly called their space Mandela Park in honor of their hope. A few months ago the Mandela Park Anti-eviction Campaign took control of a derelict school and began to run their own school for children excluded from education because their parents couldn't pay user fees. This time they named the space after themselves—People's Power Secondary and then renamed it Masiphumelele School. *Masiphumelele* means "our collective flourishing."

Mandela Park is not the only community that finds itself under armed assault from the state ten years after the end of apartheid. As we write we are receiving reports of clashes between activists and private security guards hired by the state in Phiri, Soweto. People are resisting the state's install-

ment of prepaid water meters that force the poor to disconnect themselves from water. There have been arrests and a death. The fight goes on. Every night. On October 9, 2003, the Durban City Council sent scores of heavily armed men into Chatsworth in armored cars to disconnect hundreds of people from water. Two days earlier the community had been able to hold off a less-well-armed invasion with barricades and stones. They have been fighting constant battles against eviction from their council-owned flats and disconnection from water and electricity since May 1996 when "a detachment of fifty security personnel rolled into Chatsworth in 4 x 4 bakkies (pick-up trucks) and began disconnecting water and electricity, throwing furniture and other belongings onto the street, before sealing the doors of flats."[3]

Revolts have ebbed and flowed in poor communities all over the country[4] since 1996 when the African National Congress (ANC) became the first African government to ever voluntarily seek the help of the World Bank to design and impose a structural adjustment program on its people.[5] Markets were opened, taxes to the rich were cut, state assets were privatized, services were commodified, and social spending was reduced. The results came quickly. The economy began to grow and the rich got richer. But as the government's own statistics reveal the poor got significantly poorer and unemployment, already high, reached catastrophic levels. Over one and a half million jobs were lost. Over ten million people were disconnected from water and electricity respectively. Although the black elite became rapidly richer and the white poor became rapidly poorer the stark fact is that in general terms whites got richer and blacks got poorer. The government's own statistics agency concludes that in real terms: average black "African" household income declined 19 percent from 1995 to 2000, while white household income was up 15 percent. Across the racial divides, the poorest half of all South Africans earn just 9.7 percent of national income, down 11.4 percent from 1995.[6]

People have been putting their bodies in harm's way and fighting revolutionary struggles to stay in the places where apartheid put them, to retain access to basic services like water and electricity, and to resist exclusion from education. Not even the most cynical anticipated that the millennial hopes that fueled the struggles against apartheid would be crushed like this.

The World Bank

> Changing the mindset of service providers, the elite, and the press is not simple, but it can be done. Much can be learned from the market penetration strategies of the private sector.
> —World Bank

By the late 1980s the apartheid state was working closely with the World Bank. And the World Bank, together with its enthusiastic allies among the local corporate elite, was able to persuade apartheid to begin to develop "public-private partnerships" with a view to the state making the necessary arrangements for business to be able to outlay the capital for "development" and for this investment to be recouped, with profit, from the poor.[7] In this regard Mandela Park is unusual because it is one of the first places where housing for the poor was developed by private capital for private profit. This later became the ANC's standard housing policy. In Mandela Park private banks, working with the state, bought land in 1986 and began to offer mortgages and employ private contractors to build houses. Ntanyana and Gobozo remember that

> the deposits on the houses were very low, about R500, and people were moving in by 1988. But the houses were not complete. They had no ceilings, or only one door, or no ventilation. They had cracks. They had rising damp. There was no plaster. There was only one door. And the lot size was too small. The banks built two houses on a single plot. These problems still exist in those houses today—14 years later. The community said they were not prepared to pay for the houses until the banks resolved the problems. It is also very important to understand that because the banks own the land on which the houses are built there has been absolutely no development—no schools, no clinics. Everything is privatised—the land, the house, the water, the electricity—everything.[8]

The residents mobilized their community and demanded that their houses be upgraded. When this failed to produce results, residents instituted a boycott of bond repayments. The apartheid state, fearing a violent backlash that would feed into growing support for the militantly democratic and anti-apartheid United Democratic Front (UDF) support, was hesitant to attempt mass evictions with the result that the banks found it politically impos-

sible to act on court judgments they had obtained against defaulters. But soon after the ANC took power it entered into relationships with banks and private developers and in an astonishing ideological somersault became unashamedly committed to neoliberalism's foundational developmental principal—cost recovery. The political legitimacy of the ANC, founded on years of struggle, enabled the banks to act on bad debts. There are times when it is necessary to return to Marx: "The more a dominant class is able to absorb the best people from the dominated classes, the more solid and dangerous is its rule."[9]

The ANC was swept to power on a tide of emotion promising a "better life for all." Trade union militancy from the famous Durban strikes in 1973 through to the last days of the negotiations in the early 1990s had played a central role in forcing South African capital to abandon apartheid. But after the ANC imposed its structural adjustment program in 1996 there was a rapid erosion of the local manufacturing economy, particularly the textile and clothing industry. Tariff barriers were dismantled and cheap goods produced under regimes of terror in East Asian sweatshops flooded the country. Most of the damage was done in the late 1990s. But according to the general secretary of the South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union, Ebrahim Patel, more than a thousand jobs were still being lost every month in the clothing, textile, and leather industries in the first six months of 2003. It is in this sector that thousands of people on the Cape Flats work and seek jobs. These losses followed the loss of 17,000 jobs during 2001 and 2002.[10] At the same time new research put the national unemployment figure at between 32 percent and 45 percent. The research found that a quarter of the currently unemployed lost their last job because of retrenchment or business closure, and that half the people seeking work have never worked before.[11] Furthermore while employment has declined rapidly the quality of jobs has also declined. Franco Barchiesi shows that more and more people are working in "atypical" or "nonstandard" (temporary, casual, contract, part-time) forms of employment that herald the ubiquity of a relatively unstable, and nonunionized workforce earning "poverty wages." He makes the telling point that unemployment in itself is only partially accountable for working-class poverty: "The existence of huge areas of working-class poverty in South African society . . . indicate(s) an enduring, structural inability of waged employment to satisfy basic necessities for life and household reproduction."[12]

Social income has also been subject to merciless pressure. Pensions de-

creased in real terms between 1991 and 2000.[13] Inequality has been exacerbated by the lack of state support (like a social wage) with over 13.8 million people in the poorest 40 percent of South Africa's households not qualifying for any social security transfers.[14] At the same times basic services like transport have been privatized, water and electricity have been corporatized, and the state has demanded "user fees" for schools, health care, and other services.

Cost Recovery and the Armed Assault on the Poor

> To the point that their idea of freedom, a new and recent idea, is already fading from our minds and mores, and liberal globalisation is coming about in precisely the opposite form—a police state globalisation, a total control, a terror based on "law and order" measures. Deregulation ends up in a maximum of constraints and restrictions, akin to those of a fundamentalist society.
> —Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism*

The relentless concretization of the precepts of the ANC's structural adjustment program have resulted in "a fundamental shift away from the 'statist' service delivery models of the past where the state subsidized and delivered municipal services (in an overtly racially-biased manner), towards a 'neoliberal' service delivery model where the private sector (and private sector principles) dominate. In the latter model, the state acts as a service 'ensurer' rather than a service 'provider' and municipal services are 'run more like a business,' with financial cost recovery becoming the most effective measure of performance."[15] These developments have seen the corporatization of basic services as a prelude to their eventual privatization. This has meant opportunities for the enrichment of people whose political connections get them onto the various boards—Umgeni Water in Durban, the Johannesburg Water Company, and so on—and who are paid on highly lucrative incentive schemes that reward them for increasing profit. Moreover the late Joe Modise, an ANC cabinet minister, was a director of Conlog Holdings, the company that manufactures that prepaid water meters that are currently being installed at gunpoint in Phiri, Soweto. And the directors of Dynamic Cables, the company that supplies the cabling for prepaid electricity meters, include Keith Mokoape, former deputy head of ANC intel-

ligence; Diliza Mji, former ANC treasurer general in KwaZulu-Natal; Ian Deetlefs and Ron Haywood who both held senior management positions in the apartheid state's arms industry; and Richard Seabrooke who, according the *Guardian*, was involved in smuggling to UNITA in violation of UN sanctions.[16] So it goes. When water and electricity are finally privatized local elites stand to become very rich as the ANC demands that multinationals partner with aspirant black capitalists. There are times when it is necessary to go back to Fanon: "The national middle class discovers its historic mission: that of intermediary."[17]

