Queering Johannesburg: Hillbrow and Soweto as Contrasting Spaces of Queer Interaction, 1966–1996.

by

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Declaration

This study represents an original work by the author and has not been submitted in any form to another university. It is being submitted for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts - Masters at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Where use has been made of the work of others it has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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Date

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Supervisor
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When I had first conceptualized this research topic I had very little idea of the journey this research would take me on. I had spent the previous year unsure of myself, as an individual and as an aspiring academic, constantly aware of my inadequacies and apprehensive about my work. This research has been a journey, one during an incredibly difficult year personally, but every minute achievement in the research has been reflected as a victory for myself, acknowledging that it is possible to achieve regardless of the setbacks. However, I would not have been able to do any of this alone, and there have been those who have guided me, supported me, encouraged me, and urged me to achieve more than I had thought possible. Without this group of support this research would be nothing more than an idea.

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List of Abbreviations

ABIGALE	Association of Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AMO	Alternative Men's Organisation
ANC	African National Congress
CBD	Central Business District
CPD	Congress of Pink Democrats
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
CP	Conservative Party
FMF	FeesMustFall
GASA	Gay Association of South Africa
GLOW	Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HUMCC	Hope and Unity Metropolitan Church
IGA	International Gay Association
ILGA	International Lesbian and Gay Association
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Plus
NCGLE	National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality
NP	National Party
NPP	National People's Party
PFP	Progressive Federal Party
SAIRR	South African Institute for Race Relations

SHRG	Scottish Homosexual Rights Group
UDF	United Democratic Front
USA	United States of America
WGM	University of Witwatersrand's Gay Movement

Abstract

Johannesburg, South Africa's largest city, has had its own unique history of queer spaces. Beginning with the National Party's Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 which helped the apartheid state criminalize gay men, and moving through to South Africa's democratic Constitution which allowed for non-heteronormative sexuality to become legalized, this paper studies how queer people had managed to navigate in Johannesburg by creating their own spaces, as well as covertly using public space in the city.

The thesis focuses on Hillbrow, once regarded as the gay centre of Johannesburg, and Soweto, South Africa's largest township located approximately thirty kilometres outside of Hillbrow. Due to apartheid's racial segregation, Hillbrow was up until the 1980s a white-only area which gradually deracialized, whilst Soweto has always been a black-area. This research analyses how Hillbrow became a gay centre in the city, how black queer people were able to move in and out of Hillbrow, whilst still creating their own space in Soweto, and how both black and white queer people interacted with each other.

By using archives as well as a series of conducted interviews, this research primarily focuses on the everyday interaction of queer people in Hillbrow and Soweto, and how they were able to circumnavigate oppressive laws and create their own spaces in which they were able to express their sexuality. The research also delves into two separate branches of gay liberation politics that were based in Hillbrow, one which focused on a primarily white, male base, and one which formed due to the shortfalls of the prior, which would become inclusive of all races and genders. Drawing personal testimony and archival findings together, this research finds that Johannesburg's queer population was able to provide vital resources and space in the anti-apartheid movement in order to bring queer people into the discussion regarding equality for all, regardless of sexuality in the African National Congress' Constitution.

Introduction

> Those were the days! His room would be so full, so full of young men who are afraid to be roaming the streets at night … it was so full that you couldn't open the door … because those were the days, if you have got someone gay next to you, you'd enjoy yourself for all the dry months that you never had a gay person![1]

Just as there is no single black experience in South Africa, or single white experience, there is no single queer experience in South Africa or in Johannesburg. This research highlights and explores a multitude of facets that connected queer people in Johannesburg between 1966 and 1996. As Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron note, "what has been passed for 'the gay experience' [in South Africa] has often been that white, middle-class urban men" and has ignored the plethora of white womxn[2], black men and womxn, and the working class.[3] Whilst this has changed in the historical study of queer people since 1994, the experience of many queer people during apartheid has often been ignored as history has been focused on anti-apartheid movements, leaving the experience of queer individuals and groups side-lined in favour of constructing an anti-apartheid narrative, often even ignoring groups that helped contribute to the anti-apartheid struggle.

This research analyses the everyday movements of queer people in Hillbrow and, to a lesser extent Soweto, in order to present an analysis of another persecuted group during apartheid. Whilst white queer people in Johannesburg had more freedom than their black counterparts in Soweto based on their racial makeup, they too still had to maintain a heteronormative façade. The conundrum for black queer people in Soweto was that they were already limited in their freedom because they were black, doubly so because they were queer, and queer black womxn more so because of their gender, which too was policed by the National Party (NP).

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[1] Mark Gevisser. *Lost and Found in Johannesburg*. (Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2014) p. 166.

[2] An intersectional feminist term aimed at the inclusivity of people whose gender identity fluctuate along different points of the spectrum, including trans and nonbinary people. The term will be used throughout the research, unless speaking about non-queer women, or if it's a direct quotation from another source.

[3] Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron. "Defiant Desire" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 3.

The NP's policy of apartheid elaborated the definitions of racial groups in order to entrench racial divisions and perpetuate white privilege, and simultaneously also prioritised and defended heteronormativity. As white citizens in the country were part of a racial minority, white men and women were expected to procreate faster than their black counterparts.[4] The NP feared that uncurbed homosexuality would be the ruin of white civilisation in South Africa, and as such focused much of their efforts on white gays and lesbians. Its primary focus was on gay men whose sexual activities went against Calvinist taboos, a fundamental pillar to the NP's belief system. The different approaches towards white and black queer people created starkly different conditions in how they would be able to navigate public space during apartheid.

Rationale

My interest in this topic first arose during the #FeesMustFall (FMF) movement when there was heated debate about the presence of black queer bodies in protests in Johannesburg. In 2015/16 the FMF protests took place in multiple universities across the country. The protests focused around access to free decolonized education, but there was a rise in misogynistic and homophobic nationalist rhetoric by some members of the protests. Black lesbian womxn were harassed, often violently, as some men attempted to control the protests and bolster masculine ideals in protest space.[5]

The treatment of queer womxn during the protests led to multiple proxy-protests across campuses in which queer, black, and womxn issues were raised and demanded engagement. Jimmy Pieterse argues that public discourse has historically also been used to police queer communities, although in his study he specifically looks at the language used to 'other' gay men in the country.[6] The 2015 and 2016 FMF protests which erupted across most of South Africa's 26 university campuses were marred by sexism, heterosexism, homophobia and transphobia. The divide between students who identified as "Black, queer and transgender feminists and sections of the movement who identified more explicitly with patriarchy" gave

[4] Glen Retief. "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager: State Repression of Homosexuality in Apartheid South Africa" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 102.
[5] Sandy Ndelu, Simamkele Dlakavu, and Barbara Boswell. 'Womxn's and Nonbinary Activists' Contribution to the RhodeMustFall and FeesMustFall Student Movements: 2015 and 2016'. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*. (2017, 31:3-4, 1-4) p. 2.
[6] Jimmy Pieterse. 'Dictionaries and Discourses of Deviance: Changing Lexical Representations of 'Moffie' and the Reorganisation of Sexual Categories among Afrikaans Speakers during the Second Half of the Twentieth Century'. *South African Historical Journal*. (2013) p. 2.

rise to multiple feminist protests throughout the country which highlighted a plethora of gendered and sexual bias which permeated the country's campuses.[7] These proxy-protests which took place alongside FMF exemplified the struggles queer bodies still face in the country, and their exclusions from predominantly heteronormative, cisnormative and patriarchal spaces. The recent rising trend of homophobia and transphobia in nationalist rhetoric, ethnic politics, and religious space gives rise to a fundamental need to understand queer spaces in Johannesburg as safe spaces in which queer people could interact. It also requires an understanding of the historical struggles by various queer bodies to produce safe spaces in Johannesburg.

This study focuses on the period between 1966 and 1996. The importance of 1966 is due to the arrest of 9 men at a party in Forest Town, a white middle class suburb in Johannesburg. Following this raid, the government proceeded to tighten up its policing of morality, culminating in the promulgation of the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969, which allowed for increased surveillance of gay white men.[8] This was the first nationwide moral fear of gay men during the apartheid era amongst white middle-class South Africans. In 1996 the democratic government, led by the African National Congress (ANC), included the "gay rights clause" in the new constitution which explicitly prohibited discrimination "on the basis of sexual orientation".[9] This was the first anti-discriminatory law of its kind in the world which signalled the progressive stance the ANC had, at least on paper, in order to ensure the rights of all its citizens.[10] There is a dearth of research on the individual experiences of people within queer spaces in Johannesburg. There is currently a lack of research on queer people and their histories in South Africa. This research will aim to understand how queer people in Hillbrow and Soweto traversed spaces in the city in order to carve out their own spaces for safety. It will seek an understanding of how queer people have historically navigated spaces in Johannesburg, how they interacted with other queer people, and how race and class affected their own understanding of their place within these spaces.

In doing this, the research aims to develop an understanding of how queer people created and navigated spaces within Hillbrow and Soweto by exerting their own agency within a regime

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[7] Ndele, Dlakavu and Boswell, 'Womxn's and Nonbinary Activists' Contribution', p. 2.
[8] GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immorality Amendment Bill. — Misspellings appear on the box and folder, originally reads as: GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immolarity (*sic*) Ammendment (*sic*) Bill.
[9] Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.
[10] Jacklyn Cock. 'Engendering Gay and Lesbian Rights: The Equality Clause in the South African Constitution'. *Women's Study International Forum*. (2003, 26) p. 35.

that sought to criminalise and marginalise them. Using this as a cornerstone, the research will further analyse how ideas and practices were shaped within these spaces, and how these gave rise to two prominent, albeit remarkably different queer organisations based in Hillbrow during the 1980s: the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) and the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW). These organisations created politically motivated spaces for queer people in Johannesburg. The central question addressed in this thesis is how queer people created spaces within Johannesburg, especially Hillbrow, during apartheid and in the transition to democracy.

Contextualisation

Successive white governments sought to police sexual relations through various pieces of legislation informed by racism and heteronormativity. For instance, the Immorality Act of 1927 forbade sexual relations between 'Europeans' and 'natives', the aim of which was to maintain 'white purity'. Following the electoral victory of the NP in 1948, the Act was amended several times to enhance the restrictions on interracial sexual acts, as well as include restrictions and penalties on same-sex physical intimacies.[11] The dual restrictions on both interracial sex, as well as non-heteronormative sexualities were key features in promoting and protecting whiteness as the norm in South Africa. Queer sexualities were argued against and increasingly policed and marginalized "because of the reproductive consequence" it had towards increasing the white population.[12] The NP's anxiety over sexuality was largely directed at white bodies as they were the ones directly affecting white reproduction, but with the use of religion and homophobia, were able to recreate fear towards queer bodies in the general population of both black and white citizens, and allowed for a culture of gay-bashing against queer bodies to take place.

Urban segregation in Johannesburg had already been underway since the 1890s when Kruger's government allocated separate land for Malay and African locations.[13] Paul Maylam argues that "the move toward segregation … arose in the context of industrialisation and capitalist

[11] Andy Carolin. 'Apartheid's Immorality Act and the fiction of heteronormative whiteness'. *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*. (2017, 54:1) p. 113.
[12] Glen Elder. "The South African Body Politic: Space, race and heterosexuality" in Heidi J. Nast and Steve Pile (eds.) *Places through the body*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) p. 116.
[13] Susan Parnell. 'Sanitation, Segregation and the Natives (Urban Areas) Act: African Exclusion from Johannesburg's Malay Location, 1897-1925'. *Journal of Historical Geography*. (1991, 17:3) p. 273.

development" in the late 19th century.[14] It was during this period that compounds and hostels for black workers entering urban spaces were built to form the first system of residential segregation.[15] Urban segregation in South Africa should also be understood in terms of the 'sanitation syndrome', as white citizens became increasingly concerned with the black urban presence and associated urban black residents as bringing squalor, disease and crime into urban spaces.[16] Instances of the bubonic plague in Johannesburg in the first years of the 20th century "was used by the local authorities to justify the removal of people from the inner-city 'Coolie Location' to the new township of Klipspruit.[17] Urban segregation was, at the turn of the century, linked to racial capitalism and white fear.

The 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act recommended and enabled residential segregation, but it was unevenly enforced. It was a piece of legislation aimed at removing a black urban population from the core of urban areas, which were deemed as spaces of white power and privilege. The 1934 Slums Act "sought to implement residential segregation under the guise of public health care" by removing overcrowded and insanitary slums, effectively removing the black urban population and placing them in designated townships on the outskirts of cities in order to make room for urban whites.[18] Urban segregation, as evidenced, was already taking place in South Africa before the NP ascended to power, but the 1950 Group Areas Act of 1950 introduced a more robust commitment to racial segregation and control by "tightening pre-existing measures" already in place.[19] The apartheid government was more determined than its predecessors to construct a white city by controlling the black population's access to urban spaces and became central tenets of apartheid.

The apartheid city sought to preserve whiteness both through segregation and sexual policing. Urban culture was "believed to include vice" and in the late 1960s the NP "officially discovered an urban gay subculture", something which had always been present but had by now become considered a threat to whiteness.[20] The urban landscape had become a key area in South Africa in which the NP had attempted to protect whiteness, with the legislation like the Group Areas Act delineating white areas. Whilst segregation methods and laws were undoubtedly used to

[14] Paul Maylam. 'Explaining the Apartheid City: 20 Years of South African Urban Historiography'. *Journal of South African Studies*. (1995, 21:1) p. 23.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Deborah Mary Hart. *The South African Government's Razing of Sophiatown, Cato Manor and District Six*. Unpublished PhD thesis. (Syracuse University, 1990) p. 267.
[17] Maylam, 'Explaining the Apartheid City', pp. 24-25.
[18] Ibid, p. 27.
[19] Ibid, p. 34.
[20] Elder, "The South African Body Politic", p. 118.

exclude black entrance to white areas, the NP introduced legislation to protect "young people from [becoming] waylaid" in urban spaces by increasing surveillance on homosexuality amongst white men.[21] All this came together to form a heterosexually and racially encoded space in apartheid cities.[22] Gay men, however, challenged these spaces and, in the mind of the NP, challenged the dominant racial and sexual norms too.

The NP's immediate concern was white gay men as they were the most visible active queer members within white society and, according to the conservative Calvinist morality embraced by the government were accused of negatively affecting the growth of the white population. Glen Elder has argued that lesbian sexual activity was deemed to have "no immediately apparent reproductive end and so lesbian womxn were seldom a focus for state anxiety" outside of the view of lesbians also being abhorrent citizens.[23] Gay men challenged heterosexual views on sex, patriarchy, and race, undermining "racial/sexual privilege … when the white male body becomes a locus of desire".[24] Due to fears about the spread of homosexuality, specifically in urban spaces among white men, the NP sought to augment the provisions of the Immorality Act of 1950, to make it easier for police to arrest gay men in order to further perpetuate an idealised heteronormative society.

Methodology

The initial approach to researching this thesis was to interview multiple queer people from different racial and class backgrounds who would have been in and around Hillbrow and Soweto during the timeframe of the study. The decision to use oral histories was to find ill-recorded, often ignored personal accounts of lived experiences in Johannesburg's queer spaces and to use those accounts to analyse how queer people remembered moving around the city. In total there were official interviews conducted with five people, and unofficial conversations with approximately ten more. When meeting with Percy[25] he had a friend with him, also gay and of the same generation, who asked that everything he said should not be contributed to him in any way should it be used. Others said this too, and they are considered the unofficial

[21] GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immorality Amendment Bill. – Misspellings appear on the box and folder, originally reads as: GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immolarity (*sic*) Ammendment (*sic*) Bill.
[22] Elder, "The South African Body Politic", p. 116.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid, p. 120.
[25] Pseudonym

conversations. Many of these conversations were used without being linked to their official sources due to the anonymity which they requested. Percy and his friend said that all their friends who would be suitable candidates had passed away either due to HIV/AIDS, or from old age. Interviews ranged from prominent members of Johannesburg's queer history to 'everyday' queer people in order to find different experiences and views on queer spaces and socialization in Johannesburg. There were challenges in finding people to interview, as some declined to participate or did not respond to interview requests. This is understandable, as many expressed their wariness of being 'outted' even when told they could choose to remain anonymous. Others, like Bev Ditise and Paul Mokgethie expressed that they no longer want to do interviews as they've responded to so many in the last few years. I gained access to my interviewees mainly through Edwin Cameron and Mark Gevisser, but some I had access to from my Honours research. Cameron specifically was easy to gain access to, and from him I was able to branch out to the vast majority of other informants, each of whom were able to give more informants for me to contact.