The commodification of basic services has already resulted in a dramatic escalation of the costs of these services. But where is the money to pay for commodified services supposed to come from in communities where unemployment is endemic? In the most comprehensive study of affordability David McDonald and Laila Smith found a serious crisis:

> If for example, 18 percent of the seven million people who are reported to have been given access to water since 1994 are unable to pay their water bills "no matter how hard (they) try," then 1.26 million of these new recipients are unable to afford this water and an additional 1.2 million have to choose between paying for water and buying other essentials like food. Similar percentages apply to the 3.5 million South Africans who have been given access to electricity.[18]

This in turn has increasingly caused "cost-recovery mechanisms" such as disconnections of water and electricity to occupy the attention and energy of the local state rather than the delivery of new services. Between 1999 and 2000 some 75,400 water cut-offs were imposed in the Greater Cape Town area.[19] Furthermore neoliberal logic rejects cross-subsidization and insists that each community must, itself, "recover" the full costs of service provision. This means that people previously excluded from these services must carry the full cost of installing new connections. Hence the poor, the black poor, must pay much more for their services than people in white suburbia. Furthermore coercive measures to extract payment—disconnections and repossessions of property affected at gunpoint—are disproportionately taken against the weakest people in society—again, the black poor. People in Khayalitsha have had their property repossessed and their water disconnected for debts as low as R200 while no action has been taken against the elite Newlands cricket ground for a debt two hundred times larger. And, although it is perfectly possible to avoid all this by getting the rich and cor-

porates to pay more for services and thus cross-subsidize the poor this is not done because these people have the power to lobby effectively for the maintenance of privilege.[20] In this instance, as in many others, the enrichment of the developing black bourgeoisie is at the direct expense of the poor. Indeed it is parasitic on the poor. A similar argument could be made about what the ANC calls "black empowerment" in a wide range of other areas including, for example, the national lottery.[21]

Bill Robinson argues that the emerging transnational order is characterized by "novel relations of inequality" resulting from "the rise of truly transnational capital and the integration of every country into a new global production and financial system" that functions in the interests of "a new transnational capitalist class" into which "a portion of the national elite has become integrated . . . in every country in the world." This process has been driven by "the rise of a transnational state, a loose but increasingly coherent network comprised of supranational political and economic institutions, and of national state apparatuses that have been penetrated by transnational forces" that serve "the interests of global over national accumulation process." Robinson adds that

> in most countries, the average number of people who have been integrated into the global marketplace and are becoming "global consumers" has increased rapidly in recent decades. But the absolute number of the impoverished—of the destitute and the near destitute—has also increased rapidly and the gap between the rich and the poor in global society has been widening steadily, and sharply, since the 1970s.[22]

For Robinson the emerging transnational order is best characterized as global apartheid. He notes that "ruling groups and their organic intellectuals tend to develop both universalist and particularlist discourses to legitimate their power and privilege in conformity with their own cultural and historical realities."[23]

With regard to universalist discourses we are currently witnessing a massive ideological project by the World Bank and others to delink the classic racial stereotypes (laziness, dirtiness, dangerous men and willing women, etc., etc.) that legitimated colonial domination from race and to project them onto the global poor of all races in order to legitimate contemporary forms of domination that entrench inequalities that were previously

created in explicitly racist terms.[24] The World Bank's recent book *Voices of the Poor* is premised on a Manichean split between "us" and "them"—the poor.[25] The poor emerge as The Poor—a deindividualized and othered category whose ontological flaws account for their material poverty. *Voices of the Poor* inhabits the perpetual present against which Winston Smith struggles.[26] There is an astonishingly complete refusal to take seriously historical forms of exploitation and dispossession, even when they structure and are entrenched in the present. Interviewees consistently explain that historical events caused or exacerbated their poverty. A story may start with "When my father was made a *jeune retraite* (forced early retirement, as part of structural adjustment policies) back in 1985 . . ."[27] or "When we lost the fish to the big companies. . . ."[28] But these views are immediately pyschologized and delegitimated by the World Bank's editorial voice.

> People . . . tend to think about their current economic position by comparing it with both their earlier standard of living and the current situation of others. Both are ways of attempting not only to rationally comprehend the transformations of their social status, but also to psychologically mediate their experiences. . . . Comparing the present situation with the past is a way for respondents to externalize responsibility for the current situation. By pointing to specific events that impoverished everybody . . . , or the criminality and duplicity of the wealthy, respondents feel that, at least to a certain extent, their impoverishment is not the result of personal failings, but of events utterly beyond their control.[29]

The editorial voice never inquires into the social forces that produced the arrangements that channel millions of complex lives into its twin categories of "us"—readers of World Bank books and actors with the potential to effect social change—and "them"—"the poor," objects of our paternalistic sympathies and whose neediness legitimates "our" control over "their" lives. The World Bank's gaze is locked into the present. With neoliberalism we are always at the beginning of year zero. And without history poverty is naturalized as is, by implication, wealth. Under colonialism, "The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich."[30] Under neoliberalism, the cause is still the consequence: you are poor because you are The Poor and you are The Poor because you are poor. John Holloway makes the important point that all

discourses of domination that seek to fix the ontology of the dominated are conveniently ahistorical: "The crystallisation of that-which-has-been-done into a "thing" shatters the flow of doing into a million fragments. Thingness denies the primacy of doing (and hence of humanity). Thing-ness is crystallised amnesia."[31] We can add that when such discourses seek to legitimate economic arrangements that entrench racialized inequality that is a direct consequence of historical racist domination their racial amnesia is virulently racist. Fanon developed a clear criterion for assessing the success of antiracism in the postcolony: "To break up the colonial world does not mean that after the frontiers have been abolished lines of communication will be set up between the two zones. The destruction of the colonial world is no more or less than the abolition of one zone."[32]

David Goldberg notes that the tremendous radical energies of the various social movements against racism and colonialism were committed to "transforming the racial status quo, the prevailing set of stultifying and subjugating conditions of existence for those deemed not white."[33] But he shows that these movements have been co-opted and made safe for extant power by being reduced to principals that are "primarily, principally, or completely to anti-racial commitment."[34] Using Appiah's distinction between racism and racialism he argues that

> antiracism requires historical memory, recalling the conditions of racial degradation and relating contemporary to historical and local to global conditions. If antiracist commitment requires remembering and recalling, antiracialism suggests forgetting, getting over, moving on, wiping away the terms of reference, at best (or worst) a commercial memorializing rather than a recounting and redressing of the terms of humiliation and devaluation. Indeed, antiracialism seeks to wipe out the terms of reference, to wipe away the very vocabulary necessary to recall and recollect, to make a case, to make a claim.[35]

But there is also a more particular and local factor at work. Fanon, writing forty years ago, explains it brilliantly:

> Privileges multiply and corruption triumphs, while morality declines. Today the vultures are too numerous and too voracious in proportion to the lean spoils of national wealth. The party, a true instrument of power in the hands of the bourgeoisie, reinforces the machine, and ensures that people are hemmed in and immobilized. The party helps

> the government to hold the people down. It becomes more and more anti-democratic, an implement of coercion. The party is objectively . . . the accomplice of the . . . bourgeoisie.[36]

Fanon goes on to explain how the police and army are used and how the party gets its power by the fact that it is an opportunity for "private advancement,"[37] by the ideological trick of demobilizing the people and presenting itself as the only legitimate agent of change (that is, it "expels the people from history") and by nationalist rhetoric that claims that the party incarnates the will of the people and that, therefore, to oppose it is to oppose the nation.[38] So "these men who have sung the praises of their race . . . proclaim that the vocation of their people is to obey, to go on obeying and to be obedient until the end of time."[39] Nationalist rhetoric is mobilized not only to defend the interests of local elites via political parties. At the moment Thabo Mbeki is mobilizing Pan-African rhetoric, against overwhelming opposition from African intellectuals and social movement outside of South Africa, to win consent for his George Bush– and World Bank–approved new partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which aims to subject the entire continent to a self-imposed structural adjustment program.[40]

So the ANC seeks to win consent for its armed extraction of wealth from the poor by the twin ideological strategies of the particular discourses of nationalism with their demand for obedience to the leaders and the party and the universal discourses of neoliberalism with their demand for obedience to the market. Sometimes they are combined in novel ways like the government's Masakhane campaign that claims, in the language of Ubuntu (humanism) and in the context of entrenched and worsening unemployment and poverty, that the good person is the person who pays for services.[41] In South Africa, as in other countries, mass exclusions from access to clean water resulted in the return of cholera.[42] The South African government, like the Indian government,[43] dutifully followed the World Bank's "initiative" and launched a campaign to persuade poor people to wash their hands more often. So people who had been forced, at gunpoint, to seek water in rivers and gutters and ditches, were sternly told by Nelson Mandela, in a television campaign, that they are getting sick because they are not washing their hands.[44] As Lewis Gordon reminds us, "The racist's credo [is] that, ultimately, the problem with other races is the races themselves."[45] The neoliberalist's credo is that the problem with the poor is themselves. They get cholera because they are dirty.

Arguments about hegemony are useful for explaining why most academics and media in- and outside of South Africa still enthuse about the World Bank's enthusiasm for the ANC's policies and why the lived experience of resistance and repression is almost completely absent from these spaces other than as part of the general discourse of criminality. Hegemony may also go some way to explaining how, in Mandela Park, the ANC took up the drive for cost recovery with such brutal enthusiasm and offered such support to the World Bank's own drive to make good on bond repayments and how the local state heaped further misery on the most vulnerable people in society by repossessing clothes and household goods when they couldn't pay their debts for basic services.

The right-wing nationalists gathering around Mbeki in the ANC, the market fundamentalists in the World Bank, and the local corporate elite are not content with the situation where, "in the capitalist countries, a multitude of moral teachers, counsellors and 'bewilders' separate the exploited from those in power. In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle-butts and napalm not to budge."[46] They would like to achieve a situation where hegemony does all the work—where "everything is more elegant, less bloodthirsty . . . higher finance will soon bring the truth home."[47] This is sometimes called "development." It is a lucrative niche market for academics—especially ex-Marxists. But despite all the funding from foreign donor agencies this project isn't concluded yet and hegemony doesn't explain how ten million people were disconnected from water. That fact is explained by something else—terror. Frank Wilderson makes an incisive observation in this regard:

> Capital was kick-started by the rape of the African continent. This phenomenon is central to neither Gramsci nor Marx. The theoretical importance of emphasising this in the early twenty-first century is twofold: first, the "socio-political order of the New World" was kick-started by approaching a particular body (a black body) with direct relations of force, not by approaching a white body with variable capital. Thus, one could say that slavery—the "accumulation" of black bodies regardless of their utility as labourers through an idiom of despotic power—is closer to capital's primal desire than is waged oppression—the "exploitation" of unraced bodies (Marx, Lenin, Gramsci) that labour through

an idiom of rational/symbolic (the wage) power: A relation of terror as opposed to a relation of hegemony.[48]

Mandela Park: The Revolt Begins

> The people no longer feel their bellies at peace when the colonial country has recognized the value of its elites. The people want things really to change and right away. Thus it is that the struggle resumes with renewed violence.
> —Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*

At first, meetings in Mandela Park consisted of small groups of affected homeowners who got together in an atmosphere characterized by despair and disbelief rather than militance. In fact, it was very difficult to summon up an attitude of defiance. After all it was the same ANC in which people had invested so much hope as they struggled against apartheid and it was just a few families that had been affected.

But there were a few trade union activists in Mandela Park who had been fortified by years of having to assert life and hope against the cold logic of power play. They began to put these well-honed skills to use in their community. Solidarity also arrived with activists from the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign (WCAEC), whose members in the "coloured" area of Tafelsig in Mitchell's Plain had been confronted by evictions the year before.

The WCAEC people brought very few resources with them, but the fact that a vibrant anti-eviction mass movement existed with its own language and rationale was a great boost to the people in Mandela Park. No sooner had they formed their own anti-eviction chapter than even more people received notice that they were to be evicted from their homes. Supported by a number of city-based NGO workers, trade unionists, and free-floating left activists, the Anti-Eviction Campaign started operating at two levels: exploring the prospects of a legal battle and beginning a program of mass mobilization. Soon the WCAEC through a succession of well-attended meetings, became rooted within Mandela Park. A powerful, if grim, insurgency was born.[49]

The ANC—Banking on Change

> Globalisation does not mean the impotence of the State, but the rejection by the state of its social functions, in favour of repressive ones, and the ending of democratic freedoms.
> —Boris Kagarlitsky, "Facing the Crisis"

Around the world neoliberalism recommends the creation or co-option of small, professional "civil society" organizations in an attempt to give legitimacy to commodification under the guise of "public-private partnerships." The ANC has taken this further by trying to create or co-opt simulated mass organizations to legitimize its policies. So, for example, when Mbeki's catastrophic AIDS denialism was opposed by a mass movement made up of more than ten thousand volunteers, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC),[50] the ANC set up an organization called the National Association for People with AIDS (NAPWA) that demonized TAC and supported the president's views on AIDS. This is never effective at the mass level, but it does mean that ANC-aligned media and academics always have a counterposing voice easily at hand. In Mandela Park the ANC made use of an organization called the South African National Civics Organization (SANCO). SANCO was a popular, radically democratic union of community organizations that had played a key role in resistance to apartheid. The ANC had demobilized it after taking power, but now they resurrected SANCO as a top-down structure for, in Fanon's phrase, "holding the people down." Ntanyana and Goboza explain that

> as a result of the boycott there were negotiations with the banks facilitated by the ANC and SANCO. No solutions came up, even though it was taken up to "higher levels" and people went to Jo'burg and everything. A local Joint Task Force for housing was created, with the ANC alliance on it. We were told all our demands would be met. But people were still not sure how much they should pay on their bonds. Heated debates developed in report-back meetings. Eventually proper report-backs stopped. SANCO would call meetings promising that the housing question would be discussed. But when people turned up at the meetings, the housing question would not be on the agenda. Instead all sorts of petty items would be discussed. People started to boycott these meetings.[51]

The ANC's next move was to offer SANCO a 20 percent share-holding in Khayelethu Home Loans (Pty) Ltd., the company that provided finance for home-loan debt in Khayalitsha. SANCO took the money. Letters of demand were now signed jointly by SANCO, the "civil society" organization tasked with "representing the people" and Khayalethu. Then an even more insidious organization arrived on the scene: SERVCON. As Ntanyana and Goboza explain,

> SERVCON was formed in 1995 in terms of the 1994 "record of understanding" signed between the government and the banks. SERVCON is half owned by the government and half by the banks. It was meant to serve the interests of the people, and to deal with the "historical problems" (as it is put) of incomplete houses, arrears, etc. In fact it has acted as the agent of the banks. SERVCON has offered four options: "rightsizing," rental, buybacks, or evictions. "Rightsizing" meant being moved to tiny houses far away from the community. At first we were only told these options verbally. The first time we saw them in writing was in June 2002. The community opposed them all.
>
> But SERVCON said that people must find a method to pay or else be evicted. The problem is that poor people cannot afford to pay what the banks demand. This is especially so when they have built up arrears, for whatever reason. Interest rates have been very high over the past period and this has vastly inflated the cost of these houses. Originally these houses cost R25,000. But many people have paid thousands of rand more than this for them over ten years and they still don't own them. It is unreasonable.[52]

The Western Cape government's attack on the poor of Khayalitsha at the beginning of 2002 was swift and brutal. In January 2002 evictions took place daily. More than two thousand households faced eviction. Elsewhere in the country people were being evicted from council housing. But in Mandela Park the complainants were banks. Banks are important, even revered. When the bank's lawyers get nasty, the state must be seen to immediately respond to their court orders lest boardroom whispers begin about South Africa's commitment to the rule of law. There's no real danger, though. The government seems to relish this role. Evictions are supposed to be followed by relocation to smaller houses in informal areas far outside the community. This process is described as "right-sizing," the idea being that residents who find living in two-room houses beyond their means should be evicted

and relocated to more affordable, and far more poorly serviced, one-room houses.