Beyond the interviews conducted for this research, GALA has a collection of interviews which were conducted in the early 2000s and had not been used for research like this. Those interviews were used to broaden the scope of personal lived experiences beyond the already established interviews conducted. GALA's archival collection proved to be contain a prominent collection of material required for this research, and without access to their collection this thesis would not have been able to manifest itself in the way it has. Their wide-ranging collection of archival documents highlights multiple aspects of queer life in South Africa. GALA's archives were the necessary starting point for this research, as it guided the research along, connecting oral histories to archival material to complete an analysis of queer people and queer spaces in Johannesburg's fraught history.

GALA remains South Africa's only queer archival collection, and their archives contains documents from political activities to interviews conducted with a variety of queer people from different backgrounds in the country. Their archival collection has documents which can be found elsewhere, but nowhere is it all brought together to form the collection they have. Due to the lack of other queer archives, and the depth of GALA's archive, GALA had to remain to principle archival source for this research.

GALA's archival collection was largely used for newspaper and magazine records which could not be found elsewhere. *Link/Skakel* and *Exit*, two prominent and much used magazines for

this research had entire collections which could be found in GALA. Other interview collections conducted by Mark Gevisser were also used. Gevisser suggested I use his interview collections as they spoke to this research, and were conducted with a range of possible interviewees who were unable to be contacted for various reasons in my own timeframe. With Gevisser's permission I used his interview collection which was found in GLOW to add more oral depth to my own research.

Literature Review

Existing literature on queer histories and queer people in South Africa grapple with issues pertaining to heteronormativity and queer people within heterosexually codified spaces. Perhaps the quintessential piece of queer literature is Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron's edited collection *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*, an overarching collection of work which records the lives of lesbian and gay South Africans across all races and classes, documenting sexual politics as well as erotic agency within apartheid South Africa. Within this broader narrative I will attempt to gain a deeper understanding of queer spaces. Much of South Africa's queer literature has been either too broadly focused, with little attention given to the locale (although certain places, such as Skyline Bar for example, have had extensive literature written about them), the functioning of various queer communities within a singular city has gained little traction if any. Other works have studied the politics of queer communities, specifically post-1994 literature, as a way of understanding how and why queer people became politicized.[26] These works hold their own importance, but once more they are often broad, and largely grapple with the identity of queer people and the argument of whether gayness is un-African, and finding queer space within a post-apartheid state.

Gevisser and Cameron state that *Defiant Desire* does not "claim to be a complete picture of gay and lesbian experience" in South Africa, rather that it highlights certain "issues, problems, contradictions and connecting points that makeup [gay and lesbian] lives" in the country. The book was an early piece of literature which explored the extent of homosexuality in the country and explicitly stated that it is not just middle-class white people who are queer, but that there were many queer identities which "flourished in black communities and cultures" too.[27] Their

[26] See: Gevisser and Cameron (1994), Hoad, Martin and Reid (2005), Carolin (2017), Cock (2003), Conway (2009), du Pisani (2012), Holmes (1997), Morrell (1998), Nicol (1991), Reddy (1998).
[27] Gevisser and Cameron, "Defiant Desire", p. 3.

research explores queer people across the country and in different spaces. While they do explore some space in Johannesburg, the very nature of their research was to submit a broad analysis of queer people throughout the country, and thus Johannesburg is not fully explored in their book. This research will address this by looking at spaces that may have been left out, and building on their research too.

The spaces in which queer people gathered, specifically during apartheid is in itself an important aspect of my research. Understanding why they chose to congregate in spaces such as Joubert Park, which became known for its bars during the Second World War which were often patronized by gay men hoping to meet off-duty soldiers. Hillbrow and Joubert Park, with their cheap high-density accommodation and close proximity to the Central Business District (CBD) became prominent locations for gay interactions.[28] These areas would also witness the gradual influx of black men, allowing for interaction between white and black gay men. There are spaces in townships in which a queer subculture emerged too, for those who felt unwelcome in the inner-city space and had a need for them in the townships. Soweto had at least three different bars which operated in the 1980s and early 1990s, Lee's Place, Mhlanga Rocks, and Big Mike's which catered to queer people. Thembisa, Sebokeng, and KwaThema had their own gay bars too, highlighting that there was a need for queer spaces beyond the white middle-class.[29] This research will seek to understand how these spaces were able to become prominent within Johannesburg's gay and queer communities, how they managed to function during the NP rule, the relative safety of these spaces, the everyday interactions that occurred there, and how they were able to become transgressive spaces in the city.

An important aspect of the politicization of queer spaces in South Africa is the annual Pride march, which was inaugurated in the period of the country's transition to democracy. In recent years the event has moved from a political gathering towards a more festive, mardigras-like event, yet its inception was politically motivated: a fight against oppression and a demand for a democratic South Africa to recognise LGBTQI+ rights.[30] Shaun de Waal and Anthony Manion's *Pride: Protest and Celebration* makes use of first-hand accounts collected from the Gay and Lesbian Archive (GALA) to document Johannesburg's annual Pride events from its very first march in 1990 until 2005. The space in which Pride marches take place is largely

[28] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 19.
[29] Ibid, p. 47.
[30] Beverly Palesa Ditsie. "Today we are Making History" in Shaun de Waal and Anthony Manion (ed.) *Pride: Protest and Celebration*. (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2006) p. 19.

ignored in the book. These spaces are important, as they can become exclusionary to some people. Zakhele Mbhele mentions that when he came out as openly gay he wanted to attend Pride, but was unable to because of its location in Rosebank in the early 2000s.[31] The march would move back to Braamfontein in 2005 when Mbhele was able to attend his first Pride, but it is these inclusionary/exclusionary spaces which I will grapple with in my own research. To do this I will study how class and race affected those who wished to and did attend Pride marches. Pride has taken place in many locations in the city, but has often been associated in white middle class suburbs such as Rosebank. Recently there have been separate Pride marches in Braamfontein and Soweto which have attempted to be more inclusionary to poorer, more diverse communities who have been unable to attend previous Prides, or have felt unwelcome. This touches on the inclusionary/exclusionary politics of spaces such as Hillbrow where clubs stated they accepted all races, but Simon Nkoli stated that there were many times where he was denied entrance, and when he was accepted into these spaces, felt unwelcome because he was always the only black person in the room.[32]

Using compilations such as *Defiant Desire* and *Pride: Protest and Celebration* it will be possible to locate important space in Johannesburg where members queer people had gathered. Making use of these collections, as well as other texts on queer South Africans, this research locates queer spaces and the ideas that may have helped form them. The research focuses on Johannesburg, and the different queer spaces in the city, their inclusionary/exclusionary practices, and the ideas and motivations that went into the creation and continuation of these spaces. I look at homophobic backlash by the NP, nationalist members of the liberation struggle, as well as the everyday public. Daniel Conway further explores attempts by the NP at gaining white votes in 1987 when pro-gay rights candidate Leon de Beer the party's candidate for Hillbrow.[33] These attempts to gain a white gay vote highlight the NP's attempts to maintain the apartheid regime in its final years and suggest that within a certain space gayness would become more acceptable during the latter years of apartheid, at least in spaces where it was already well-established. The continuing change of how space is perceived and who is accepted into that space becomes the cornerstone for my research.

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[31] Zakhele Mbhele. "Pride Crystallised my Sense of Being Part of a Bigger Community" in Shaun de Waal and Anthony Manion (ed.) *Pride: Protest and Celebration*. (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2006) p. 170.
[32] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 40.
[33] Daniel Conway. 'Queering Apartheid: The National Party's 1987 'Gay Rights' Election Campaign in Hillbrow'. *Journal of South African Studies*. (2009, 35:4) p. 849.

A few historians have investigated the legislative debate surrounding the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 which came into being as a result of the 1966 raid in Forest Town, as well as how it led to an increase in the prosecution of gay men.[34] There have also been studies on the prevalence of gay and lesbian communities in South Africa and other parts of the continent.[35] These works offer a broad scope of the experience surrounding gay and lesbian communities in the country, but lack an in-depth analysis of the many different lived experiences of queer communities in Johannesburg. Focusing on Hillbrow with some extensions into Soweto, I will engage with the multi-layered lived experience of different queer peoples and groups in the city in order to highlight how people were able to subvert discriminatory laws and thus assert their own agency.

For many queer bodies the navigation of space is integral to their daily lives. Their location determines how they are perceived in that particular space. Space could be reconstructed to highlight the visibility and presence of queer people, whilst space which could be harmful to queer people may force them to move to spaces in which they are accepted. There is the suggestion that queer bodies are in constant movement in the spaces around them as they try to find and produce "safe spaces" where they are welcomed.[36] Zethu Matebeni has noted that queer people have often moved into cities in South Africa as they offered spaces where queer bodies were more visible than elsewhere.[37] Johannesburg itself became a space in which people travel to hoping for a space more accepting than where they have come from. Movement within the city further develops as people find 'safe space' in Johannesburg where they can openly express their identity. Hillbrow was one such space, but a space predominantly open to white men There were only a handful of sites in Soweto where black queer people were able to find "safe spaces" for themselves. Constant movement within the city became an identity of queer bodies always trying to situate themselves in places where they are safer than elsewhere.

Henri Lefebvre has noted that scholarship which has attempted to conceptualize ideas of space have failed to address the gap between linguistic mental spaces and social spaces and that authors have dogmatically approached the topic believing that this gap does not need to be explored. The presupposition of an "identity between mental space … and real space" creates

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[34] See: Andy Carolin (2017), du Pisani (2012), Pieterse (2015).
[35] See: Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (1994), Neville Hoad, Karen Martin, and Graeme Reid (2005), Zethu Matebani, Surya Monro, and Vasu Reddy (2018), Bart Luirink (1998).
[36] Zethu Matebeni. "TRACKS: Researching Sexualities Walking about the City of Johannesburg" in Sylvia Tamale (ed.) *African Sexualities: A Reader*. (Dakar, Nairobi and Oxford: Pambazuka Press, 2011) p. 50.
[37] Zethu Matebeni. *Exploring Black Lesbian Sexualities and Identities in Johannesburg*. Unpublished PhD thesis. (South Africa: University of the Witwatersrand, 2011) p. 69.

a chasm between the two, with mental ideas of space on the one side, and physical space and social spheres on the other.[38] The intertwining of these spaces where identity begins to take form of how people both view themselves in space and how they are viewed. Lefebvre addresses how students in France "occupied and took charge of their own space" and that by taking control of space they were able to reconstruct their physical space as well as their identity within those spaces.[39] "State-imposed normality makes permanent transgression inevitable" and the outcome is often violence between the state and nonnormative people.[40] The Stonewall riots of 1969 in New York City were about predominantly gay men collectively challenging police in order to make their presence and safety within space viable.[41] Yet, as is often the case with protests in which space is reclaimed, violence is inevitable as state-norms become questioned and those defying the norms seek recognition.[42]

Space is thus constituted through linguistic mental spaces, social physical spaces, and textual spaces too. Drawing on both Roth and Lefebvre this research develops an understanding of what constitutes space, and how these spaces can be navigated by members of queer communities, as well as how these spaces become political or remained apolitical, and how they may differ in different areas within Johannesburg. A recurring theme of gay space is the idea of 'safe space' for queer communities, spaces in which queer visibility becomes normalized and consequently less dangerous.[43] Using gay magazines such as *Exit/Link-Skakel,* published during apartheid, this research will study how publications were able to advertise queer-friendly spaces. The implication of normalizing these spaces is a way in which queer communities may attempt to alter public perception through politicization, sports or religion amongst other groups and gatherings, as an overt way to stress that they are not different from hegemonic groups. Through Lefebvre's theories about the production of space, my research will look into the formation and normalization of queer spaces,.

On the surface the 1970s appeared to be the decade of "gay liberation" in the United States. The Stonewall Riots had taken place in 1969 and gay rights were placed on the forefront

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[38] Henri Lefebvre. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) pp. 5-6.
[39] Ibid, p. 56.
[40] Ibid, p. 23.
[41] Christina B. Hanhardt. *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013) p. 1.
[42] Ibid, p. 20.
[43] Yoel Roth. 'Zero Feet Away: The Digital Geography of Gay Social Media'. *Journal of Homosexuality*. (2016, 63:3), p. 441.

alongside civil rights' movements. The presence of glam rock and glitter rock helped loosen sexual taboos in the early 1970s as musicians performed in make-up, dresses, and covered in glitter and feathers.[44] Yet underlying this proliferation of gender non-conforming artists, America's streets and 'gayborhood's' remained prime targets for gay-bashing.[45] The promotion and protection of gay safe spaces also reinforced race and class stratification, and thus "understanding social and spatial restricting of United States' cities" becomes critical in understanding the intersective nature of queer politics, and race and class.[46]

Jeffrey Weeks has noted that since the 1960s "the idea of sexual politics had any real impact" on societal changes.[47] In *Sexuality*, Weeks emphasizes individual agency, an idea very much at the forefront of this research, which transgresses attempts at governmental control over sexual bodies. His book, although addressing some other parts of the world, primarily focuses on "the West", and as such is not a complete analysis of transgressive sexualities elsewhere. Where Weeks does touch on South Africa, it is in passing when he notes how the NP attempted to control sex and sexuality with the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969.[48]

Christina Hanhardt's analysis of queer communities being differentiated on racial lines draws distinct parallels to South Africa's own politics under apartheid. The Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) had initially claimed to be apolitical, but soon declared itself to be politically opposed to apartheid in 1984 in order to gain membership to the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), yet GASA failed to intervene following Simon Nkoli's arrest. Instead, they made it clear that they did not intend to help liberate all South African's, only their own white gay community.[49] Nkoli was a black gay man from Soweto, and a vocal advocate for gay rights and later became an HIV/Aids activist. He fought for both gay rights and against apartheid, stating that "In South Africa I am oppressed as a black person and I am oppressed because I am gay … I must fight for [freedom] from both oppressions" at a time when apartheid was coming to an end, but there was still no guarantee for freedom of sexuality.[50] Multiple

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[44] Randy Jones and Mark Bego. *Macho Man: The Disco Era and Gay America's "Coming Out"*. (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2009) p. 53.
[45] Hanhardt, *Safe Space*, p. 10.
[46] Hanhardt, *Safe Space*, p. 9.
[47] Jeffrey Weeks. *Sexuality, Third Edition*. (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2010) p. 100.
[48] Ibid, p. 43.
[49] Jens Rydström, "Solidarity—With Whom?: The International Gay & Lesbian Rights Movements and Apartheid" in Neville Hoad, Karen Martin, and Graeme Reid (eds.) *Pride: Protest and Celebration*. (Johannesburg, Jacana Media, 2006), p. 36.
[50] Beverly Palesa Ditsie and Nicky Newman (directors). 2001. Film. *Simon & I*. South Africa: See Thru Media/Steps for the Future.

works have been done on Simon Nkoli and his life, and most works on queer people in South Africa mention Nkoli.[51] Ruth Pettis has published a short biography about Nkoli's life, regarding him as South Africa's founder in the black gay movement and helped link a gay rights' movement to the anti-apartheid struggle, a political stance many of the country's gay liberation groups failed to address prior to Nkoli.[52] Nkoli's role in queer spaces suggests that whilst there white-run clubs claimed that black patrons were granted access, this was not always the case, and he spoke out against these claims.

Existing studies on queer people in Johannesburg exist within the broader topic of gay and lesbian people in South Africa. The first major investigation into the lives of gay and lesbians in South Africa came from Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron's 1994 edited collection *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa* in which they sought to "highlight some of the issues, the problems, the contradictions and the connections that make up our [queer peoples] lives" in a collection which comprehends its own inability to completely represent the experience of queer people.[53] There is no complete representation of any marginalized group of people, as individuals all maintain their own agency in shaping their lives and their lived experience. Even maintaining a connection by sexual identity, and even possible groups struggling for queer representation, individuality still undermines collective representation, and thus it is always impossible to represent everyone in a study. My research will not attempt to grapple with this, but rather accept that in Johannesburg there is no umbrella representation for all queer people.