People who had been evicted from their homes by the Group Areas Act during apartheid, who had been forced out of "coloured" townships as the government tried to police a "coloured labor preference policy," who had been forced to find shelter in squatter settlements, now found the same thing happening to them again. But now it came under a new "raceless" phraseology called right-sizing.

Right-Sizing

> For them the whole purpose of language is to mask intent.
> —Arundhati Roy, "Power Politics"

People evicted from Mandela Park are "right-sized" to "houses" that residents refer to as "Dog Kennels." This was the fate of Mr. Mcondobi. Mr. Mcondobi, a pensioner, was evicted and "right-sized" in February 2002. He was in good health when he was moved to a one-room house with no inside plastering, a leaking roof, and no bath or shower. The Cape winters are notoriously cruel. As winter set in, Mr. Mcondobi contracted pneumonia and died. Max Ntanyana knows seven other old people from Mandela Park who died in "right-sized" houses that winter and has heard of another fifteen from elsewhere in Khayalitsha.

Ntanyana and Goboza explain that local ANC officials rapidly moved from promises of help to the community to helping SERVCON identify easy targets for evictions.

> After the first eviction the ANC ward councillors came in promising to solve the problems—but on condition that people must pay to prevent evictions. Small workshops were organized, with just a few people together with councillors and SANCO people etc. But after a short time we found that the ANC and SANCO officials were targeting the most vulnerable people—pensioners, the disabled, single mothers and so on—and intimidating them with the threats of eviction if they didn't pay. The targeting of the vulnerable became a consistent pattern. This is why the ANC did so badly in the local government elections in our area.
>
> But the backlash at the polls didn't protect us. Immediately after

> the elections evictions started on a much bigger scale. People didn't have the energy to fight back all the time and they were confused. We know of at least 190 families that were evicted in Mandela Park They were "right-sized"—relocated to smaller houses far away from Mandela Park, in Harare or Macassar. By 2001 the sheriffs and police were evicting people from more than 30 houses a day. In some cases people's houses were put up for sale by the banks even before they were evicted—because there was no new smaller house ready for them. And they still had to continue to pay the bond on the original house!"[53]

Resistance and Repression

> New struggles always involve elements of continuity as well as discontinuity with the past. Bodies of thought formulated in different conditions, and marginalised in the recent past, can reemerge to exert a major influence in a new movement.
> —Alex Callinicos, "Toni Negri in Perspective"

At first the MPAEC sought to talk to the banks and the provincial minister of housing. They pleaded that their houses be fixed and that the government buy back the land on which their houses were built from the banks. This was in the nature of a reasonable expectation—that the state subsidize low income group housing. All attempts at meetings with the ANC MEC (provincial minister) for housing and the banks were rebuffed.

While the MPAEC showed a willingness to talk to the banks and politicians, it was intransigent in not getting involved in the rationality of administrative procedures. This involved dividing the poor from the not so poor (preparing the former to be right-sized), negotiating a lowering of the debt (in return suspending the boycott), and so on. In this way, the MPAEC was making power visible, laying the foundations for openly confronting the authority and domination that are often hidden by the impersonal rationality of administrative procedures.[54] As Ntanyana and Goboza explain,

> At first we were only semi-organised. Our real campaign against the banks started at the end of January 2001. We hold twice weekly meetings, on Wednesdays and Sundays, which are attended by hundreds of supporters of the campaign. Western Cape community safety MEC Leonard Ramatlakane stated in the *Cape Times* that we are "a handful

> of people." Our meetings are attended by young and old, as many and perhaps more women than men. We have invited Leonard Ramatlakane to attend our meetings, but he has failed to come and discuss with these people. We invite him again to come and see who we are.[55]

In the first few years after 1994, ANC and even SANCO leaders were accorded respect and even deference. They came with the mystique of liberation fighters and a language that promised a better life. But the exposure of false promises and the repressive response to the community's mass mobilization had the cultural effect of what Ralph Miliband called "desubordination," an erosion of respect and deference for those who have power and their right to govern.[56]

People were offended by the ANC's flat refusal to meet the MPAEC and outraged when activists in the MPAEC were harassed by the police, armed with guns and dogs, while the banks enforced evictions. Gradually the community realized that its overtures to the banks and government were not being taken seriously. This set in motion a series of more militant actions. They included marching onto the company that was disconnecting electricity, popularizing a campaign for a R10/month flat rate for basic services that had begun in Durban, and ensuring that nobody was able to occupy houses from which people had been evicted. Ntanyana and Goboza explain:

> During 2001 we began to slow down the rate of evictions and by June 2002 we had essentially halted them. In 2001 the sheriffs started cutting water in Mandela Park, and confiscating goods as payment for bills in arrears. There are similar problems with electricity. The anti-eviction campaign is now taking on these problems too. People build up "arrears" because they cannot afford to pay. This is why we have made the demand for an R10-a-month flat rate service charge. Already this is what our members are paying each month. In April hundreds of us sat in at the municipal offices in Khayalitsha to protest cut-offs and to demand R10-a-month service charge.
>
> In November, we marched to the electricity company and they agreed to reinstall electricity boxes they had taken out. From March 2002 we started returning people to their original homes.
>
> In some cases these original houses have been unscrupulously "sold" by the banks so that new people have a title deed. New owners—some of them even policemen and soldiers—have agreed to move to allow the original owners to return. We assisted in them in finding other

> housing, for example in vacant houses (often protected by the bank's security personnel) where the original owner does not intend to return. We have not left a single new owner without alternative accommodation.
>
> SERVCON and the banks are well aware that these houses are in dispute. It is very irresponsible of them to sell them off to new owners. Through this period we have been writing to the banks. We began writing to the ministry of housing after the ANC/NNP government came in the Western Cape in late 2001. Last May hundreds of us went to NBS and held a sit-in there. We complained that vulnerable people were being evicted and "right-sized" to places in Harare and Macassar. We complained about the small plot sizes, and rising damp, the fact we had installed ceilings and roofs in the house at our own expense, had repaired faulty electrical wiring at our expense, and plastered and filled in cracks also at our own expense. We raised the question of the purchase of the land in Mandela Park by the government.[57]

At the beginning of May community members burned down two houses that the banks had repossessed. This was a catalyst for a series of public meetings where an entirely new tactic was born. Instead of burning down repossessed houses, a tactic that was obviously militant yet somehow admitting of defeat, they decided to move those who had been evicted back into their homes. "Seize our homes, seize our lives" was the provocative chant that went up in Mandela Park, a chant that would become a widespread practice, inspiring people all over the country and earning local activists the rage of the state.

On May 30, 2002, 250 people from Mandela Park occupied the ground-floor National Building Society (NBS) offices in swanky St. George's Mall, Cape Town. It is hard to remember when last a bank had been occupied in South Africa. Most of the occupiers, the majority of whom were pensioners, faced eviction the following week. Their situation was desperate as they had to pay back R500 a month. Their monthly pension stood at R540.

On June 12, 2002, the MPAEC organized an occupation of Khayalethu Home Loans company and refused to let the manager leave until the company's head office in Johannesburg agreed to attend a meeting that Khayalethu had previously promised, but failed, to attend.

> We met with Khayalethu Home Loans in July. More than 200 of us sat in the whole day. When the boss finally appeared we showed him a

> videotape of conditions in the houses, and of our struggles. We told him to scratch the arrears and to drop the prices of the houses. KHL agreed to scrap the arrears and promised to never again evict pensioners and the disabled. But NBS, Standard, First National are still arrogant and won't move on anything.[58]

On June 26, some three hundred MPAEC and Tafelsig AEC members converged on the Western Cape provincial parliament to get a date for a meeting with the ANC MEC for Housing Nomatyala Hlangana:

> We have written numerous letters to the Western Cape MEC for housing, Nomatyala Hlangana She has never accepted our invitations to come and visit us. Eventually we heard that she was appearing on Radio Zibonele, on Wednesday 4 July, and we sent a delegation there to meet her. A few of us were on the air with her and she agreed to meet with us in Mandela Park—though later she withdrew from this.
>
> Instead she set up a meeting with SANCO, COSATU, the SACP and ANC in Mandela Park. The leaders are saying that it is them who know everything and that the majority of the people can't think. We are saying that everyone can think. We weren't invited to this meeting with Nomatyala and the organisations that support the banks and the government so we went to her office in Wale Street with hundreds of people. Officials would not tell us if Nomatyala was there. While we were waiting for the Managing Director of SERVCON to arrive as we had been told, police surrounded the building, sprayed teargas inside, and arrested 44 of us. Some of those arrested were pensioners and children. We were charged with trespassing—in a ministry of our elected government! Among our bail conditions were that we never appear in Wale Street![59]

The banks applied for an interdict against MPAEC and four members of the organization including the chairperson, Max Ntanyana. The interdict was unopposed because there was no money to go to court. The interdict restrains the respondents from, among other things, preventing evictions, persuading or inducing others to do the same, and directly or indirectly inducing or encouraging any person to occupy property. This interdict eventually became the basis for lengthy periods of incarceration of MPAEC activists.

When the sheriff of the court arrived to repossess the goods of a woman pensioner who owed R800 on her water account all they could find in her

house was a battered mattress and some old clothes. They took the clothes. All of them. The community organized to defend the pensioner. The police moved in, firing rubber bullets and teargas. Twelve people were arrested including Max Ntanyana. Despite their injuries, they were held overnight in police cells and denied medical attention. The twelve appeared in court the next day; eleven were released on bail, while a juvenile held illegally overnight was released without charge. But by now Max Ntanyana was a familiar face in the Khayalitsha Court. Sitting in the back of the courtroom was a police officer who had publicly stated that he regarded the MPAEC as an enemy of the state. The discourse of the police and local media began to add the word *terrorist* to their existing vocabulary of *criminal* and *ultra-leftist*.

Max Ntanyana was a shop steward in the radical South African Municipal Workers Union. The union struck against the privatization of municipal services. On September 7, 2002, twenty workers were arrested and taken to Somerset police station. Ntanyana was accused of continuing with his AEC activities in spite of the interdict, and charged with intimidation and contempt of court and, while in prison, fired from his job. The other workers were all released on R300 bail on September 9, but Ntanyana was imprisoned in Pollsmoor maximum security prison for one month and one week while bail was refused. In Pollsmoor Ntanyana met people who have been awaiting trial for years. Two weeks after Ntanyana's arrest, Goboza was arrested, imprisoned in the holding cells in Khayalitsha, and eventually released on bail of R500. Ntanyana recalls that

> Pollsmoor is terrible. It was tough time. When you get a visitor you know that you are going to be robbed. You can only phone once a week. The warders won't look after you. The prisoners fight. People are sodomized. But we are finding that other prisoners have a lot of respect for what we are doing. We survive.
>
> And we get overwhelming support from the community. When we appear in court it is full-up. One time when they were refusing me bail they made me appear at lunch-time so that they could avoid the community. But they were there. They were hiding me so that I couldn't see the community. Then they said that my lawyer wasn't there so I must come back tomorrow. But I know that my lawyer was there. There are police working for the banks undercover. But other police are also affected by the disconnections and evictions so they were briefing me—telling me that I would not get bail. There was support from Argentina, Canada, Italy, America, Germany. People from Durban and

> Johannesburg came down physically. They came to the court and to visit us in prison. The support made me feel very strong. I was not worried anymore. I became more worried about the community and the campaign—especially the arrests and the crackdown.
>
> When we got bail our conditions were that
>
> - We can't attend any public meetings, gatherings, marches, pickets of any nature
> - We must sign two times a week at the police station (it costs R10 to travel there)
> - We must not communicate with any evicted person
> - We must not leave Khayalitsha without permission from the police

The ANC tried to rally in Khayalitsha.

> On 26 October 2002 the AEC and ANC had rallies on the same day. We only had money for 4 buses but 6,000 people came to our rally in Khayalitsha. The ANC had 12 buses moving all around the Western Cape and nice loudhailers. Jacob Zuma was the main speaker. Nobody came. The rally was postponed. They said it was because Pirates were playing Sundowns but people came to our rally at the same time. People are not interested in party politics—they are interested in real politics. We are getting stronger all the time. After we were arrested it seemed as if they have a continuous programme to harass us. The provincial Safety & Security minister, Leonard Ramatlakane said that he would crack down on the AEC and our people are getting arrested all the time. He is on the central committee of the SACP but he is sacrificing his own people to advance the profit making of the banks. He came to the community with the MEC for housing and the new Cape Town mayor and hundreds of police, and casspirs. But we were thousands and we asked Ramatlakane to apologise for calling us criminals, to explain why he is siding with the banks while calling himself a communist and to withdraw the charges. He couldn't say even a word and so he was chased away by the whole community. He calls himself a Communist and a leader but he can't come to the community without police.[60]

The rhythms of resistance and repression beat faster and faster. On the last Thursday in July 2003 police and sheriffs moved into Mandela Park and evicted three households. This was after a similar operation in neighboring Illitha Park exactly a week before where seven families were evicted in one

street alone. In all cases, the evicted households were moved back into their houses by the community on the same day.

After the August 7 evictions (which were again reversed by the Mandela Park community), the young men in Mandela Park struck back, stoning police and targeting commercial vehicles driving down the main road through Mandela Park. This display of rage did not stop further attacks: on the following Sunday, police and sheriffs repossessed the goods of a woman who owed council for a water bill. They also disrupted the regular Sunday Mandela Park AEC meeting. The MPAEC press statement explained the pressure that the movement was under.