Hugh McLean and Linda Ngcobo's chapter in *Defiant Desire* addresses how black gay men viewed themselves and their sexualities. They suggest that gay life in townships adapted the "tradition of male 'marriage' which came from the hostels" and perpetuated these forms of gay lifestyles into their daily lives, continuing a process of 'husband and wife' style relationships with other men.[54] White Afrikaans men were often completely ostracized by their families once coming out, causing them to seek refuge in the city's gay subculture, whilst English speaking white men were more likely to be, but not always, accepted into their homes and remain

[51] See: Gevisser and Cameron (1994), Judge (2018), Conway (2009), Croucher (2002), Pettis (2005).
[52] Ruth M. Pettis. 'Nkoli, Tseko Simon (1957-1998)'. *GLBTQ*. (2005) p. 1.
[53] Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron. "Defiant Desire" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (ed.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 3.
[54] Hugh McLean and Linda Ngcobo. "Abangibhamayo Bathi Ngimnandi (Those who Fuck me Say I'm Tasty): Gay Sexuality in Reef Townships" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (ed.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 163.

somewhat detached from the subculture.[55] The different approaches to gay subcultures among race and ethnicity highlight distinct racial approaches used to police sexuality, a key understanding of how sexuality was viewed by different races and classes which has to be understood going further into this research. The state's strict imposition of segregation limited cross-racial interaction in the city, but this is not to suggest this did not happen. Although whites rarely visited Soweto, black people regularly entered white spaces such as Hillbrow, mainly for work, and from the 1980s increasingly to live there.[56] This led to more interaction between the city's white and black residents in Hillbrow, and allowed for the possibility of queer, multi-racial relationships to exist within the city. The extent to which this may have happened will have to be further researched, but there is evidence of it happening with Simon Nkoli who had found himself dating white men, as seen in the film *Simon & I* (2002).[57]

Chapter Outline

The research begins by analysing the origins of the NP's anxiety over subversive sexualities which were addressed following a raid on a house party in Forest Town, Johannesburg where approximately 300 middle-class white men had been found partying. Nine were arrested, multiple newspapers publicised the men's photos, and the police urged the NP to amend the current laws which made it difficult to arrest homosexuals. This incidence of publicising homosexuality as a mass problem to be addressed was the NP's first voyage into the realms of protecting heteronormative sexualities. The chapter briefly examines queer spaces prior to the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 by locating gay bodies in public spaces, as well as exploring the debates that followed the party which led to the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969. The chapter will then study the emergence of Hillbrow as a gay centre, where gay subculture was truly beginning to define itself as a response to the Act. When all placed together it will become evident that homosexuality had always been present in Johannesburg during the NP's rule, even prior to the party considering it to be a serious problem which should be dealt with. Following intense scrutiny, it will be seen that queer people, and at this time it

[55] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 39.
[56] Martin J. Murray. *City of Extremes: The Spatial Politics of Johannesburg*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011) p. 141.
[57] Beverly Palesa Ditsie and Nicky Newman (directors). 2001. Film. *Simon & I*. South Africa: See Thru Media/Steps for the Future.

was predominantly middle-class white gay men, had actively sought to create spaces in the city where they would be able to find safety.

Following from the previous chapter's conclusion that Hillbrow was starting to become a visible gay neighbourhood in the 1970s, the second chapter begins to analyse the experience of black queer people from Soweto, their presence in Hillbrow, and how they managed to carve their own spaces in Soweto. Placing historical accounts of queer socialisation at the fore, this chapter interrogates the development of homophobia within black urban communities before addressing their prevalence in Johannesburg from 1966. This is to highlight that queer people have existed within black communities prior to apartheid and colonisation, as Marc Epprecht's research shows.[58] The chapter then develops on this by examine the strategies queer people have used in dress, style, appearance, and mannerisms in order to either hide their sexuality or exemplify it.

Having outlined the legal precedence developed to police queer bodies, and how queer people had still managed to create their own spaces in Hillbrow and Soweto, the third chapter studies how and why the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) came to be the first cross-country organisation aimed at lobbying for queer rights. GASA's formation took place in Hillbrow, and as it remained a largely white organisation, it ignored the needs of black gay citizens, and does not feature in Soweto. However, its importance remains due to its connection to Simon Nkoli, a former member of GASA who would go on to form the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW), which was active in both Hillbrow and Soweto.

Finally the research analyses the importance of GLOW in Hillbrow and Soweto, and how GLOW managed to mobilise a fragmented queer to community to strive towards constitutional equality in the 1990s. The chapter explores GLOW's anti-apartheid stance and its utilisation of politically motivated movement through space by analysing Johannesburg's early Pride Marches.

[58] Marc Epprecht. *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004) p. 32.

Chapter One

Policing Sexuality: Intersections of Sex, Space, and Security

> Hegemonic masculinity is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal, and violent. Among its defining features are misogyny, homophobia, racism and compulsory heterosexuality. Hegemonic masculinity is not stable. It is constantly responding to challenges, or repelling rival masculinities.[1]

Introduction

When the National Party (NP) gained power in South Africa in 1948 the racial order of society became their ideological pre-occupation. The gendered order of society had remained deeply patriarchal, misogynistic and assumed that heteronormativity was and would remain the norm, and as such little restrictions to any forms of perceived deviance were applied in cases where it did not manifest itself as cross-racial. Large sections of the nation, across class and racial lines, maintained societally heteronormative ideals resulting in little attention to homosexual and lesbian activity in the country. As more regulations were introduced to somewhat successfully curb black resistance through the 1950s and 1960s, the NP government began to turn its attention to white homosexuality, which had gained visibility in urban spaces since the 1940s, but only received political intervention in the mid-1960s.[2] Urban spaces had, as what Henri Lefebvre alludes to, separated the distinction between reproductive sex, and sexual pleasure, allowing sexual boundaries to be crossed and giving arenas for non-heteronormative practices to develop somewhat more openly.[3] Apartheid's ideology of white supremacy not only sought to control the movement, separation, oppression, and exploitation of black bodies, but also took an active interest in the "production and policing of idealised ways of *being* white" by the state. The heterosexual white male was then at the fore of this as a symbol of perfection and purity.[4]

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[1] Robert Morrell. 'Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (1998, 42:2) p.608.
[2] Kobus du Pisani. 'Shifting Sexual Morality? Changing Views on Homosexuality in Afrikaner Society during the 1960s'. *Historia*. (2012, 57:2) p. 188.
[3] Henri Lefebvre. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) p. 167.
[4] Andy Carolin. 'Apartheid's Immorality Act and the Fiction of Heteronormative Whiteness'. *Tydskrif vir Letterkune*. (2017, 54:1) p. 111.

South Africa's multiple periods of urbanisation – Johannesburg's early mining rush, then rural people entering cities in large numbers in the 1920s and 1930s – meant there were new people in cities, away from their families, and able to practice what Mark Gevisser noted as "personal autonomy" and help create a "homosexual subculture" with more ease.[5] In South Africa's urban spaces homosexuality was left relatively unburdened and, with the Second World War and the influx of transient men in uniform, Johannesburg's gay spaces began to take form in bars outside an army camp in Joubert Park. The bars were frequented by white gay men looking to meet off-duty soldiers, but as the war ended most of the bars were closed. What was left in Joubert Park, Hillbrow and the surrounds were people who had moved into flats close to the bars.

The Population Registration Act of 1950 helped maintain the NP's racial policy in urban areas, effectively subjecting black citizens to settle in peripheral townships around urban areas. Hillbrow was designated for white citizens to live in, and with The Separate Amenities Act of 1953, entertainment facilities in Hillbrow were limited to whites only.[6] Hillbrow's proximity to town and its cheap high-density housing became "an obvious and acceptable neighbourhood for young people to live alone" and create their own subcultures in the area.[7] The demographic shifts in Hillbrow after the war suggests it became a place dominated by single and younger people: by the mid-1960s, 32 percent of its population was under thirty, and 52 percent younger than forty.[8] In the mid-1960s the proportion of single adults stood at a remarkable 60 percent.[9] The youthful, single status of Hillbrow's residents allowed for it to become an inner-city neighbourhood associated with "cosmopolitan flair" as "coffee bars, clubs and late-night book stores [made] Hillbrow an entertainment magnet for the rest of white suburbia" seeking to join in with the bohemian residents.[10] Hillbrow became a sought after destination for gay men and lesbian womxn.

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[5] Mark Gevisser. "A Different Fight for Freedom: A History of South African Lesbian and Gay Organisation from the 1950s to 1990s" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 18.
[6] Alan Morris. 'Race Relations and Racism in a Racially Diverse Inner City Neighbourhood: A Case Study of Hillbrow, Johannesburg'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (1999,25:4) p. 667-671.
[7] Ibid, p. 19.
[8] Alan Morris. *Bleakness and Light: Inner-city Transition in Hillbrow, Johannesburg*. (South Africa: Witwatersrand University Press, 1999) p. 82.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Melinda Silverman and Tanya Zack. 'Case Study: Hillbrow & Berea'. *Land Use Management and Democratic Governance in the City of Johannesburg*. (2007) p. 16.

A number of clubs which weren't necessarily regarded as 'gay clubs' but still had a gay clientele had emerged during the war, and in the years following the war more clubs opened which catered to a gay clientele. The Carlton Hotel had become a popular meeting spot for gay men, and then the Astor on Smit Street. Gay meeting places and gay clubs shifted throughout the inner-city, determined by where gay men felt safe and where they wanted to congregate. A woman called Chick Venter opened a club near Park Station – a popular cruising spot in its own right – in the late 1950s where mostly gay men went, but was also deemed safe by lesbian womxn.[11] Gay clubs moved from place to place throughout the inner-city, but by the 1960s this changed as The New Library Hotel, situated on Commissioner Street, promoted itself as a gay venue.[12]

Whilst clubs were inconsistent throughout the 1950s, in Johannesburg there were two 'Health Clubs' which existed to provide services like massages and saunas, but were largely attended by men looking to have sexual encounters with other men. These Health Clubs operated with an "explicit division between day-time and night-time functions: the day being the domain of the day, the night of the gays".[13] From the 1940s Johannesburg's inner-city had started gaining a reputation, at least amongst gay residents, of being a place where gay men could find each other. The NP did not move decisively against these spaces, although during the 1950s there were a few arrests made on cruising spaces in Johannesburg. The largest police sweep of the decade took place in a popular cruising location in Durban, where 30 men were arrested and charged with indecent assault.[14] There was still no push from the NP to extend legislation to police sexual minorities, probably due to the fact that it was not seen as a nation-wide problem at the time.

In the 1950s and 1960s the Nationalist government had already established an "obsessive interest in sexual policing" in order to uphold the values of Christian Nationalist apartheid ideology. Initially criminalising interracial sex in order to avoid miscegenation with the Immorality Act of 1957, the NP would move their attention to non-heteronormative sexualities.[15] Repressive legislation introduced in the late 1960s, specifically the Immorality

[11] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 20.
[12] Ibid, p. 23.
[13] Pater Galli and Luis Rafael. "Johannesburg's 'Health Clubs': Places of Erotic Languor or Prison-Houses of Desire?" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 135.
[14] *Natal Daily News*, 23 July 1956.
[15] Glen Retief. "Keeping Sodom out of the laager" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 100.

Amendment Act of 1969, was about protecting conservative NP ideas on 'whiteness' through the creation and maintenance of sexual boundaries and norms on the basis of heterosexuality and procreation.[16] The idea of white reproduction was ratified when the Report of the Select Committee was read, with lesbians being regarded as a social evil due to their lack of reproduction because of their sexual orientation.[17] Whilst queer people of all genders and races have always been present in Johannesburg, white men have been the most visible because of a "combined privilege of their race, gender and class" and have thus always been the focal point of moral and legal opposition.[18] Lesbians were more invisible to a societal gaze, with cliques forming in private circles, with access achieved via word of mouth, which would meet at flats for private parties, occasionally at "welcoming bars, clubs or coffee shops", and sporting clubs, which became stereotypical of the 'rougher' or 'butch' lesbian.[19] White lesbians remained predominantly suburban and hidden, thus maintaining a decorum which was not perceived to be a threat by the NP. Therefore, laws were generally targeted at white gay men, whose presence was perceived as a threat to the moral fabric of society and the production of whiteness.[20]

This chapter analyses how queer bodies became increasingly policed in Johannesburg, and their reactions to that. By analysing both white and black queer bodies, it shows the difference in how the NP actually viewed sexuality based on race, but also how members of both black and white society were able to act as 'societal police' through a culture of gay-bashing, which forced many queer people to always have to find safety in their own spaces that were coded heteronormatively.

Forest Town Raid

On the 22nd of January, 1966, a Friday night party in a secluded two-storey house of Johannesburg's leafy suburb of Forest Town was to be the site of South Africa's "largest, most

[16] Graeme Reid and Liz Walker. 'Sex Then and Now: Exploring South Africa's Sexual Histories'. *South African Historical Journal*. (2004, 50) p. 79.
[17] GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immorality Amendment Bill. – Misspellings appear on the box and folder, originally reads as: GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immolarity (*sic*) Ammendment (*sic*) Bill.
[18] Marius Pieterse. 'Perverts, Outlaws and Dissidents: (Homo)Sexual Citizenship and Urban Space in Johannesburg'. *Urban Forum*. (2015, 26) pp. 100 – 101.
[19] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", pp. 19-21.
[20] GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immorality Amendment Bill. – Misspellings appear on the box and folder, originally reads as: GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immolarity (*sic*) Ammendment (*sic*) Bill.

organized and most publicized" attack on queer bodies.[21] The party consisted of around 350 white men and two womxn, all enjoying the night under the assumption that the private property allowed a space of safety from a sexually repressive government. However, a "tip-off" led police to conduct a raid on the house which lasted around five hours between midnight and 5 a.m., culminating in the arrest of nine men "on charges of gross indecency, selling liquor illegally and masquerading as women".[22] Detectives had first "infiltrated the party" as disguised partygoers, and were later followed by "30 other policemen" conducting the raid under the auspices of Brigadier Gideon Joubert (Chief of the C.I.D) and Colonel C. A. Buys.[23] Of the 350 in attendance, only 9 men were arrested due to the insufficient laws in place to charge men on homosexuality.[24]

This private space in the cordoned off sections of white society had been penetrated. The private had become the public, and the security thought to have been offered by private space had faded away. Michelle Bruno, one of the men arrested at the party was taken to Marshall Square, told to strip, and was left "standing just in a black bra with a red suspender belt", stocking, and men's underwear. According to Bruno, the charge would have been more had he been wearing women's underwear instead.[25] After paying a ten rand admission of guilt fee, Bruno was allowed to leave. The next day whilst working at the salon, Bruno saw his picture, along with others arrested, in the Afrikaans *Beeld* newspaper, their faces barely covered as an attempt to conceal their identity.[26] Bruno noted that "they were announcing our names every half hour on Radio Highveld" and felt convinced that his career would be over.[27] These intimidation tactics had put those who were enjoying themselves in a private space directly into a public space and within the public mind.

Prior to the Forest Town raid homosexuality was regarded as a social evil which was only scattered around the country, with no serious threat evident. The language used by the South African Police suggest that it was easy to control homosexuality in the previous years, but that "offenders are now pursuing an organised *modus operandi*" to spread their sexuality and take

[21] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", pp. 30.
[22] 'Vice Squad Finds 350 Men in One House', *The Star*, January 22, 1966.
[23] 'Five Pay 'Men Only' Party Fines', *Rand Daily Mail*, January 24, 1966.
[24] 'Nine men arrested in raid on Jo'burg house', *The Sunday Times*, 23 January 1966.
[25] Mark Gevisser. *Lost and Found in Johannesburg*. (Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2014) p. 163.
[26] '300 Mans in Malle Fuif', *Beeld*, January 22, 1966.
[27] Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA). AM3160(A). B2.2.1. Queer Tour Research Forest Town.

control of some sectors in society.[28] The South African Police also stated that "although [we have] dealt with various forms of homosexuality over the years … it was regarded as isolated and not really constituting a threat to the country".[29] Due to the amount of people involved, and their status within society – many were doctors, lecturers, teachers – the Forest Town party suggested that homosexuality, in the eyes of the authorities, had become widespread in urban spaces and constituted a threat to white society.


DIE S.A. BEELD, 23 JANUARIE 1966

ONTUG EN VREES: VUURDOOD

TWEE gevalle van mense wat selfmoord gepleeg het deur hulself aan die brand te steek, het vandeesweek in Transvaal voorgekom.

WATERSTAND IN VAALDAM

INVLOEI
VERBRUIK
VERSAMPING
WATERSTAND

Miljoenêr, ander hoës betrap

300 MANS IN MALLE FUIF

Deur JACK VIVIERS

HEEL BO: 'n Paar van die „mans" wat Vrydagaand op 'n groot party in 'n weersmeltende woonbeurt in Johannesburg betrap is. Op die foto dra hulle pruike en op die foto heel links kan gesien word hoe 'n speurder die pruik van een van die mans se kop haal. Die foto's is by Marshallplein geneem nadat die manse per motor daarheen gebring was. Van die manse op die foto's sal Maandag op verskeie aanklagte in die hof verskyn. Onder hulle is verskeie hooggeplaastes en rykes. Van die driehonderd gaste het baie ver gery om die party by te woon.

'300 Mans in Malle Fuif', Beeld, January 22, 1966.