> This is ongoing police repression. As of today, there are 6 comrades still in jail after being arrested on the Thursday the 12th of June (yes, that is 2 months ago!) for the simple "crime" of re-occupying the houses that they had been evicted from. (Originally there were 10, but 4 have subsequently been released.) The costs of hiring a lawyer to try and get these comrades released has left the Mandela Park AEC with a legal bill of R2500, and as the case progresses, the bills are going to increase (the next court date is tomorrow!). The Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign is trying to raise money to pay this bill. We are also trying to raise funds towards a bail fund and a legal defence fund. We anticipate that as next year's elections draw closer, pressure on the Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign will intensify—in the strongly contested Western Cape province, the ANC has relied on the votes of Khayalitsha residents. They will want to eliminate opposition social movements, such as the MPAEC, in order to secure their voter base.[61]

The ANC were now directly targeted in the poems that began to appear as resistance to evictions continued:

> Watch out Thabo!
> We will not build this nation in your image
> We are not living in your nation, Thabo:
> We are seizing our own power![62]

The Safety and Security MEC, Leonard Ramatlakane, a leading member of the SACP, announced that he had instructed the provincial police commissioner to restore stability to Khayalitsha "and deal with the anti-eviction group, which is behaving as if it is representing the state. It is manipulating the real concerns and real problems of the community and should be brought to order."[63]

The WCAEC response was direct: "Why is there so much emphasis on criminalising people who are living in poor circumstances? Lets open debate on the issue of housing and let's not talk about not having money while we spend millions on weapons and a jet for the president."[64] According to an MPAEC press statement, "The catalyst for the ANC's attack was the MPAEC's practice of reinstating those evicted and right-sized even if the beneficiaries of this reinstatement strategy are people like 80-year-old Mrs. Ncama, card-carrying ANC member and care-giver to 5 children who was ejected from her house on July 25, 2002."[65]

Marginalization and repression of community movements seems set to continue. In August 2003 the ANC deputy secretary-general, Sanki Mthembi-Mahanyele, in response to a question about the MPAEC, told a conference on Social Activism and Socio-Economic Rights that the government would distinguish between positive social formations and those with which they have a bit of a problem. "We are a young democracy. . . . We need a consensus. So we cannot behave in a manner like societies [that have been] independent for many years."[66]

In the same week the ANC Gauteng general secretary, David Makhura, was more direct when he referred to people in community movements like the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), which opposes disconnections and evictions in Johannesburg, as "ultra-revolutionaries." "Basazakubethwa!" ("They will continue to be beaten!") he thundered. "COSATU is a contested terrain and in this province the ultra-revolutionaries must be given a tough time. . . . The ultra-revolutionaries must have nowhere to hide."[67]

Prospects for the Movements

> Movement successes and failures—their growth and decline, their heritage for the future and their mark on history are all intimately tied up with their forms of leadership, the quality of ideas offered and accepted, the selections from repertoires of contention, organisation, strategy and ideology they make.
> —Colin Barker, Alan Johnson, and Michael Lavalette, *Leadership in Social Movements*

The rebellions around South African against the commodification of the means to bare life have come to be called, to the limited extent that any note is taken of them in the academy and the media, "community struggles."

Very little has been written about them and what has been written, including the work of the current authors, tends to romanticize these struggles. It's difficult not to be moved by women who stare down men with guns to keep a neighbor in her house. But it must be remembered that people are fighting "revolutionary" struggles to keep themselves in apartheid's satanic ghettoes. As this diary of events in Mandela Park illustrates, life in neoliberal South Africa remains, for the poor, a permanent state of emergency. The community movements respond to attempts to evict them from their homes or exclude them from water, electricity, and education with actions designed to prevent and reverse dispossession. Their actions are largely defensive and reactive. There are generally periodic mobilizations around single issues that don't develop into an ongoing mass-based confrontation with the ANC's neoliberal juggernaut. The lack of resources and the ANC's ability to enforce repression and make strategic concessions all feed into the inability to sustain mobilization. Moreover, for many community movements the need to fight defensive battles in the courts exhausts resources so rapidly that the possibilities of linking with other struggles in the country, let alone Harare or Cochacomba, are very limited. Indeed activists in Mandela Park often struggle to work with activists elsewhere in Khayalitsha when there is no money for telephone calls and transport. The danger is that the rebellion in Mandela Park could become an isolated case of what Raymond Williams has called "militant particularisms," unable to function in the face of sustained repression and the ANC's presentation of SANCO as the only "legitimate" body able to take up community issues.

Attempts to mobilize around issues within communities—like family violence, attempts at generating collective livelihoods, the creation of spaces for artistic expression, and so on—have generally been fragmented and limited. This had lead some middle-class sympathizers, taken up with the Spinozism of both Deleuze and Guattari's refusal of depression and affirmation of desire and Hardt and Negri's ecstatic invocations of love, to conclude that the movements are failing. But Antonio Negri is not just a Franciscan. He also argues that "decision and insurrection are neither rational nor irrational, neither systemic nor spontaneous; they participate in the teleology of the common, that is, in that teleology that at each instant is opened in a creative manner to the immeasurability of the to-come."[68] He goes on to add that "the eminent form of rebellion is the exodus from obedience, that is to say, from participation in measure, i.e., as the opening to the immeasurable."[69] The defense and seizure of houses, water, and electricity entails the

smashing, sometimes joyfully and sometimes grimly, of locks and meters. It is a rebellion against measure and an affirmation that humanity is an unconditional legitimation of the right to have the means to bare life. Under neoliberalism that is heresy. This matters.

And there are some attempts to move toward a politics that reaches beyond bare life. Certainly in Mandela Park the political culture of meetings continues to evolve in democratic directions. Meetings currently attract around six hundred people but are still a space that is, in Ato Sekyi-Otu's useful phrase, "radically political" in relation to itself and not just antagonistic to the forces that it opposes. For Sekyi-Otu radically political spaces are "essentially contestable and inescapably open, answerable (to the) claims of collective wills."[70] At these meetings everyone can speak, everyone is obliged to listen, and decisions are taken by a show of hands. Discussion tends to be extremely practical and to draw on the many varied strengths of the community. The culture, still promoted by the "liberation movements," of simply applauding speakers on a platform and endlessly reciting empty slogans, has been decidedly broken. Moreover, people openly speak of the political nature of this form of organization (twice-weekly mass meetings, the designation of delegates to take on particular tasks rather than representatives to hold a position, etc.). In the words of Zuki Mlonyeni, "We want to make decisions—not make leaders."[71]

This is a prefigurative politics—that is, the organizing of a movement "in a manner that prefigured the broader cultural values and social relations that it was seeking in a transformed society."[72] But there is a danger in portraying this as a unilinear unfolding. Debates over leadership continue, with some activists accusing Ntanyana and Goboza of having too much control and not allowing critical voices to be heard. They, on the other hand, facing periodic imprisonment, police harassment, and living on the run, are fearful of losing influence in the MPAEC and so support a more centralized control of the organization.

Recently the MPAEC took a bold step in their attempt to move beyond reactive defensive struggles. They seized an abandoned school building and opened a community-run school called People's Power Secondary School (later renamed Masiphumelele School). Some eighteen hundred children registered to attend and twenty-eight unemployed teachers began teaching. The school was explicitly "set up by Khayalitsha residents and members of the Anti-Eviction Campaign to cater to students excluded from other schools on grounds related to fees, failing exams, or age. But after initially

agreeing to allow the school, the Western Cape Department of Education suddenly closed the school down. The acting chairperson of the school's governing body, Chris Ndabazandile, reported that most of the students were now sitting at home and that the school was closed despite meeting all the requirements for registration: "We were told that the reason the school is closing is that the African National Congress does not want it. Why . . . are they playing these unconstitutional games with us?"[73]

Community movements like the MPAEC tend to be very wary of constituting themselves as formal organizations and linking into an organized national structure. In part this is a "reflexive" response to the post-apartheid "co-optation" of "radical" civic leaders and a fear the formalization will lead to the development of internal oligarchies that will "tend to blunt the main source of movement influence, militancy.[74] Consequently community movements have mostly acted in ways reminiscent of what Frances Piven and Richard Cloward have called "disruption." Piven and Cloward "see organisation, especially over time, as undermining possibilities for subordinate groups to bring about change . . . poor people are most likely to bring about change through disruption, and that disruption can be mobilised without formal organisation."[75] The suspicion of formal organization is also matched by a suspicion of "leaders," fueled by fears that people's mobilization will, once again, be hijacked. Often though, this suspicion has translated into a disavowal of leadership and has threatened imagination and invention at the level of tactics and militated against linkages with other struggles and movements, especially those of the organized working class.

Some argue that the power of these movements comes from the very fact that they are "unrepresentatable" and "unpredictable."[76] Others argue that these movements need to congeal into a new movement that "poses the potential of a serious challenge to the South African government among its historic core constituency—the broad working class."[77] It has also been suggested that these movements exist autonomously and form strategic alliances at specific moments like the World Conference against Racism[78] and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Many look to the well-resourced labor movement to, in alliance with the community movements, take resistance to the ANC's neoliberal policies across the razor wire and velvet ropes that still divide, albeit messily, South Africa into two opposed zones. It is often argued that this is a dead end because unions are firmly co-opted into corporatist structures of conflict mediation and are steadily losing their capacity to constitute counterpower

due to the new circuits of outsourcing and subcontracting resulting in an increasingly precarious and un-unionised labor force where women and "illegal" migrants are employed in conditions of superexploitation and low wages. Clearly it is true that in a context where full-time wage employment is part of the everyday life of just one third of the African labor force, and with an unemployment rate estimated as high as 45 percent of the economically active population, the organizations and forms of solidarity that had once translated insertion in waged employment into popular expectations for citizenship and democracy are facing a slow but dramatic decline. But while this outcome testifies to the remarkable success of the ANC in containing a well-established tradition of working-class militancy, it also undermines the organizational power and coherence of trade unions as necessary partners in the process of constitutionalizing wage labor as a central disciplinary mechanism in society. This contradiction is producing an expanding variety of social actors that are voiceless within the corporatist institutions set up to contain the insurgencies of waged labor, and for which waged employment is not part of any reasonable life strategy, let alone views of citizenship and social integration. In fact the return of working-class poverty means that even access to a low and irregular wage no longer provides adequate access to water, electricity, and housing that are increasingly privatized and inaccessible at market prices. So the ANC's success in responding to the challenges posed by the militancy of the organized working class is thus opening new, potentially explosive spaces of demands, solidarity, and contestation that a diversified range of radically unconstitutionalized social subjects are ready to inhabit.

This analysis has led some activists and intellectuals allied to the movements to put complete faith in community movements and to write off unions. The spineless kowtowing of the COSATU leadership to the bullying by the Stalinists and conservative nationalists in the ANC reinforces these sentiments and a "go-it-alone" psychology. But for Trevor Ngwane, "the [COSATU] leadership has captured the bodies of the workers but their souls are wondering around. One day they will connect with other bodies."[79]

But we would argue that while the decline of formal employment, the bureaucratization of decision-making, and the failure of radical reform have severely damaged the extent to which unions can constitute themselves as a fighting force, it is precisely because of these very reasons that there is great potential for workers to become more centrally involved in community movements in spite of their leaders' hostility to these movements.

Across the country these community movements are linked by what Kim Voss has called a "fortifying myth," "an explanation of defeat that linked current failure to future triumphs, keeping hope alive so that activists could mobilize support when new political opportunities arose."[80] The community movements tend to focus on "betrayal." The discourse of many meetings claims that the ANC has betrayed the democratic spirit of the struggles against apartheid fashioned in the mass mobilizations of the 1980s. Speeches are filled with claims about how particular personalities and groupings "hijacked" the "people's struggles."

The community movements put themselves forward as the true torchbearers of liberation, a movement that can never be defeated. This allows these organizations to "survive setbacks by maintaining the commitment of activists and their followers."[81] It seems that the myths that inspire and sustain rebellion will endure the current repression.

These debates over the form of organization, the nature of leadership and value of forming a broad front against the ANC are being vigorously debated in Mandela Park and in community movements around South Africa. What has become clear is that while community movements have "disrupted" the ANC's drive to impose neoliberalism by winning a good number of defensive battles, they have only begun to interrogate the constitution of counterpower.

A Fighting Culture

> Just as in Cochabamba, just as in Buenos Aires, just as in Auckland, just as in Chicago, just as in so many other cities and communities throughout the globe, privatisation of the means to life is at the forefront of the capitalist neoliberal attack on basic human dignity. It is poor communities who are most affected and who are thus at the parallel forefront of resistance. The new culture of militancy has become part of people's everyday lives.
> —Dale McKinley, *Water Is Life*

Both neoliberalism, via its claim to governmentality, and conservative nationalism, via its claim to representation and vanguardism, legitimate their power in the name of the poor. Yet no one seriously disputes the empirical evidence that the poor have become poorer in the last ten years. Ten years

after the victory over apartheid by the most widely mobilized and militant society in the world the two most powerful forces and discourses in South Africa stand naked.

There are many explanations for the failure of the multiple and militant struggles against apartheid to achieve anything more than the progressive deracialization of the structures of domination. Some argue that the ANC have good intentions but are helpless in the face of a hostile global environment. The global environment is hostile, but neither the market nor George Bush demanded that Thabo Mbeki buy himself a jet or build himself a personal golf course. There is a clear contempt for the poor at the heart of the ANC. Others argue that the democratic forces in the ANC were defeated by the Stalinist currents of the SACP and the authoritarian currents associated with the conservative nationalists and that hope lies in achieving democracy in the ANC. Still others marshal historical evidence to argue that the ANC has always been an organization of the African elite intent on making a deal with the white elite. For some the problems lie still deeper. Some critics argue that a politics centered around the capture of the state will always fail the poor as the state is inherently and essentially an instrument by which capital dominates society.

Our argument is this:

1. The struggles against apartheid are invariably spoken of as The Struggle. This is propaganda and it is propaganda that illuminates a key cause of the failure of the struggles against apartheid. Apartheid South Africa teemed with struggles, and neoliberal South Africa still teems with struggles because to live is to struggle. And, like everywhere else, there are always struggles within struggles and factions within movements and people within factions and conflicting desires within individuals. It has always and will always be this way.

2. Because apartheid extended its madness and brutality through so many spheres of life, from conception to burial, a lot of struggles did take apartheid to be their ultimate enemy. But ten years after apartheid we can't doubt that many struggles were wrong to make this assumption. The enemy must be domination, wherever it develops and however it seeks to justify itself.

3. Reverent talk of The Struggle is therefore dangerous. It implies that there was one struggle with one enemy and that that struggle is now over. It also makes comfortable the claim that certain people and organizations can manage The Struggle. This is also why it is so dangerous to canonize past heroes and to recite key events of the struggle against apartheid in the

way that Catholics recite the Stations of the Cross—with humble awe. If people can be made to believe that their struggles against apartheid were not the "real struggle" and that the "real struggle" was something otherworldly, waged by semidivine beings far removed from the complicated, compromised, messy reality of life as it is lived in the here and now, then the "real" struggle can appear to belong to some other inaccessible world. It starts to feel as if semidivine heroes were able to make the world in the past, but that in our fallen age we just have to get on with the job of trying to survive in the world that we've been given. Almost invariably it is the beneficiaries of the new order that demand or try to invoke this reverence for The Struggle. This is no accident. They are then able to use the almost magical power of these mysticized heroes and struggles of the past to disguise their very concrete betrayals and to delegitmate the struggles that are being fought in the here and now.

4. The way to do justice to the courage of the struggles against apartheid is not to fetishize them but to recognize, celebrate, and engage with the creativity and courage of movements that incarnate that spirit in the here and now.

5. To inaugurate a new struggle, in the singular, is to risk the failure of another generation at the cost of another generation.