For the NP government, the Forest Town raid seemed to confirm that homosexuality had become perilous to white, urban South Africa on a scale which was not considered in the years before. Many in the public also viewed the presence of homosexual men in the country as "unnatural"[30] and "abhorrent"[31], reflected in letters in the *Sunday Express*. Although a few letters defended homosexuality, albeit always with the clarification of being "fortunate not to be homosexual", the majority of the letters published in the newspapers expressed disgust towards gay men.[32] Public outcry following the Forest Town raid highlighted white male homosexuality as an issue to be addressed in the country. On 10 February 1966, General J.M. Keevey wrote to the Minister of Justice, B.J. Vorster, highlighting the "seriousness of the problem" and the inadequacy existing legislation provided in policing homosexuality.[33] Vorster, who succeeded H.F. Verwoerd in September 1966 as leader of the NP and government, left the new Minister of Justice, Peet Pelser, in charge of introducing amendments to the Immorality Act of 1957 in order to deal with homosexuality. Conservative draft legislation was introduced in 1968, which aimed to make all "unlawful, indecent and unnatural deeds between persons of the same sex punishable" and allowed police unprecedented powers

[28] GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immorality Amendment Bill. – Misspellings appear on the box and folder, originally reads as: GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immolarity (*sic*) Ammendment (*sic*) Bill.
[29] Ibid.
[30] 'Unnatural . . . . Ungodly', *Sunday Express*, April 2, 1967.
[31] 'Abhorrent to all', *Sunday Express*, April 2, 1967.
[32] 'No Wonder World is Like it is', *Sunday Express*, April 2, 1967.
[33] du Pisani, 'Shifting Sexual Morality?', p. 194.

to attack homosexuality. The law would make both male and female homosexuality statutorily illegal and punishable by up to three years imprisonment.[34]

The "Men at a Party" Clause

The debates following the Forest Town raid took place during what Glen Retief calls "the famous white baby boom", when white mothers were urged to breed faster than black women.[35] No opposition MP's challenged the NP on the Bill, but it had caused issues amongst legal and medical professionals who argued that such a sweeping law would make criminals of five per cent of the population based on their being a certain way.[36] The Bill failed following an outcry from medical and legal professionals who had successfully urged Pelser to "refer the matter to a Parliamentary Select Committee" and to accept public participation on further drafting.[37] Pelser had introduced the Bill and suggested that it be referred to a Select Committee for investigation into homosexuality.[38] A group of gay professionals and advocates quickly began organising in Johannesburg and Pretoria to form an 'action group', later formalised as the Homosexual Law Reform Fund, commonly known as Law Reform, with a task of raising R40 000 to retain a firm of attorneys to prepare evidence and defend against the proposed legislation before the Select Committee which was organised in order to evaluate the state of homosexuality in the country, mostly focusing its deliberations on male homosexuality, and allowing for public and professional input.[39] Written submissions were given to the Select Committee to deliberate on, coming from various academics, religious organisations, the police, and the Law Reform. The majority of arguments, specifically put forth by police and religious organisations during the Select Committee's deliberations argued that homosexuality was a precursor for other crimes such as increased alcohol consumption, drug use, and a "Godless Society [where] goodness, cleanliness and Godliness are completely dethroned" and replaced with immorality.[40] These arguments were submitted in writing to the Select Committee for them to deliberate on.[41] The idea of allowing homosexuality to prevail in the

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[34] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom" p. 31.
[35] Retief, "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager", p. 102.
[36] B.v.D. van Niekerk. "The 'Third Sex' Act". *The South African law Journal*. (Cape Town: Juta, 1970) p. 88.
[37] du Pisani, 'Shifting Sexual Morality?', p. 195.
[38] Republic of South Africa. *Index to the Debates of the House of Assembly*. 31st January to 21st June, 1969.
[39] du Pisani, 'Shifting Sexual Morality?', p. 182.
[40] GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immorality Amendment Bill. – Misspellings appear on the box and folder, originally reads as: GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immolarity (*sic*) Ammendment (*sic*) Bill.
[41] Ibid.

country opposed the prevailing pillars of the NP's Calvinist Christian-Nationalism tenets which purported that sexual activity should only take place within the confines of a marriage between a man and a woman.[42] Glen Retief argues that in conjunction with heterosexual marriage, apartheid's Calvinist Christian Nationalists sought to police sex in order to "keep the white nation sexually and morally pure so that it had the strength to resist the black communist onslaught" and grow towards, and maintain, an idealised white ethno-state.[43] The Select Committee's central deliberation was based on the possibility of homosexuality being infectious and whether it could endanger the country's youth.[44] This central manifestation came from Pelser's previous Parliamentary speech where he had argued that historically homosexuality was the ruin of once great societies:

> [H]istory has given us a clear warning and we should not allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking that we may casually dispose of this viper in our midst by regarding it as innocent fun. It is a proven fact that sooner or later homosexual instincts make their effects know on a community … Therefore we should be on the alert and do what there is to do lest we be saddled later with a problem which will be the utter ruin of our spiritual and moral fibre.[45]

Due to Pelser and the Select Committee's approach on attempting to completely criminalize all homosexual acts, the Law Reform's goal was to lobby against complete criminalisation, which proved successful. This was largely due to the Law Reform being able to mobilize enough legal support to defend homosexuality in private between two consenting adults. However, the Select Committee, still holding firm in its belief that homosexuality was a precursor to other crimes, followed other recommendations which targeted gay parties, sex with teenage boys, and dildos.[46]

Throughout the legislative hearings multiple crimes were brought forth by members of the police which were linked to gay men as an attempt to prove and solidify the connection between homosexuality and crime. The crimes recalled were often violent transgressions of consent, such as a 24 year old who had stabbed his father to death in 1964 because his father had "committed sodomy" on him from the age of 9, and another case where a middle aged man had

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[42] Sarah Emily Duff. "Let's Talk About Sex Education". *https://www.wits.ac.za/news/latest-news/general-news/2015/2015-05/lets-talk-about-sex-education.html*. (Accessed 31 August 2018).
[43] Retief, "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager", p. 100.
[44] Ibid, p. 102.
[45] Peet Pelser. 'Speaking in Parliament'. *House of Assembly Debates*. Cols 1405-6. 21 April 1967.
[46] Retief, "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager", p. 103.

shot and killed a 17 year old boy for refusing to have sex with him in December 1965.[47] Institutionalised heterosexual masculinity was weaponized to create "repressive legislation to curb and criminalize homosexuality" through both the law as well as the use of intimidation and violence outside the law.[48] However, there were also more rational submissions to the select committee which sought to divide the link between homosexuality and criminality, and ultimately helped lead to a more nuanced amendment. An example from the Select Committee hearings came from Dr. Simonsz, a state psychiatrist, who argued that instead of completely criminalizing homosexuality more therapeutic work was required in dealing with the phenomenon, age restrictions were needed so that young boys would not be imprisoned, and that the original clauses inserted be changed so that it is not homosexuality which is charged as an offence, but rather homosexual acts.[49] The insertion of "a male person" excluded lesbians from the law and thus meant that the law would only apply to gay men.[50] The lack of evidence found for lesbians in the country had contributed to this, as lesbians were regarded to be too few in numbers to "constitute a social evil to the same extent" as gay men. During the final reading of the report, however, it was argued that they were still an evil in society because they were regarded to be "completely unproductive as far as reproduction is concerned", further highlighting the NP's desire for white women to procreate.[51] Lesbian sexual activity was not approached in the same thorough extent as which homosexuality amongst men was. Womxn who deviated from sexual norms were still considered to be a social evil, but solely in the way in which it related to reproduction rather than sexual experiences.[52] When asked about the ratio between lesbians and gay men, and whether lesbians constitute a social evil to the same extent as gay men, Johannesburg-North's District C. I. Officer reported that:

> The fact that there are fewer lesbians than male homosexuals, causes me to think that it does not constitute a social evil to the same extent, but in spite of that I must be consistent and say that lesbianism, too, is an evil because

[47] GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immorality Amendment Bill. – Misspellings appear on the box and folder, originally reads as: GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immolarity (*sic*) Ammendment (*sic*) Bill.
[48] du Pisani, 'Shifting Sexual Morality?', p. 188.
[49] GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immorality Amendment Bill. – Misspellings appear on the box and folder, originally reads as: GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immolarity (*sic*) Ammendment (*sic*) Bill.
[50] du Pisani, 'Shifting Sexual Morality?', p. 200.
[51] GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immorality Amendment Bill. – Misspellings appear on the box and folder, originally reads as: GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immolarity (*sic*) Ammendment (*sic*) Bill.
[52] Glen Elder. "The South African Body Politic: Space, race and heterosexuality" in Heidi J. Nast and Steve Pile (eds.) *Places through the body*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) p. 116.

> lesbians are completely unproductive as far as reproduction is concerned … lesbians, too, tend to drink too much.[53]

Perceived notions of social morality were often mentioned in relation to homosexuality, with queer people often being labelled as excessive drinkers, but the real argument was that homosexuality went against religion, so too did all the social ills homosexuals were perceived to enjoy. The same District Officer quoted "the Holy Scripture" in order to "make it perfectly clear where we stand in regard to [homosexuality]".[54] Using religion as justification, and linking an overabundance of gay men with drinking, partying and overt sexuality, police and the NP's Christian base had hoped to completely criminalise all gay and suspected gay behaviour.

As the Select Committee had allowed the public to also submit evidence, and with a point being made "that all evidence would remain confidential" throughout the hearings, the Law Reform worked on gathering their own evidence to present a case against the proposed legislation.[55] The Law Reform had managed to organise enough to raise funds for lawyers who were able to successfully lobby against the complete criminalization of all gays, and helped allow lenience towards private sexual encounters between men. Final amendments were effected to the new legislation in 1969, removing "blanket clauses" from the first amendments which targeted homosexuals throughout the country. Instead only three amendments were implemented. The first raised the age of consent for male homosexual acts from 16 to 19 as a supposed effort to protect teenage boys from child molestation. The second outlawed the use and sale of dildoes, as they were regarded to form an unnatural sexual gratification which was believed to contravene the need of a man for women. The final amendment targeted gay men at a party who were engaged in any sexually activity, in which "a party means any occasion where more than two are present" regardless of the location being public or private.[56] The clause became known as the "men at a party clause" and, due to its definition of a party being any occasion where more than two people are present, was seen as a way of giving the law greater powers and reasons to regulate white male homosexuality.[57]

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[53] GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immorality Amendment Bill. – Misspellings appear on the box and folder, originally reads as: GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immolarity (*sic*) Ammendment (*sic*) Bill.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 32.
[56] "Immorality Amendment Act, 1969", *Government Gazette*, May 21, 1969.
[57] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 35.

The law created a dilemma which arose from different interpretations. Private homosexual acts were, in effect, of no legal consequence, but behaviours associated with homosexuality, "such as sodomy, 'unnatural' sexual acts including masturbation, and acts designed to promote 'homosexual behaviour [were] proscribed".[58] Prosecutions had to be handled on a case-by-case basis, and due to the way in which the 'men at a party' clause was written, had many different effects depending on the situation. In one such case, during a raid on a gay sauna in Johannesburg, a police major had attempted to entrap two men in a cubicle, but as he entered, the two men disengaged from one another. The Supreme Court surprisingly acquitted the accused as it was "held that the two men's jumping apart when the major switched in the light meant that no 'party' came about" during the event.[59]

Applications of the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969

The immediate consequences of the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 were tighter control and surveillance of cruising areas and routine police surveillance and occasional raids of clubs, bars and parties throughout the 1970s.[60] Mr S. Frank, the Chairman of the Select Committee hearings, noted that the evidence obtained from police throughout the country between the first of July 1966 and the thirtieth of June 1967 showed that a total of 15 cases of sodomy between two white men were reported, 11 between a white man and a non-white man, and 186 cases which involved no white men at all, of which 147 were between black men.[61] These numbers were less than the prosecutions made in the years following the implementation of the Act, which in the early 1970s had increased drastically due to the ability of the police to entrap gay men in public areas. Despite concerted attacks on the gay community from the mid-1960s, the lack of publicity garnered from any gay activity until the Forest Town raid allowed for homosexuality to be regarded as "invisible enough for the state not to regard homosexuality as a serious problem" in the country.[62] Between 1971 and 1980 there were 3 071 prosecutions for sodomy, 1 929 of which ended in convictions, and 717 indecent assault prosecutions leading

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[58] Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick. *Male Homosexuality in South Africa: Identity Formation, Culture, and Crisis*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) p. 150.
[59] Edwin Cameron. "'Unapprehended felons': Gays and lesbians and the law in South Africa" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 92.
[60] Retief, "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager", p. 103.
[61] GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immorality Amendment Bill. – Misspellings appear on the box and folder, originally reads as: GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immolarity (*sic*) Ammendment (*sic*) Bill.
[62] Retief, "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager", p. 101.

to 448 convictions. A large portion of these prosecutions and convictions "have dealt with police entrapment in public areas" where police actively sought to disrupt the movement of gay men, seeking sexual behaviour in toilets, sexual interaction with boys younger than 19 years, and continual harassment in gay clubs.[63]

Table 1: *Prosecutions and convictions for sodomy and indecent assault by man on man, 1971–1980.*

Year	Prosecutions		Convictions	
	Sodomy	Indecent Assault	Sodomy	Indecent Assault
1971	337	89	182	54
1972	307	68	158	35
1973	323	82	178	54
1974	327	74	167	34
1975	323	58	228	38
1976	278	47	200	39
1977	266	37	207	28
1978	289	50	186	31
1979	317	103	226	56
1980	304	109	197	79
TOTALS:	**3 071**	**717**	**1 929**	**448**

Source: *Annual Reports of Criminal Offences (Central Statistical Services: Pretoria, 1982).*[64]

Cruising spots became the main targets for police to find gay men, with police often making use of entrapment tactics to capture men cruising in public spots. Consequently, queer people

[63] Isaacs and McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, p. 151.
[64] Republic of South Africa. *Annual Report of Criminal Offences*. Pretoria: Central Statistical Services, 1982.

moved indoors, which was relatively accepted by the NP as it "meant keeping them under control" and out of public visibility.[65]

There was a suggestion that nowhere felt safe for any non-heteronormative people, and that the NP government was determined to enforce their idealized form of heteronormativity. In the public sphere extra precaution had to be taken by many queer people. Rumours of extra-marital affairs could have womxn fired, let alone anyone discovering she might be lesbian, whilst men would "look at the flamboyant queens who didn't give a damn, and … secretly envy them" but still keeping their lives hidden due to fear of persecution and ostracization.[66] Lesbian spaces however, did occur, but were far fewer, and often existed in the form of cliques, organised by profession, and with entry only possible via word of mouth in the workplace. Most of their gatherings took place at homes which one had to be invited to, and as such they were separated based on profession, such as teachers, nurses, lawyers, and other professional cliques.[67] Hannah, an informant for Mark Gevisser, remembered that queer womxn felt safe from raids as long as there were no men present, and as such had to perform a level of self-censorship when it came to organizing house parties by not inviting gay men, as men often attracted unwelcome attention from neighbours.[68] Whilst the majority of lesbian social organizing took place in houses, there were some 'safe' public spaces available for lesbians, the most prominent of these in Johannesburg was run by a lady named Chick Venter. A "rough" club with "walls covered in fishnets and bottles" near Park Station, with a mostly male clientele, Chick Venter's venue was one of Johannesburg's few clubs were "unaccompanied womxn could go" beyond the clique-based houses.[69] There were no spaces specifically aimed at a lesbian clientele. Furthermore, all of these spaces remained exclusively white. Black queer people had to find their own spaces which came with problems which differed from the police raids of Johannesburg's white queer population (*see chapter 2*). Cruising continued in Hillbrow for both black and white gay men in the years following the Act's implantation, but had become substantially more hazardous.

[65] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 37.
[66] Ibid, p. 25.
[67] Ibid, p. 19.
[68] Ibid, p. 24-25.
[69] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 20.

Cruising

Cruising spaces had always been prominent spaces for sexual interaction between gay men. Prior to the increased surveillance of homosexuality, gay men were more easily able to access public locations in order to find sexual encounters. Public parks, the bathrooms at Park Station, the post office at Joubert Park, and the Union Grounds were some of the well-known locations where men could find willing participants to engage in sexual exploration with, occasionally across racial boundaries.[70] Prior to the 1960s cruising had been a significant part of Johannesburg's gay subculture. Cruising areas had become popularized due to the Second World War because of their proximity to soldiers, and through the 1940s and 1950s had become well-known spaces for quick sexual liaisons which could take place.[71] Cruising remained prominent in the 1960s, and remained an ever-present aspect of gay subculture throughout the NP's regime. Cruising remained a male-dominated aspect of queer subculture, and was one of only a few places where cross-racial sexual encounters could take place.[72]

Mostly during the 1940s and 1950s, but still into the 1980s, black men would often go to the Union Grounds, and the soldiers patrolling the grounds would walk up to them, whilst on the other side of the fence, and ask "how much?" and the response would always be "twenty-six", indicating "two shilling and a six pence" in order to have sex. The white soldiers would then pay the amount and the two would engage in penetrative sex through the "diamond mesh wire fence".[73] They would however not identify themselves as sex-workers, rather it was just the way men were able to meet each other across the racial divide.[74] Park Station was less transactional, where men would loiter in the toilets waiting to find others to have sex with. Outside the toilets Park Station became a cruising hotspot because of its proximity to soldiers during the Second World War, but remained active cruising locations in the following decades until police crackdowns in the 1960s.[75] Percy[76] recalls Joubert Park's post office, another popular cruising location, as a "pickup point" which introduced him to white men in the city who were able to provide refuge from the police:

> Even at Joubert Park, the police would raid and would arrest a lot of the boys masquerading at the post office. That was the pickup point. Because you would go out there late in the evening and whites would come and pick

[70] Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA). AM3160(A). B2.2.3. Queer Tour Drafts/notes/routes.
[71] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 19.
[72] Retief, "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager", p. 109.
[73] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[74] E Cameron. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 2 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[75] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 19.
[76] Pseudonym.