6. Fanon's idea of a fighting culture emerges in his theorization of the lived experience of resistance in the Algerian revolution. As Nigel Gibson shows, Fanon insists that military strategies must be subordinated to the political task of bringing into being a "whole universe of resistances."[82] In Chiapas the Zapatista army uses its guns only to create the space for radical politics and in Durban the movements against disconnections and evictions use their (volunteer) legal arsenal in the same way. In each case the refusal of an elite politics is premised on the desire to develop radically democratic alternatives that are just too large, too multiple, and too immediate to be co-opted or mediated. Fanon's rejection of elite politics includes parties, leaders, and so on and seeks, instead, to generate opportunities for the "subaltern" to become "a protagonist not only entering history but becoming its author. Everyone could participate in the reconstruction and invention of . . . a social collective, where truth becomes subjectivity and subjectivity acquires a dimension of objectivity." Fanon saw it as the "practice of freedom" taking place.[83]

7. The affirmation of a fighting culture is not a refusal of alliances and organization. But it is a commitment to focus on the diffusion of power,

via the constitution of multiple sites of counterpower, rather than just the seizure of power. This means that "there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the magic hands of the people."[84] We must abandon the idea of the ontologically pure militant and recognize that "it is only when grounded in the ubiquity of resistance that revolution becomes a possibility."[85] This is the lesson of the courage and creativity and ordinariness of the resisters in Chatsworth and Phiri and Mandela Park. Nelson Mandela was right about one thing—there is no easy walk to freedom.

Notes

The quotation in the title of this essay is from Lesego Rampolokeng, "Blue V's (for you my love)," *The Bavino Sermons* (Durban: Gecko Poetry, 1999), 22.

1 These bail conditions are discussed in further detail on page 863.
2 Fonky Goboza and Max Ntanyana, interview by Richard Pithouse, 2003. Their bail conditions make it impossible to discuss the circumstances of the interview in further detail. They asked that their comments be attributed to both of them in the interest of solidarity and in case of adverse legal consequences. They approved the text of the interview after it was transcribed.
3 Ashwin Desai, *The Poors of Chatsworth* (Durban: Madiba Publishers, 1999), 38.
4 See Ashwin Desai, *We Are the Poors—Community Struggle in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002).
5 See Patrick Bond, *Elite Transition* (London: Pluto, 2000).
6 Cited in Patrick Bond, *Talk Left, Walk Right: South Africa's Frustrated Global Reforms* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004), chap. 8.
7 See Bond *Elite Transition*, 122–51.
8 Goboza and Ntanyana, interview.
9 Karl Marx *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 3 (New York: Penguin), 736.
10 *Mail and Guardian*, August 8–14, 2003, 17.
11 *Mail and Guardian*, March 1–7, 2002, 4.
12 Franco Barchiesi, "Social Citizenship, the State and the Changing Constitution of Wage Labour in Post-Apartheid South Africa" (paper presented at the 2002 Annual Congress of the South African Sociological Association, University of the Western Cape, 2002), 9.
13 Tom Lodge, *Politics in South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 67–69.
14 Neil Coleman and Fiona Tregenna, "Thinking BIG . . . the proposed Basic Income Grant for South Africa" *South African Labour Bulletin* 26.2 (2002): 25.
15 David McDonald and Laila Smith, "Privatizing Cape Town," Occasional Papers 7, Municipal Services Project, 1.
16 This information was discovered, at our request, by the renowned investigative journal-

ist Paul Kirk who has done much to expose the extent of the corruption in the ANC's multimillion-dollar arms deal.

17 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 1967), 122.
18 McDonald and Smith, "Privatizing Cape Town," 9.
19 Ibid., 41.
20 All of this is carefully explained in David McDonald and John Pape, eds., *The Crisis of Service Delivery in South Africa* (Pretoria: HSRC, 2002).
21 See Stephen Louw, "Report on the National Lottery," Centre for Civil Society Research Report, no. 1, www.nu.ac.za/ccs (accessed May 5, 2004).
22 Bill Robinson, "Social Activism and Democracy in South Africa—A Globalization Perspective" (paper presented at the Idasa conference on Social Activism and Socio-Economic Rights: Deepening Democracy in South Africa, Cape Town, August 2003), 2–3.
23 Ibid., 7.
24 See Richard Pithouse, "Producing the Poor: The World Bank's new discourse of domination," *African Sociological Review* (forthcoming).
25 Deepa Narayan with Raj Patel, Kai Schafft, Anne Rademacher, and Sarah Koch-Schulte, *Voices of the Poor* (New York: Oxford University Press/World Bank, 2000).
26 George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Penguin, 1989).
27 Narayan et al., *Voices of the Poor*, 120.
28 Ibid., 222.
29 Ibid., 71.
30 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 31.
31 John Holloway, *Change the World without Taking Power* (London: Pluto, 2003), 34.
32 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 41.
33 David Theo Goldberg, *The Death of Race* (London: Basil Blackwell, 2004), 9.
34 Ibid., 1.
35 Ibid., 4.
36 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 138.
37 Ibid., 138.
38 Ibid., 135.
39 Ibid., 135.
40 See Patrick Bond, *NEPAD: Fanon's Warning* (New Jersey: African World Press), 2002.
41 See Richard Pithouse, "Report from the Frontlines of an Undeclared War," *Politikon* 30.1 (2003): 65–74.
42 See Tracey Mkhize, "Cholera and the Water Business," *Debate*, no. 5 (2001), and Patrick Bond, *The World Bank in the Time of Cholera*, www.nu.ac.za/ccs (accessed May 5, 2004).
43 See Sudhirendar Sharma and Vandana Shiva, *Of World Bank, Toilet Paper and Washing Soap*, www.mindfully.org/WTO/World-Bank-Toilet-Paper23sep02.htm (accessed May 5, 2004).
44 See Mandisa Mbali, *A Bit of Soap and Water, and Some Jik: Historical and Feminist Critiques of an Exclusively Individualising Understanding of Cholera Prevention in Discourse around Neoliberal Water Policy*, www.nu.ac.za/ccs (accessed May 5, 2004).
45 Lewis Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 29.
46 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 28.

47 Ibid., 52.
48 Frank B. Wilderson III, "Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Society," *Social Identities* 9.2 (2003): 229–30.
49 This paragraph is informed by a proposal for a 2003 research project developed by Sophie Oldfield and Kristian Stokke, "The Western Anti-Eviction Campaign: Research Work Plan" (unpublished).
50 See www.tac.org.za.
51 Goboza and Ntanyana, interview.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Stephen Buechler, *Social Movements in Advanced Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 102.
55 Goboza and Ntanyana, interview.
56 Ralph Miliband, "A State of De-Subordination," *British Journal of Sociology* 29.4 (1978): 47.
57 Goboza and Ntanyana, interview.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign press statement, August 7, 2003.
62 Poem read at an Anti-Eviction Rally, Mandela Park, author's notes.
63 *Cape Times*, November 8, 2002, 1.
64 *Cape Times*, November 11, 2002, 4.
65 Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign press statement, July 25, 2002.
66 *Mail and Guardian*, August 15–21, 2003, 3.
67 Ibid., 2003, 12.
68 Antonio Negri, *Time for Revolution* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 226–27.
69 Ibid., 258.
70 Ato Sekyi-Otu, *Fanon's Dialectic of Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 32.
71 Conversation with the authors, July 2003.
72 Buechler, *Social Movements in Advanced Capitalism*, 204.
73 *Mail and Guardian*, August 8–14, 2003, 14.
74 Susan Eckstein, "Power and Popular Protest in Latin America," in Susan Eckstein, ed., *Power and Popular Protest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 7.
75 Frances Pivan and Richard Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 97.
76 Barchiesi, "Social Citizenship."
77 Social Movement Indaba, press statement (2002).
78 See Pravasan Pillay and Richard Pithouse, "We Mekkin Histry," in *We Are Everywhere*, ed. Notes from Nowhere (organization) (London: Verso, 2003), 398–408.
79 Ngwane, *Township Sparks*, 55.
80 Kim Voss, "Claim Making and the Framing of Defeats: The Interpretation of Losses by American and British Labour Activists, 1886–1895," in Michael Hanagan, Leslie Moch,

and Wayne te Brake, eds., *Challenging Authority* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 139.

81 Voss, "Claim Making and the Framing of Defeats," 140.

82 Nigel Gibson, *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 128.

83 Ibid., 134.

84 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 159.

85 Holloway, *Change the World without Taking Power*, 175.