> people up there. I would go with the [black] boys [to the post office] but was not interested in … whites. I just wanted to go there because these [black] boys wanted us to go as a group … Then I met quite a number of whites … who'd get boys at the station and invite to their place and say "come on Percy, we've got so many boys, you can pick and choose".[77]

Park Station's toilets provided space for black men "desperate for a tussle in a locked toilet stall", but for a more intimate encounter black men had to find a white man as they had access to private spaces which were ill afforded to black residents.[78]

> [A]partheid was destroyed in those toilets. By men who had sex with men, regardless of class or race.[79]

Cruising was also important for closeted gay men who did not want to subsume themselves completely into Johannesburg's gay subculture, which began to steadily grow in the 1970s and 1980s, as it gave them anonymity ill-afforded to openly gay men. Speaking of his own cruising experience in the 1980s Levi recalls the secluded nature one expected:

> I mean you didn't have forty-two cameras in every corner those days … there was a kind of subtle underworld … it was more than subtle … you find your way. It's like kind of weird, just public loos were pretty much available in Hillbrow at that time … and you kind of took chances you'd meet people there.[80]

In the repressive atmosphere promoted by the NP, many gay men felt that they had to stay underground and that they must keep to themselves.[81] Yet the continuation of cruising guaranteed a sexual encounter that was not always available in other spaces.

Percy remembers that most of the time if he went to someone to initiate sex in cruising spaces he would be accepted by the other:

> Most of them I approach them, and I'd say ninety-nine point nine percent of the boys I approached never turned me down … I would approach the boy and the boy would be willing to have sex with me.[82]

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[77] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[78] Gevisser, *Lost and Found*, p. 197.
[79] Zackie Achmat. "My Childhood as an Adult Molester: A Salt River Moffie" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 334.
[80] Levi. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 19 August 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[81] Greta Schiller (director). 1998. Film. *The Man Who Drove With Mandela*. Belgium: Canvas.
[82] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.

For Percy this happened throughout his time cruising, from the 1950s into the 1990s. Levi had similar experiences. His first cruising experience took place in the 1970s, almost accidentally in the way he describes it:

> I was working in a store in Rosebank in the mall, at the time it was a clothing store, and I remember I was fifteen or sixteen and some guy came in, and ok there's a bit of an energy, and I figured out that he was interested, and he walked to the loo and I followed him. Next thing one thing led to another, they sort of leave the door open a bit … the desire took over and we sort of just took these risks. If a gap came your way it was something you did … there was the station, Park Station, was definitely a spot.[83]

Cruising was a guaranteed way for men to have a sexual encounter, and as the spaces where cruising took place were well-known amongst gay men, it continued despite the risks involved. It was also always seen as a once-off hook-up between men, with no interviewees claiming they maintained any relationships with people they met whilst out cruising, which further suggests it was purely intended for sexual encounters. Cruising spaces were not only well-known amongst gay men, but also became sites for gay bashing, and stories circulated about how men were "being gay-bashed, or beaten up, or mugged" which, according to Mark Gevisser's retelling of Johannesburg's cruising spaces during an interview, created a "mythology to cruising" in Johannesburg.[84] Levi was hijacked during a night out cruising, and first suspected the man he approached was an accomplice of the hijacker:

> I remember being in a hijack … I felt vulnerable because I, shouldn't have been there in the first place … I was parked by the tennis court and I saw this guy who I thought was kind of cute, and he drove around and I drove around, and I parked my car [next to his, facing opposite directions] … and the next thing he reversed back suddenly. I couldn't know what he was doing, my windows were open next thing I have a gun at my head, a guy had come from behind that [the man in the other car] had obviously seen and he drove off … I ran cross past the tennis courts to the other road and this guy [in the other car] is in a green 3-Series and I stopped and I said, "oh fuck, you know him?" … he said, "no man, I'm just trying to help you, get in".[85]

Whilst cruising spaces were often dangerous, this interaction also suggests a sense of camaraderie between gay men cruising. The two left, went back to Levi's home, and had sex because they felt they "might as well have a session" because that's what they had intended.[86]

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[83] Levi. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 19 August 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[84] Mark Gevisser. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 23 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[85] Levi. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 19 August 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[86] Ibid.

The dangers of cruising were often ignored in favour of the guaranteed sexual experiences which could be found for men who wanted instant gratification, and as such they existed as spaces in and around Johannesburg throughout the NP's rule.

Percy contrasts "gay life for blacks" with that of whites on an economic scale, noting that "gay life for blacks was very expensive" whilst for white gay men it was easier because they had places of their own where they could take men to:

> Whites were enjoying it because whites had their flats, they would go to hotels, they would drive around in cars and pick up boys, and go towards, to the wilds, to any other open spaces and have whatever they want to have. But with blacks then you will have to go behind the toilet or in the toilet [to have sex][87]

This economic mobility was linked to race as a factor of South Africa's history of 'separateness' and racial accessibility.[88] Spaces occurred where racial boundaries could be blurred, but they were few and far between, and often required black citizens to enter 'white-only' areas, making movement more risk-inducing than that of their white counterparts for fear of contravening pass laws. Meanwhile white citizens contravening the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 were not always fearful of being arrested because they were found to be gay, but rather that they would be arrested for public sex, masquerading, or any other 'indecency', as stated by Levi:

> I don't ever remember [arrests for being gay] happening around me. In those days there were a few clubs with gay men already. So, it [being gay] was kind of not punished, but not encouraged … I don't think I would've have ever felt that [fear of being arrested for being gay]. As much as I knew it was not okay, I didn't feel I would be arrested or being gay, I'd sort of feel I'd get arrested for having a bit of a session with someone in a public loo.[89]

Police justified their "repressive measures directed at [white] lesbian, gay and bisexual people [as a way] to treat homosexual activity in public places as a nuisance and to charge transgressors with sexual offences" which were often not linked to their sexuality, but included public indecency, sexual assault, and immoral soliciting.[90]

Coincidentally there was another location in Forest Town often regarded as a haven for many gay men, both white and black. 'Peter's Place', as the house became known. Phil, an

[87] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[88] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 18.
[89] Levi. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 19 August 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[90] Retief, "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager", p. 106.

interviewee of Mark Gevisser's, tells of Peter's Place as a location black gay men could go to if they missed curfew and the last train back into Soweto.[91] Evading curfew by dashing to friend's places in town, or even using their spaces as their own refuge in town becomes a common theme among some Soweto residents, as Percy, who also frequented Peter's Place, highlights:

> [W]e would go to, with the other boys, to the lecturer's place. If I'm not at Peter's Place we would go to the lecturer's place … Carl got somebody in town [who] left the room and gave us the key, and we maintained the room, we paid for the rent for the room and we would go, then we relaxed, we had our own place.[92]

The preoccupation with safety was thus not only about being caught with other men, or masquerading, but for queer black people in the city it manifested itself in also not being caught within white city limits after curfew. The 1923 Native Urban Areas Act, which was made stricter with the 1952 Urban Areas Act, allowed for an indiscriminate harassment of Africans by demanding their passes, making arrest a likely fear for all Africans in the city.[93] Finding safety in town once the last trains had left for Soweto became an understandable priority for queer black people. Travelling between Hillbrow and Soweto became a feature of black queer experiences, one different to white queer experiences which involved a safety unfamiliar to black residents of the city.

Creating Space in Hillbrow

With cruising proving to be more dangerous than it once was due to police entrapment in the city, white queer people had to find new spaces to carve in a society characterised by a repressive government. Demanding safe space came from experience and recognition that the city was alienating queer bodies. But the "right to the city [did] not demand all rights for all people" and, as such, queer black bodies were excluded from these spaces during the 1970s as gay white men sought to make their own spaces accessible only for themselves.[94] Demanding a "right to the city" first took form in Hillbrow's clubbing scene which began to thrive in the early 1970s. This had become possible for two reasons: the first was that Hillbrow had become

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[91] Gevisser, *Lost and Found*, p. 165.
[92] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[93] William Beinart. *Twentieth-Century South Africa*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) p. 158.
[94] Peter Marcuse. "Whose Right(s) to what City?" in Neil Brenner, Peter Marcuse and Margit Mayer (eds.) *Cities for People, Not for Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City*. (Oxon: Routledge, 2012) p. 35.

known for its bohemian reputation born out of increased urbanisation into the inner-city from mostly young, liberal whites.[95] The second reason can be traced to a relative allowance by police who allowed clubs to function as it allowed control over where they were, and kept them hidden. This tended to keep gay men away from cruising areas, and sent them indoors into club spaces.

> The flourishing of gay commercial life in the form of clubs and bars was accompanied, in the case of Hillbrow in Johannesburg at least, by the formalisation of an area where gay people had always lived into a clearly identifiable 'gay neighbourhood' … and [had] a new level of tolerance from other inhabitants. As the neighbourhood grew, the authorities decided to view Hillbrow's densely-populated flatland too as a 'gay venue' … choosing not to apply the same pressure on its streets as they did on other outdoor areas.[96]

Kanika Batra states that according to the NP and police, it was easier to control the movement of queer people if they remained indoors, and gave the added advantage of keeping them hidden from society.[97] Mark Gevisser's informant, Hannah, who ran a club in Johannesburg for queer people in the early 1970s, recalls a regular vice squad colonel who would visit to keep an eye on her and the club:

> He would come by every now and then for his bottle of whiskey. He said he had no objection to the club because he preferred to know that everyone was under one roof, rather than at Zoo Lake or Joubert Park.[98]

This notion of having everyone "under one roof" highlights the mindset of the police that it was easier to control Johannesburg's queer population if they were all kept in one space rather than scattered throughout the city. Hillbrow's bohemian nature, with a flourish of liberal minded white people entering the city, the gay subculture was able to develop relatively unimpeded. Gay clubs, bars and restaurants gained prominence throughout the 1970s, were "exclusively gay business ventures", and gave space in which a gay clientele were able to congregate together.[99] Hillbrow's rapidly growing gay community had popular clubs open throughout the decade: the Dungeon first opened a few weeks after the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 passed, Rocky's at the Continental and The New Library both opened in the early 1970s, and later still, The Butterfly at Skyline Hotel would become one of the most packed gay

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[95] Kanika Batra. 'Worlding Sexualities under Apartheid: From Gay Liberation to a Queer Afropolitanism'. *Postcolonial Studies*. (2016, 19:1) p. 40.
[96] Ibid, p. 38.
[97] Ibid, p. 37.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid, p. 25.

venues in the city. The Together Bar, or T-Bar as it was often called, was opened for lesbians in 1974 in Hillbrow's Hilton Court Hotel.[100]

Creating Space in Soweto

Soweto's first spaces of gay interaction developed in single-sex mining hostels. Throughout the country male-male sex among Africans was largely associated with mine hostels, as well as prisons, and were considered "somewhat embarrassing to colonial health officials" but could be tolerated by government officials as a way to "protect white women from the assumed scourge" of the so-called Black Peril.[101] Outside the hostels safe spaces for queer people to meet were scattered around the area, but not to the same extent as Hillbrow. Those that did exist were usually due to shebeen queens' seeing a gay clientele as being a guaranteed income due to them wanting to "get other men drunk" for sexual encounters.[102] Gay men had to then either go to hostels, the shebeens, or make their way into Hillbrow during the 1960s and 1970s if they wished to have any sexual interaction due to the limited space available for them in Hillbrow. This was done in cruising spaces, the most notable one where black men could go to the toilets in Park Station.

In Soweto it was impossible to take anyone home during the 1960s and 1970s, as it was likely one's parents or wives might find them and ostracize them. Although never stating it, Percy suggests that his parents thought he might be gay, but they ignored it because he eventually married a woman and fathered children.[103] The constant grapple between presenting oneself as straight in public, and privately living a 'gay life' more of a problem for Sowetan's who were unable to live alone than it does from Hillbrow residents who had been able to move away from their parents and into their own space. Economic marginalization had kept queer black South Africans from having the same freedom that came with being white. They lacked private spaces, lacked freedom of movement, and were left to find space in an actively anti-gay environment. Often this involved cruising in Soweto, but these were often dangerous to travel to and from.[104] Soweto did have a few shebeens scattered around which had a gay-friendly

[100] Ibid, pp. 39-41.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.

setting, and these were also places for queer black citizens to find each other, but also had their own danger, as leaving the shebeen with someone made one a target for gay-bashing.

Soweto's shebeen culture never developed its own gay-only source of entertainment, but rather some shebeen's expanded to include a "gay-friendly" outlook on its clientele which became important places for social interaction in the townships.[105] Shebeens were chosen by gay black men, rather than the shebeen queens. Prominent shebeen's included Lee's Place in Orlando East and Mhlanga Rocks. However, gay-friendly shebeens were "unstable and capricious", mostly due to liquor laws placed on black South Africans.[106] The shebeen queens would not complain, as they knew that "these [gay] boys bring money" and as such they protected their gay clientele whilst they were customers. Once word got out that a shebeen queen was friendly and open to gay men in her property, gay men would frequent the shebeen and claim it as their own.[107]

Queer people were also aware of the dangers shebeens presented, and they knew that they should not "go to the shebeens at twelve o'clock at night and walk back at home alone" because of the threat of being "raped and killed".[108] As they were spaces where queer people were known to congregate, and with the intoxication and violence of other residents' around, queer-bashing outside shebeens late at night was a threat involved for those at shebeens, and shebeen queens could only protect their patrons within specific parameters, meaning queer Sowetan's often had to find places outside of Soweto too. The lack of gay-friendly shebeens also meant that those that did exist in Soweto were often far apart from each other, far from resident's homes, and unable to bring large groups of queer people together in a social setting in the way Hillbrow was able to.[109] As such, Hillbrow and the inner-city still provided many of Johannesburg's queer black youth the most plausible chances of safely interacting with other queer people in the city.

[105] GALA. AM3160 (a) B2.2.3. Drafts/notes/routes.
[106] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 53.
[107] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[108] Melanie Judge. *Blackwashing Homophobia: Violence and the Politics of Sexuality, Gender and Race*. (New York: Routledge, 2018) pp. 35-36.
[109] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 53.

Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 and Black Queer Bodies

It must be noted that Select Committee debates and subsequent laws introduced were largely aimed at white male homosexuals, disregarded lesbians and was not used to police townships.[110] The urban black population had its own portrayal of homosexuality, with *Drum* magazine becoming the "first mass publication which discussed homosexuality" in the 1950s, portraying it as a "disgrace" and an "evil" in society.[111] Notably, this wasn't different to how many white South Africans and the NP viewed homosexuality. Socially conservative sexual morality is likely strongly related to a religious indifference towards homosexuality. Marc Epprecht suggests that there was a "cultural transfer of homophobia from Christian missionaries" which manifested itself within much of Southern Africa's population and solidified homosexuality a taboo.[112] Although violence has often been perpetrated against queer people of all backgrounds, recent studies[113] have shown black lesbians to be the main victims when it comes to violent displays of hetero-masculinity, thus giving them less space to express themselves within the hegemonic heteronormative norms of the city.[114] The system into which black South African citizens have been historically forced into has seen violence in black communities garner more media attention.[115] The visualisation of violence on black lesbian bodies renders white lesbians as "protected" and "invisible" to the public gaze.[116] Black lesbians openly living in Soweto were viewed in the public as being lesbian, whilst their white counter were able to escape public gaze by hosting private parties.

Showing oneself in public as openly queer has always been dangerous. Due to apartheid there was a lack of space available for black people in urban areas, and queer black people were left Soweto's compact streets having to find spaces to sexually engage with each other in a volatile space. Exposure and visibility in Soweto becomes more evident and is associated to a lack of safety for black queer people. Being exposed as openly lesbian in Soweto came with threats of

[110] du Pisani, 'Shifting Sexual Morality?', p. 189.
[111] Marc Epprecht. *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004) p. 147.
[112] Marc Epprecht. 'Sexuality, Africa, History'. *The American Historical Review*. (2009, 114:5) p. 1270.
[113] See: Polders & Wells, Wells, 2005; 2004; Rich, 2006; Love Not Hate Campaign, 2016.
[114] Judge, *Blackwashing Homophobia*", p. 21.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid, p. 56.

violence, often as a way to 'correct' womxn and make them straight.[117] Men were also routinely gay-bashed, and the economic struggles the black population had kept them away from enjoying the relative freedom that came with being white.

Conclusion

Whilst the NP and homophobic people created a dangerously homophobic climate in Johannesburg, queer people were still able to navigate space. The Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 was created for white gay men, and as such black queer bodies and white lesbians were able to navigate with more ease than white gay men. Homophobia within society had however deemed it necessary for them to find safety elsewhere, often creating their own spaces and finding each other in secret rather than in public.

Making space in Johannesburg, for both black Sowetans and white city-dwellers became dependent on where club-owners and shop-keepers were welcoming, as well as where law enforcement was lacking. It was in these spaces where Johannesburg's queer experience was able to develop in the post-war years whilst the NP focused its agenda on maintaining white support in an increasingly suburbanised residence in the city, moving its focus out of the inner city and onto fringe suburbs. Space was created in more liberal bases, but these spaces were still monitored. In Soweto, mostly by its residents, and in Hillbrow and its surrounds by an increasingly diminishing conservative police force who sought to keep gay men away from public spaces more than completely arresting every gay man they came into contact with within private or semi-private spaces, such as clubs.[118] Many houses and flats became safe havens for well-connected queer individuals, but it would take a number of years before Johannesburg's queer population sought to seek political consciousness. The 1970s gave rise to multiple queer clubs in Hillbrow, but by the end of the decade these were once more under scrutiny from the NP.

[117] Hugh McLean & Linda Ngcobo. "Abangibhamayo Bathi Ngimnandi (Those who Fuck me Say I'm Tasty): Gay Sexuality in Reef Townships" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 173.
[118] Daniel Conway. 'Queering Apartheid: The National Party's 1987 'Gay Rights' Election Campaign in Hillbrow'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (2009, 35:4) p. 852.

Chapter Two

Space is Queer: Creating Queer Space

> Integration has not worked anywhere else in the world. Why would it work in Hillbrow?[1]

Introduction

This chapter will seek to understand how the notion of same-sex relations came to be rejected by the apartheid state. It will further analyse how both the apartheid state and homophobic people forced queer people to find and create their own spaces where they were able to interact with each other outside of protected heteronormative spaces. The previous chapter analysed the increasing measures the National Party (NP) perpetuated in order to maintain heteronormativity within white society, and specifically in urban areas as they were deemed to be the prominent areas where "homosexuality [was] gaining ground in the country".[2] The Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 targeted white gay men in public spaces, but the homophobic nature of the Bill had the effect of perpetuating homophobia within broader heteronormative society. Whilst white gay men in Johannesburg were frequently harassed by the police, internalised homophobia within both Hillbrow and Soweto saw many queer people targeted by the public too, and forced further into secretive and covert meeting places. Queer people had to either gain entry to these places, or make themselves identifiable to other queer people in public by adopting personas or stylistic choices which could be identified by other queer individuals whilst not drawing attention to themselves within heteronormative society. Yet these tactics were not always successful, and homophobic violence became an acceptable part of society, as shall be seen, with particular reference to queer womxn in Soweto who were often targeted by straight men with the aim of turning them straight.[3] Pervasive homophobia had forced queer people to create spaces in which they could find safety amongst themselves.

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[1] 'Keep Hillbrow White', *The Star*, 30 July 1983.
[2] GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immorality Amendment Bill. – Misspellings appear on the box and folder, originally reads as: GALA. AM2656. Immorality Amendment Bill A: Report of the Select Committee of Immolarity (*sic*) Ammendment (*sic*) Bill.
[3] Hugh McLean & Linda Ngcobo. "Abangibhamayo Bathi Ngimnandi (Those who Fuck me Say I'm Tasty): Gay Sexuality in Reef Townships" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 173.

This chapter will then further seek to understand how queer people had created these spaces during the 1970s, and within specific areas in Johannesburg.

Queer people have always had to navigate heteronormative spaces in society, however volatile they might be, and often made to present themselves as heteronormative in these spaces. These public spaces have, however, been historically heteronormatively codified. Only by creating their own spaces have queer people been able to challenge societal norms and find spaces which do not come with the precarity of public spaces. In order to understand the need to create their own space, this chapter will first outline differing attitudes to white and black queer people within Johannesburg, first by highlighting a relative acceptance to male-to-male experimentation amongst black youth within South Africa, and then finding how homophobic notions changed this attitude. The chapter will then delve into personal accounts on how queer people highlighted their own sexuality and sexual roles within public society as a broad identifier to queer people around them. By analysing their public personas, it will become apparent how queer people were also victimised due to their visibility. The chapter will focus on the black female queer experience in Soweto as targets of homophobic abuse, as their abuse still has large, unaddressed ramifications today which should be placed within an historical context. It is due to large swaths of homophobia that queer people had to find their own spaces, and this chapter will further develop on the spaces which queer people created within Hillbrow and Soweto in order to find safety which was often non-existent within most heteronormative spaces in Johannesburg. The chapter will conclude with the white flight of Hillbrow which took place starting in the 1980s, and what that meant for Hillbrow's predominantly white queer clientele, but also seek to understand how Hillbrow's new black queer residency reacted, either by co-opting previously mostly white queer spaces, or creating their own new spaces.

Contextualizing Queer Socialisation

Growing up in Soweto, Percy noted that he would sexually interact with other boys with no penetration, but rather a form of external intercourse as, according to him "it was a common thing [for] Africans" to do.[4] Born in 1936, Percy's early experiences of queer interaction took place when he was fifteen in the early-1950s.[5] Legislation did not directly affect gay men in Soweto, due to its racialised implications, but during the 1960s it appears that sexual interaction

[4] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[5] Ibid.

became more difficult for black gay men. Perhaps largely due to religious reasons, at the time Percy had noticed that the many acceptable forms of queer interaction he was involved in previously, such as non-penetrative sex amongst boys, had been largely disavowed. This custom of *hlobonga* – to have external intercourse – is well documented amongst heteronormative youths in Zulu society, and interestingly still plays a role in the development of a queer African youth coming to terms with their own sexuality in the city.[6]

During the 1950s there was a somewhat widespread acceptability of covert homosexuality amongst black youth.[7] The 1960s demonstrated a shift in how heterosexual people viewed homosexuality.[8] During the 1950s the *Golden City Post* had organised the annual "Moffie Queen completion at the Kismet Theatre in Athlone" which was widely celebrated by the media.[9] Cape Town has tended to have a tolerance of gay spectacle, but these widely celebrated events would eventually be celebrated in Johannesburg too. For the 1960s and 1970s however, there is little to suggest that these gay spectacles were celebrated in Johannesburg, and only in the 1980s do heteronormative people attend and enjoy the events.[10] Whilst the NP focused its efforts on gay white men, who the state needed to use to help breed more white children, its homophobic and religious stance was filtered through various facets of society who also deemed homosexuality as contradictory to their own religious beliefs and helped further ostracize queer people from so-called 'respectable' society.[11] In order to self-identify amongst themselves within heteronormatively codified public spaces, queer people would have to find well-known spaces such as cruising locations or clubs, or they would have to make themselves appear queer.

Identifying Other Queer People

Various forms of male-male sexual practices between black urban youth took place throughout Soweto when they were able to find spaces in which they could be sexually active, often doing

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[6] Peter Delius & Clive Glaser. 'Sexual Socialisation in South Africa: a Historical Perspective'. *African Studies*. (2002, 61:1) p. 33.
[7] Dhianaraj Chetty. "A drag at Madame Costello's: Cape moffie life and the popular press in the 1950s and 1960s" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 118.
[8] *Drum*, January 1962.
[9] *Golden City Post*, 15 May 1955.
[10] GALA. GAL0001. GLOW A.1-A.2. Glow publications, SA Organisations publications (Box 1 of 11).
[11] Glen Retief. "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager: State Repression of Homosexuality in Apartheid South Africa" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 100.

so outside their homes which were safeguarded by their families.[12] In order to find other boys or men who gay men could interact with they would have to venture into public spaces, which in Soweto were often codified heteronormative spaces with its own subtle subversive queer sub-culture which would only be known by those immersed within the sub-culture. This could be done either by frequenting shebeens in Soweto which, by word of mouth, are known to be gay-friendly, or by recognising *skesana's* – a man who adopts a traditionally feminine persona – based on their style and gestures.[13] Thami, an interviewee of Hugh McLean and Linda Ngcobo recalled that recognising a *skenana* is based on "their movement, their attire and their queenish actions" while Lucky, another of their informants states that "to know another gay in the township is easy. First of all there is the beauty, then the movement and the attire" which all suggests that some gay men in townships take on more feminine roles in highlighting their sexuality to those around them.[14] Spotting a *skesana* would often be the simplest way of finding queer black sexual partner in Soweto, as the gay-friendly shebeens which did exist were "unstable and capricious", only accessible for queer youth if the shebeen-queen was accommodating and if the heteronormative crowds within the shebeen were kept under close scrutiny by the shebeen-queen and her workers.[15] By the 1970s shebeen-queens saw gay youth as a new clientele which would frequent their shebeens regularly, and two prominent, although still unstable, shebeens became the haunts of Soweto's black gay youth: Lee's Place and Mhlanga Rocks.[16] As mentioned in the previous chapter, shebeens were also dangerous spaces for queer people, as they were known to have queer people in them they became targets for intoxicated homophobes who were willing to violently attack queer people leaving shebeens. Whist there were a few spaces where gay youth could meet in Soweto prior to this, they were either in home's where parents were out, or, as was the most prominent case, public toilets or the Wilds, which often posed more risk as they were completely in public view to those around them, whilst lesbian womxn had to find other ways to find sexual partners, often using dress too as an indicator of their sexuality.

[12] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[13] Hugh McLean and Linda Ngcobo. "Abangibhamayo bathi ngimnandi (Those who fuck me say I'm Tasty) in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 171.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Mark Gevisser. "A Different Fight for Freedom: A History of South African Lesbian and Gay Organisation from the 1950s to 1990s" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 53.
[16] Ibid p. 68.

Butch and Femme

Queer black womxn, most of whom identified as lesbian, found themselves emotionally attracted to other girls in their youth. Unlike boys, who would participate in physical intimacy with each other as their forms of experimenting, girls seemed to move towards the physical through the emotional. This is largely suggested through the lack of womxn cruising, whereas men would cruise explicitly for quick sexual encounters.

> Women are wonderful to me. This thing started very young with me. I wanted very much to marry my best friend, who was a girl.[17]

> From an early age I knew I was different. I never had feelings for men and I always had deep feelings for women … I shocked the whole village in Standard 6, when a rumour spread that I had proposed to another girl. It's true, I was madly in love with this girl, and I would follow her everywhere, from the river to her home.[18]

Highlighting their emotional attraction before physical desire suggests that queer womxn would most likely prefer emotional intimacy before they become physical with other womxn. Yes, they were physically attracted to other womxn, but there was often, but not always, more to that attraction than a simple desire to become physically intimate. In their study on sociosexuality, Jeffry Simpson and Steven Gangestad highlight that it is more likely for men to be possess more attitudes to sex and engage more frequently in uncommitted sexual relations than womxn.[19] Recent research suggests that men are more inclined to focus on their sexual drive and physicality, whilst women frame their sexual behaviour within "the context of an intimate relation".[20] The suggestion that men and women perceive intimacy and sexual desire differently may stem from early socialization in childhood. In childhood development boys are pressured to conform to the rejection of femininity, including showing intimacy in friendships, whilst girls are permitted to "express emotions in interpersonal interactions" with their friends.[21] Analysing research in sociosexuality it becomes evident that womxn would be more inclined to forming intimate bonds with each other prior to sexual activity, whilst men would

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[17] Tanya Chan-Sam. "Five Women: Black Lesbian Life on the Reef" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 192.
[18] Vera Vimbela & Mike Olivier. "Climbing on her Shoulders: An Interview with Umtata's 'First Lesbian'" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 194.
[19] Jeffry A. Simpson & Steven W. Gangestad. 'Individual Differences in Sociosexuality: Evidence for Convergent and Discriminant Validity'. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. (1991, 60:1) p. 870.
[20] Lydia A. Shrier & Emily A. Blood. 'Momentary Desire for Sexual Intercourse and Momentary Emotional Intimacy Associated With Perceived Relationship Quality and Physical Intimacy in Heterosexual Emerging Adult Couples'. *The Journal of Sex Research*. (2015) p. 2.
[21] Dorie Giles Williams. 'Gender, Masculinity-Femininity, and Emotional Intimacy in Same-Sex Friendship'. *Sex Roles*. (1985, 5:6) p. 589.

be more willing to engage in sexual activity without intimacy. This does not speak to all men and womxn, but suggests a likelihood, and is evident with a majority of respondents spoken to for this research. Forming intimate bonds with each other becomes a recurring theme for queer womxn in Johannesburg exploring their sexuality and friendship.

The lack of queer spaces which were targeted to womxn required them to find other ways to meet, and in Hillbrow amongst middle-class white womxn this was often done in small cliques of friends organised by profession. Teacher's would associate with other teachers, nurses with other nurse, lawyers with other lawyers. Entry into these cliques was either by word of mouth in the workplace, or inventive advertising. Hannah, an informant for Mark Gevisser, met her first lover through a newspaper advertisement which read: 'Lady interested in motor mechanics wishes to meet same'.[22] The cliques developed alongside gay clubs, and remained insular because queer womxn were unable to risk their sexuality being disclosed. There were a few clubs which allowed queer womxn entry, but lesbian social life mainly "revolved around private parties in flats" where they were able to find safety.[23] It was in these spaces with only a handful of womxn who were carefully selected to gain entry that womxn were able to form close bonds with each other that was not available to men who found themselves cruising.

When there was an emotional bond formed, queer womxn would perform their sexual intimacies with one another. S'Bu Kheswa, an informant who grew up in Soweto in the 1960s and 1970s, talks about his experimentation pre-transition, when he had still identified as a closeted lesbian in Soweto, but immediately takes the conversations towards appearance:

> Well as I said, I've experimented mostly with my friends, you know, touching and kissing, and stuff like that. You know, but mostly, you know, ja, as I said what was important for me was my look, my *butch* look.[24]

Bongie, a Sowetan interviewed by Tanya Chan Sam, also talks about how she first interacted with other girls, this time in boarding school during the late 1970s and early 1980s in Nelspruit:

> So you will be friends and share things. Very often this friendship allows you to hold hands, kiss, talk in whispers: because you are sweethearts or sweeties … my mother doesn't know [that I am lesbian], but she always asks why I dress so *butch* – I never wear dress, you see.[25]

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[22] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 19.
[23] Ibid, p. 20.
[24] S'Bu Kheswa. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 04 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[25] Chan-Sam, "Five Women", p. 192

Bongie's *butch* appearance is a theme for many lesbians in Soweto, so her *butch* style may have been created whilst in Soweto prior to moving to her boarding school in Nelspruit. S'Bu's attention to a *butch* presentation is, as with Bongie, a way of presenting as queer, and a way to highlight their own ambivalence towards traditional notions of femininity. A *butch* style and appearance thus became a way for queer womxn to codify their sexuality and roles in public spaces.

Appearance becomes a recurring theme for many lesbians. Sexual intimacy is very much part of their coming out process, but how they presented themselves to those around them — both their families and their peers — appears to be equally as important, either appearing as *butch* or *femme*. As previously mentioned, appearance and dress. becomes a signifier in space which allows other womxn to know one's sexuality. By displaying a *butch* appearance, queer womxn were able to enter heteronormative space whilst showing their sexuality.

Finding Safety in Familial Relations

Familial relations play an important role in coming out. If one's family was more accepting it made it easier for individuals to come out to those outside their family. Speaking on coming out, S'Bu, a transman from Soweto, first came out to his family as a lesbian:

> [When I came out] there was no drama about [me coming out]. There was no stop this, or chase you out of home, anything like that. There wasn't such things. You know, as I said, it's not resistant, but it's like, please … keep it low … there were no problems, because traditionally for instance, with funerals and things like that, girls must dress this way and do this, at home they never, never put me in those things, so I would go to things in my trousers, in my butch look, nobody ever said "you can see all women are covered, where's your cover?" there was never, never, never an issue.[26]

Two things are important to note here. Firstly, having the safety and general acceptance of their family, S'Bu was able to come out and not face familial persecution and ostracization at home. This further highlights complexities within Soweto, as the township was not entirely homophobic and there were spaces of safety to be found. Secondly, S'Bu, like other womxn, used dress as a defining factor of their identity, and tried to maintain a masculine appearance pre-transition:

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[26] S'Bu Kheswa. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 04 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.

> One day, [walking] from the shops, local shops, there's this group of guys just standing by the corner, they are my neighbours, so as I'm passing this one guy comes to me "hey, you know, as you were walking this way I really, really thought you were a guy, until you were closer that I saw your chest". That crushed me, you know, that crushed me completely, that there's something that gives me away [as a womxn].[27]

Female socialisation, beyond sexual interaction, had a lot to do with dress styles and presentation. Divided into *butch* and *femme*, queer womxn would often play normalized gender roles in the household, with one womxn doing the stereotypical masculine routine, whilst the other played the role of the housewife. This wasn't always the case, but still happened often enough that it thoroughly developed amongst both white and black queer womxn. Perhaps more of a way for *butch* lesbians to signify their sexuality through dress and presentation, the *butch*/*femme* divide articulated a social construct within queer relationships, but further signified the roles they also wished to take part in within society, the workplace, and amongst other people outside of their queer circles.

Speaking on her own experience of dress, Zozo, a lesbian from Soweto in the 1970s, explains the different perceptions of those around her when she's in Soweto compared to when she's in town:

> I have problems when I have to attend course and workshops. Especially when I have to go out of Soweto. Here in Soweto most of the people know me and where I stand. Even my boss knows that I am a lesbian. Outside of Soweto people look at me and they ask if I am a man or a woman, and sometimes it hurts when I overhear such things. In most cases when I am attending workshops I wear civilian clothes and people would have questions about that. I don't have even one skirt, the only skirt I have is part of my uniform.[28]

Obviously fortunate that her family and those she works with knows she's lesbian, she exemplifies the duality of a lived experience. Accepted and rejected, Zozo's dress preference hindered her, but also allows her a sense of fulfilment. She struggled to find a "man's uniform" which is "better [than females clothes] because trousers and shirts are the same" and require less hassle than constantly having to present herself in a way she finds discomforting.[29] For both S'Bu and Zozo their family's acceptance of them helped in their coming out process, but

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[27] Ibid.
[28] Busi Kheswa and Saskia Wieringa. "'My Attitude is Manly … A Girl Needs to Walk on the Aisle': Butch-Femme Subculture in Johannesburg, South Africa" in Ruth Morgan and Saskia Wieringa (eds.) *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives*. (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2005) p. 216.
[29] Ibid, p. 217.

they still had to face challenges outside of a familial context which idealised the norms of a way womxn were expected to dress and behave in society.

Shay, a white lesbian who frequented Hillbrow in the 1970s, born into white suburbia, had a similar experience to Zozo:

> [I wore] skirts and sort of blouses and things like that. It was unusual [for me]. I knew everyone was going to give [me] a look because [I] wasn't dolled up with [my] hat and gloves and all of this. And then at that point I cut my hair which was very unusual which it was at that time when women were wearing these bangs and curls in the front and all this kind of jazz. And my *parents were quite cool with that as well* … I walked into a barber shop … I said "Solly I want you to cut my hair". And he looked at me and said "don't be daft, I can't cut your hair" … I approached lots of hairdressers and they said "no my dear your hair is so beautiful don't cut it blah blah" … and again if you walked down the street with short hair people kind of looked at you as though you were something that had come out a hole in the ground of something like that … I worked with machines and spanners … [so] it was a marvellous excuse to go to the MD and say "look I can't climb up and down these ruddy great machines in skirts, can I wear slacks?" And he kind of looked at me and said "God that's a most unusual request but if you have to you have to. But please make it look as elegant as you can".[30] (emphasis mine).

What Shay, S'Bu, and Zozo highlight is how heteronormative society perceives them, but also how they are still willing to maintain who they are even through heteronormative backlash, although this is hinted as being due to a strong support group which each of them mentions. They all maintain comfort in a more masculine dress style, they all work, and as such, are able to provide, and in doing so, they all perform the heteronormative idea of masculinity within a household. Not all queer womxn presented themselves as *butch*, but those that did were seen in public as being less feminine, and therefore subjected to more backlash over their stylistic choices and their self-presentation than *femme* womxn would be subject to. As such, when they did navigate space, *butch* womxn had to be more conscious of their surroundings and the people they interacted with in order to find safety in a city which would rather render them invisible at best, and attempt to convert them into heteronormative members of society at worst.

Coming out through style allowed womxn to subvert heteronormative space around them, highlighting their distinct disdain to heteronormativity, and allowing other womxn to notice their sexuality. Whilst there were certainly risks involved, presenting themselves as *butch*

[30] GALA. AM3160 (B): C4.1.1. Joburg Tracks. Tracks Interview: Shay.

became a way of showing who they were, and that they could be approached, something that would not have been as possible in heteronormative spaces without the signifier.[31]

Navigating Space

Graeme Reid and Teresa Dirsuweit note that "while most people feel that sexuality belongs to the private space of the home", the reality is that public spaces are coded to be heterosexual. In order for queer members of society to find safety in an overwhelming heteronormative space they have been required to create their own overt, "publicly codified gay space" separate from the transcendence of heteronormative spaces.[32] These spaces have often taken the form of clubs, bars, restaurants, and cruising locations throughout Hillbrow and its surrounds. Queer spaces in Soweto had not gone through the same form of self-imposed queer-identification, and had rather been formed through processes of compromise between shebeen queens and their queer patrons, as shebeen queens saw it to be profitable to allow their shebeens to be gay-friendly without being overtly "gay spaces" as was the case with Hillbrow's gay clubs.[33]

> [T]here were shebeens which were gay-friendly. Two or three shebeens in Orlando which were gay-friendly and one in White City was also gay friendly … A friend will come and tell you "Hey, we can go to such and such a place, I went there for three consecutive weekends and nobody [harassed me for being gay]". Then you get interested and you want to go and see. Then you'll go there, then you'll see that the lady, the shebeen queen they will just [say] "hey my boys, hey my boys, how are you?". Then she will be interested in these boys because knowing that because these boys brings money, because … passive guys would buy drinks for these boys, to get them drunk so that they can get them to go … So that's how I got to know that those [shebeens] are gay friendly.[34]

The safety provided by the shebeen queens allowed Soweto's queer youth to find space in which they could socialize with each other in relative safety, again highlighting complexities in the township.

If they were able to make the right connections in the city, queer black people had access to the homes of white citizens.

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[31] S'Bu Kheswa. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 04 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[32] Graeme Reid and Teresa Dirsuweit. 'Understanding Systemic Violence: Homophobic Attacks in Johannesburg and its Surrounds'. *Urban Forum*. (2002) p. 100.
[33] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 53.
[34] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.

> [W]e would go to … the lecturer's place [in town]. If I'm not at Peter's Place [in Forest Town] we would go to the lecturer's place, the lecturer will throw a party. Most whites will throw parties, even during the apartheid days, then we will go to the parties. But then the music was very soft, and there was no noise because of the police … Because you would go out [into town] late in the evening and whites would come and pick people up there. I would go with these boys but I was not interested in, most of the time I would be left out there because I was not interested in whites. I just wanted to go there because [my friends] wanted us to go as a group. And I enjoyed them. Then I met quite a number of whites who understood me, who'd get boys at the station and invite me to the place and say "come on Percy, we've got so many boys, you can come and you can pick and choose". Then I'd go out there [to their homes].[35]

Percy's connections with white gay men in and around Hillbrow allowed him access to private spaces in the city few other black residents had access to. Those who did have access were able to attend private parties in white homes, and in these spaces had a sanctuary in which they could participate in sexual activities which were ill-afforded in public space outside of cruising locations, or even private spaces in Soweto as many young queer people still lived with their families.[36] Older queer people in Soweto who did not have the support of their families, such as Percy, were also forced into marriages and had to pass much of their lives as heteronormative, also reducing the possibility of private spaces in Soweto where they could be sexually active.[37]

The lack of space in Soweto where queer people could be sexually active did mean that many had to find spaces in the inner-city, with clubs and cruising scenes acting as gateways into private white-owned homes and flats. Percy, navigating these spaces throughout the 1970s and 1980s recalls how these spaces were not merely used for sexual encounters, but also spaces of refuge from the apartheid states pass laws, as he and many of his friends and acquaintances would make their way to homes owned by his white friends if they were to miss the last trains out of Johannesburg. They would stay in their friends' homes, and if the homes were searched by police, as happened on a few occasions, they would stay in the "servants quarters" for safety.[38] Phil, an informant of Mark Gevisser, also recalls having done this, having pretended that he was the domestic worker's boyfriend which, at worst, would have her "charged with contravening pass regulations, but at least she [and Phil] would evade the far more severe

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Mark Gevisser. *Lost and Found in Johannesburg*. (Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2014) p. 165.
[37] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[38] Ibid.

Immorality Act" should they be caught.[39] Peter's Place, where both Phil and Percy found themselves, was a place where many young Sowetans would head for safety, often filling up with boys who missed the last train:

> From the way Phil tells it, you might indeed *plan* to miss the last train back to Soweto: 'Oh brother, he said, slapping this thigh, 'those were the days! His room would be full, so full of young men who are afraid to be roaming the streets at nights.' As was often the custom, Peter raised his bed on sandbags and bricks to protect him from demons, 'and he would make a bedding all around him for everyone coming in. I remember one time it was so full that you couldn't open the door. I slept against the door, but in the morning, when I woke up, I was next to the bed, maybe even under the bed, because those were the days, if you have got someone gay next to you, you'd enjoy yourself for all the dry months that you never had a gay person with you!'[40]

These spaces provided young gay boys with safety, but also sexual experiences which were tough to find in Soweto, and as such places like Peter's Place and the lecturer who Percy visited became havens where boys could escape the confines of apartheid, and at the same time find comfort with another boy. Evidently access to the city provided a level of safety that not all queer Sowetans were able to afford.

Percy, Phil, and other black Sowetan's had access to some white-owned homes in Johannesburg, and were also able to cruise in and around Park Station, but gay clubs operating in Hillbrow were loath to accommodate a black clientele during the 1970s. Even with a proliferation of clubs through the 1970s in Hillbrow, black gay men were denied entrance, and those who had remained present in and around Hillbrow during the previous year's recall that they were unable to access clubs until the 1980s. Paul Mokgethi, a prominent queer activist from Soweto, recalls that he only started accessing gay clubs in Hillbrow in 1982, at the age of 20, even though previously he had been involved in queer gatherings in Soweto. Hillbrow's racial makeup and liquor laws made it dangerous for club owner's to accommodate black patrons, and even when they were able to access these spaces in the 1980s, they were still questioned, and often times refused entry.[41] But gay clubs were prominent, and although there were a few which opened and closed in and around Hillbrow before the Forest Town raid of 1966, more opened and remained during the 1970s, as well as other clubs. Hillbrow's club

[39] Gevisser, *Lost and Found*, p. 165.
[40] Ibid, pp. 165-166.
[41] GALA. AM3160 (B): C4.1.1. Joburg Tracks. Tracks Interview: Paul.

scene was prominent across sexual borders, and it was not just gay clubs which proliferated the area.

An important facet of queer social spaces in Hillbrow were the various clubs that opened up which catered to a mostly gay clientele. Chick Venter's club near Park Station had been one of at least two clubs which, although maintaining a predominantly gay clientele, was also frequented by white working class lesbians. Chick Venter's establishment had been in operation since the late 1950s and remained one of the longest lasting club spaces for lesbian womxn. The other club which was accessible to lesbians, Spiders' Web in Jeppe Street, only operated for a short period of time in the early 1960s.[42] Whilst there were clubs and bars in Hillbrow through the 1960s and before, their presence grew and characterised Hillbrow's gay scene of the 1970s.

The proliferation of clubs in the 1970s was largely due to the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 which had sought to minimise homosexuality in public spaces such as toilets and cruising venues, and also the rise in club spaces overall during the decade, as urban spaces became hotbeds of "nightclubs [which] were attractive venues for younger white South Africans … removed from the moral confines of suburban white South Africa" and able to form various subcultures which did not conform to suburbia.[43] The effect of this was that queer people had taken themselves into bars and clubs as a way to move out of sight of the police presence which had begun to stringently target more public venues. Whilst this lessened the freedom of movement of gay men who had been cruising, it had the unexpected effect of formalising gay subculture in clubs and bars.[44]

Gay clubs, although not explicitly political, were spaces in which gay men were able to resist heteronormativity and construct their own subculture within apartheid's carefully manufactured heteronormative state.[45] The move from cruising locations to the inside of clubs and bars had meant that they were easier to maintain oversight over, as well as hidden from the public's view. In 1969 Ronnie Oelofsen opened the Dungeon Club, which became one of the longest running gay clubs in Johannesburg. The club opened a few weeks after the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 had been promulgated, and on its opening night included *sakkie-*

[42] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 29.
[43] Daniel Conway. 'Queering Apartheid: The National Party's 1987 'Gay Rights' Election Campaign in Hillbrow'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (2009, 35:4), p. 852.
[44] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 37.
[45] Carolin, 'Apartheid's Immorality Act', p. 114.

sakkie[46] which contributed to its predominantly Afrikaans clientele. Oelofsen claims that The Dungeon was able to operate because of a strict set of rules it followed:

> As long as there were no minors on the premises and you were not selling liquor, you were safe. The only time I have ever been raided was when I showed a banned movie one Sunday night.[47]

Oelofsen may also have been able to keep the club in operation without much query from police due to his relationship with inner-city town councillors, who he allowed to use the venue for senior-citizens parties.[48] The Butterfly, located at the Skyline Hotel on Pretoria Street in Hillbrow, opened in the early 1970s and quickly became one of the most frequented gay clubs in Hillbrow, well known for its status as a 'rental area' where one could find men cruising following the decline of Park Station as a cruising location.[49] Throughout the 1970s many gay clubs and bars opened in Hillbrow and its surrounds, and the area gained a reputation of being gay-friendly. Whilst many white gay men were easily able to access Hillbrow's clubs and bars in the 1970s, black and poor men were unable to gain entry and were still left to cruise, a culture which continued throughout apartheid, although following the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 became increasingly dangerous.[50] Cruising remained prominent even with the proliferation of gay clubs for both white and black gay men in Johannesburg, with some white men preferring to cruise rather than go to clubs as it almost always guaranteed a sexual interaction.[51]

The social stratification which came with white-only clubs and bars which required entrance fees meant that a majority of those in attendance were middle-class white gay men. The lack of racial and class integration within these spaces may have developed a notion of white gay men being ambivalent to racial inequality in the country, as their ideas on race would not have been challenged due to the lack of inclusivity inside clubs. Robert Morrell notes that "working class, black and gay men were excluded from … hegemonic masculinities" but have in various times fallen under the "umbrella of hegemonic masculinity" and have been able to exclude others, most notably women, as they have benefitted from patriarchal structures of society.[52] Gay clubs in the 1970s were able to exclude black patrons and, as shall be seen in the next

[46] Traditional Afrikaans folk dancing music.
[47] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 37.
[48] Ibid, p. 40
[49] Ibid, p. 40-41.
[50] Ibid, p. 37.
[51] Levi. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 19 August 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[52] Robert Morrell. 'Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (1998, 24:4) p. 608.

chapter, this had its own ramifications on Hillbrow's gay political revival when white gay men chose to support the NP in order to maintain Hillbrow's status as a white-only area. Morrell further notes that hegemonic masculinity produced by the state is constantly produced and contested, an idea which is evident in Hillbrow's gay clubs during the 1970s.[53] Whilst white gay men were challenging the state's heteronormativity by claiming space in Hillbrow, they were still producing racial notions of who could enter the space, as black men and womxn, as well as poor whites were unable to gain entry into gay clubs and bars, further stratifying apartheids racial legacy in their own queer groupings. Poor whites, however, were able to access cheaper bars in Hillbrow, something queer black people would still have been unable to do. Their exclusion was only limited to their finances. Mark Gevisser recalls that when he first started going to gay clubs during the 1970s he doesn't "remember ever seeing black people [in the clubs]".[54] Lack of entry meant that an earlier generation of black gay men who had been cruising in Hillbrow and interacting with other white men were now ostracised from large swathes of Hillbrow's queer scene, and were required to risk cruising with increased surveillance, or create their own spaces in Soweto.

There was a distinction between black residents who had access to the city, and those who did not. Access to Johannesburg's inner-city allowed Sowetan residents a relative safety in which they could more openly express their sexuality due to the liberal leanings of many of the inner-city's residents. The compact layout of Soweto, as well as its residents' overwhelming conservative view on sex and sexuality, derived from a Christian view on morality much like the NP and its constituents, helped formulate homophobia aimed at Soweto's queer residents, in much the same way homophobia played a role in sections of white society too, which could only be escaped via queer-friendly shebeens which were only sporadically dotted around Soweto, or access to Johannesburg's pink inner-city spaces. Paul Mokgethi recalls how he had to remain indoors during the 1970s whilst in Soweto, as if he were to leave his house with his friend that he was sexually involved with they would be questioned by other boys. He and his friends' would know that they had to be home by "five o'clock .. because our parents are coming [home]" which could have ramifications if they were caught by either their parents' or other boys' who might find them.[55] S'Bu mentions how in order to have permanent or even semi-permanent access to Hillbrow, Sowetans had to be able to either afford the residential

[53] Ibid, p. 609.
[54] Mark Gevisser. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 23 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[55] GALA. AM3160 (B): C4.1.1. Joburg Tracks. Tracks Interview: Paul.

prices in the city, or they had to have access to their own private transport for safety, as public transport became dangerous for overtly queer people.[56] Access to the city gave queer people safety, but only if they could afford it, or, as in Percy and Phil's cases, they were able to find white residents who were welcoming. Sowetans who were unable to afford the relative safety Hillbrow provided were required to remain in Soweto and navigate the few spaces of safety there: the few shebeens, the fields, or the hostels.[57]

Homophobia Endangering Queer Bodies

> The patterns of conduct associated with hegemonic masculinity are usually authoritative, aggressive, heterosexual, physically brave, sporty, and competitive. This hegemonic masculinity is celebrated, presented as an ideal and invested with power. Non-hegemonic masculinity is a move away from power and is subordinate.[58]

Notions of homophobia are instilled in children through parenting, friendships, religious groups, or schooling, but the minds of children are used to construe notions of difference. What makes these notions of homophobia turn from seeing and maintaining a mere hatred of the other different in a South African context is the high levels of violence which has been perpetuated in the country, drawing from notions of masculinity and the emasculation of black South Africans during apartheid. In order to recover from this, Pumla Dineo Gqola has argued that black men perform hypermasculinity, often with violence, in order to regain their notion of manhood, and direct their violence to vulnerable others, be it women, gender non-conformers, or anybody with a non-heteronormative sexuality or non-heteronormative appearance. She argues that the glamourisation of violence through media has also attributed to the notion of hypermasculinity as being part of radical transformative politics, thereby silencing those who speak up against it as being part of an anti-liberation movement.[59]

Townships, then, with their minimal protection of queer bodies and identifiable safe spaces make all space vulnerable, with rape, largely against queer black womxn, commonplace as a

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[56] S'Bu Kheswa. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 04 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[57] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[58] Deevia Bhana. "Violence and the Gendered Negotiation of Masculinity Among Young Black School Boys in South Africa" in Robert Morrell and Lahoucine Ouzgane (eds.) *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005) p. 207.
[59] Pumla Dineo Gqola. *Rape: A South African Nightmare*. (Johannesburg: MFBooks Johannesburg, 2015), pp.152 – 153.

form of 'correction' to their sexuality.[60] Segregating the black urban community and leaving them economically marginalized, along with migrant labour, hostels, and a stark gender divide due to a lack of access to the city for women, helped harness a culture of violence among the urban poor, most visible in townships such as Soweto.[61] Although Soweto was not monolithically homophobic, as expressed throughout, many lesbians found it to be more homophobic than Johannesburg. The permeation of violence into everyday life normalises violence, homophobia, and toxic masculinity in order for men to attain to notions of manhood. Yet this violence, as seen previously, is homophobic in nature and took place in Hillbrow too, but due to the nature of reporting, in Soweto it was black womxn who were always seen as the victims, whilst in Hillbrow it was white men.

Lesbians living in the townships also found central Johannesburg to be safer. Expressing or acting on attraction to other womxn was seen as less risky in central Johannesburg than in the township environment.[62] This is not to further propagate the notion of blackness being violent, rather the system into which black South African citizens have been historically forced into has seen violence in black communities garner more media attention.[63] The visualisation of violence on black lesbian bodies renders white lesbians as "protected" and "invisible" to the public gaze.[64] Black lesbians openly living in Soweto were viewed in the public as being lesbian, whilst their white counterparts were able to escape public gaze by hosting private parties. Speaking on contrasting experiences of space in later years, Kekeletso, a black lesbian speaks on this issue of visibility and invisibility during Pride:

> [F]or example we had Joburg Pride, we went to march in Rosebank where people are hiding behind their big windows not even interested. Nobody will see that you're lesbians. And it's safe. I get drunk, I know I can take a taxi, then I go back home. But going to Soweto, we march, you know, for a big community, where you're visible as a lesbian … [Whites] are very private. I am very more exposed. We have next-door neighbours who know more about your issues than in the white community.[65]

Exposure and visibility in Soweto becomes more evident and is associated to a lack of safety for black lesbians. Being exposed as openly lesbian in Soweto came with threats of violence,

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[60] Reid and Dirsuweit, 'Understanding Systemic Violence', p.105.
[61] Ingrid Palmary, Janine Rauch and Graeme Simpson. "Violent Crimes in Johannesburg" in Richard Tomlinson, Robert A. Beauregard, Lindsay Bremner and Xolela Mangcu (eds.) *Emerging Johannesburg: Perspectives on the Postapartheid City*. (Great Britain: Routledge, 2003) p. 102.
[62] Ibid, p. 108.
[63] Judge, *Blackwashing Homophobia*, p. 56.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

often as a way to 'correct' womxn and make them straight.[66] Bev Ditsie, a black lesbian in Soweto had her house surrounded by "about twenty angry men … demanding that [she] come with them so that they could teach [her] a lesson" after she was publicly outed. Her grandmother recalls the incident, and said the men said that "they wanted to show [Ditsie] that [she was] a woman, [she was] not gay".[67] These threats of corrective rape has often been a reality for many black queer womxn. Soweto's compact nature takes safety away from queer residents. What all this highlights is that throughout the NP's regime homophobic violence was rampant, and in Soweto was mostly directed towards visibly queer womxn.

Homophobic violence in Hillbrow and its surrounds increased following official suppression of homosexuality. Gay spaces, recognised by many, were made to be easy targets for homophobic crimes. Prior to legislation criminalizing homosexuality, gay-bashing was already occurring in the inner-city, but the culture of gay-bashing increased as the inner-city became more overtly queer "with a vibrant 'health club' and bathhouse culture developing in the inner-city" as well as the growing presence of gay clubs.[68] The overt queerification of the city, as well as public perceptions of queer people, made the inner-city a prime location for violent homophobia as homophobic members of society knew exactly where they would be able to find queer people who they could lash out on. R.W. Connell argues that homophobic violence "is not just to abuse individuals. It is also to draw social boundaries, defining 'real' masculinity by its distance from the rejected" which is more often than not done through the rhetoric of masculine and feminine, with gay men seen as feminized men and lesbian womxn as masculine men.[69] Judith Butler argues that masculinity and masculine reasoning is based on the "exclusion of other possible bodies" through race, gender, and sexuality.[70] This othering of queer people can be linked to NP ideologies of othering different races, and the pervasive violent oppression of non-whites seeps into a permissive culture of violence towards all seen as 'other', in this case queer people. Gay-bashing became permissive in the queer-friendly inner-city as a way of reinstating masculine norms perpetuated by the NP and its white, conservative constituency. Whilst in Soweto homophobic violence was directed towards visible womxn, Hillbrow's violence was mostly directed towards gay men, as they were the

[66] McLean & Ngcobo, "Abangibhamayo Bathi Ngimnandi", p. 173.
[67] Beverly Palesa Ditsie and Nicky Newman (directors). 2001. Film. *Simon & I*. South Africa: See Thru Media/Steps for the Future.
[68] Marius Pieterse. 'Perverts, Outlaws and Dissidents: (Homo)Sexual Citizenship and Urban Space in Johannesburg'. *Urban Forum*. (2015, 26) p. 101.
[69] R.W. Connell. *Masculinities – Second Edition*. (California: University of California Press, 2005) p. 40.
[70] Judith Butler. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. (New York: Routledge, 1993) p. 49.

most visible on the streets. Spaces that are known to be gay venues have shown to have a significant number a violence related to sexuality, with men often the perpetrators of violence.[71] This made Hillbrow prime for gay-bashing, being known as housing many queer-friendly spaces, it had become easy for men to target a queer community of people.

Greying the Pink City

Edwin Cameron remembers Hillbrow in the 1980s as being a "crossroad of class and race" with men of "mixed-race descent, rather than Africans" found frequenting the area more often.[72] Research suggests this, but Levi remembers it differently, saying that he never saw many people who weren't white in Hillbrow during the 1980s.[73] Saul Dubow reflects on the process of Hillbrow's 'greying' during the 1980s:

> In inner city Johannesburg, the cosmopolitan suburb of Hillbrow began to go 'grey' during the 1980s as Indian and coloured apartment-seekers, followed by Africans, ignored the strict provisions of the Group Areas Act … In the shifting geography of segregated spaces, the government was effectively relinquishing control of inner city Johannesburg in the knowledge that its real urban support-base was considerably suburbanized.[74]

The gradual racial integration of Hillbrow caused alarm among many of South Africa's right-leaning politicians, but was welcomed by progressives. There was a mixture of views amongst white South Africans over the racial integration of Hillbrow during the 1980s.

Hillbrow's racial integration drastically increased following a 1982 court case, *State versus Govender*, in which Judge Goldstone concluded that "people convicted of living in white group areas should not be automatically evicted" unless they were given alternative accommodation.[75] The ruling came following an appeal by an Indian woman, Mrs Gladys Govender, whose family faced eviction from their Mayfair home in Johannesburg, an area reserved for whites. Due to the housing shortage faced by Indian and coloured communities in Johannesburg, the inner-city witnessed an influx of non-whites following the Govender judgement, now knowing that it would be increasingly difficult for them to be evicted.

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[71] Reid and Dirsuweit, 'Understanding Systemic Violence', p. 108.
[72] E. Cameron. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 2 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[73] Levi. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 19 August 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[74] Saul Dubow. *Apartheid, 1948-1994*. (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014) p. 242.
[75] 'Judges in landmark group areas ruling', *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 December 1982.

> The significance of being convicted under the Group Areas Act [before the Govender judgement] was not the fine or the possibility of imprisonment. A far worse punishment was the possibility of eviction when no alternative accommodation was available. By removing the threat of eviction, the judgement effectively nullified this fear and *de facto* allowed coloured and Indian tenants to remain in Hillbrow.[76]

Without viable accommodation to be offered to Indian and coloured people, the state had to either address the housing shortage crisis, or effectively allow Hillbrow and other areas to become multiracial. *The Star* noted that:

> Some authorities suggest it will henceforward be difficult for the State to obtain eviction orders until the massive housing shortages for Indian and coloured people has been cured.[77]

Alan Morris highlights the lack of will by the NP during this time, as the ruling party realised that it was "neither feasible or desirable" to "reimpose[e] the white group area status of inner Johannesburg" by creating more housing for Indians and coloureds.[78] Morris further argues that there were three significant reasons why the NP did not choose to challenge the Govender judgement. Firstly, the government did not have the fiscal capacity to resolve the housing crisis in Indian and coloured areas. Secondly, adverse publicity over Group Areas evictions made it difficult to justify evictions when whites had surplus housing but other non-white locations suffered from a housing shortage. Lastly, the Govender judgement came at a significant time when the NP was attempting to "encourage coloured and Indian politicians to enter the new tricameral parliament" and challenging the Govender ruling would have adverse effects.[79] Had the NP ignored the Govender judgement, or introduced new legislation to counter the judgement, it would be unlikely that any Indian or coloured politicians would be willing to participate in the tricameral parliament.

The economic and political crises of the 1970s, as well as differing views on the implementation of apartheid policy resulted in a division in the NP between the more pragmatic, reformist *verligtes*[80] and the more rigid, conservative *verkramptes*[81]. The ascendency of the *verligtes* during the early 1980s contributed to the decline of decline of prosecutions for violations of the Group Areas Act, with only three people prosecuted in

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[76] Alan Morris. *Bleakness and Light: Inner-city Transition in Hillbrow, Johannesburg*. (South Africa: Witwatersrand University Press, 1999) p. 37.
[77] 'Some relief, but an unjust law', *The Star*, 2 December 1982.
[78] Morris, *Bleakness and Light*, p. 38.
[79] Ibid, pp. 38-39.
[80] Roughly translated as 'enlightened' ones.
[81] Roughly translated as 'conservative' ones.

Johannesburg's inner-city in 1981, before the Govender judgement. The *verligtes* realised that the survival and growth of the NP was ultimately dependent on a move away from the fundamental tenets of apartheid, as well as "a need for the government to widen its potential support base" by increasing parliamentary access to Indians and coloureds.[82] Parliamentary access beyond whites was realised when, in 1984, the tricameral parliament incorporated Indians and coloureds into "the central parliament by way of separate parliamentary houses".[83] The Group Areas Act remained a central feature to members of the tricameral parliament, with Reverend Alan Hendricks, the leader of the coloured Labour Party, remarking that the party would take up a negotiating stance on the issue of suspending all prosecutions and further group area proclamations of the Act.[84] Whilst the tricameral parliament brought coulloureds and Indians into parliament, the majority of these people rejected this racialized and limited reform. The *verkramptes* split from the NP and formed the Conservative Party (CP).[85]

In 1984 the CP decried the growing presence of coloureds and Indians in Hillbrow, arguing that their presence correlated with a perceived increase in drugs and prostitution in the area. The CP "called on the Government to implement the Group Areas Act" to remove coloureds and Indians from the area, and asked for people to form "action groups" to help police the city.[86] However a study found that fifty-six percent of residents interviewed in Hillbrow "favoured total [racial] integration" whilst twenty-nine percent were in opposition.[87] Mr Clive Derby-Lewis, Johannesburg's chairman of the CP, had claimed that he had received a barrage of complaints from white residents about the general crime of the area, what he and the CP claimed to be linked to the integration of other races.[88] The divide over Hillbrow was not only between the CP and residents, but other organisations as well at odds with the CP. Mr Cassim Saloojee, chairman of Actstop, "an organisation representing coloureds and Indians living illegally in Hillbrow", argued that the CP was inciting hatred. Mr Abie Choonara, an MP for the National People's Party (NPP) and part of the tricameral parliament, had promised to fight to prevent the CP from moving forward with its plans to remove coloureds and Indians from Hillbrow. Mr Mohammed Dangor of the South African Institute for Race Relations (SAIRR), as well as being a prominent member of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in opposition to

[82] Alan Morris. 'Race Relations and Racism in a Racially Diverse Inner City Neighbourhood: A Case Study of Hillbrow, Johannesburg'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (1999,25:4) p. 673.
[83] Ibid.
[84] 'Coloured poll of reform', *The Star*, 20 April 1983.
[85] Morris, *Bleakness and Light*, p. 331.
[86] 'Anger over CP's Hillbrow plan', *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 September 1984.
[87] 'Hillbrow favours racial integration', *Rand Daily Mail*, 11 November 1982.
[88] 'Row brews over CP plan for Hillbrow', *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 September 1984.

the tricameral parliament said that "CP activities would not be good for race relations" in Hillbrow and further described Hillbrow as "a tranquil island of racial co-operation" which the CP was attempting to disrupt.[89] Multiple organisations sought to maintain racial integration in the area, but loud voices from right-wing parties and individuals highlighted the precarity of the situation taking place in Hillbrow.

Increased violence in townships, receding influx control, the worsening housing shortage, unlikely prosecutions under the Group Area Act, and the willingness of landlords to rent their apartments to black tenants – many of which were left vacant as a result of white flight – all resulted in favourably circumstances for black residents to leave the townships and move into Hillbrow in large numbers by the second half of the 1980s adding to the precarity of Hillbrow's racial dilemma.[90] Included in Hillbrow's new black residents were queer people who had moved out from Soweto. Coming from Soweto, Paul Mokgethi remembers being fearful during his first few times going to the Butterfly, a gay bar in Hillbrow:

> [T]here were all these white men that would come in there. So now we're scared of going in, we're scared of going inside the place. We would push each other; go and check what is happening. Now I do not want to go, I am scared.[91]

S'Bu further highlights harassment in the inner-city queer clubs for black queers, having been harassed by a bouncer for publicly kissing his girlfriend. It took place before S'Bu's transition, so in the bouncer's view it was two black girls kissing each other in what was regarded as an openly queer space, and still he had intimidated them, threatened to kick them out, and told them not to "do this shit here".[92] Paul and his friends, meanwhile, had eventually gained access to the Butterfly and become friendly with the bartender because of their sexuality. They became frequent customers of the Butterfly, but they still remained side-lined from its white clientele. The Butterfly, like many gay bars and clubs in Hillbrow, was separated by cliques. In one corner you might find the [white] *butch* lesbians, with the [white] *femmes* in another, one corner could be saturated with gay men from Doornfontein, and those from Melville somewhere else, and the people from the Southern suburbs in a different section in the bar. In the 1980s black patrons were now included in the mix due to the racial breakdown taking place in Hillbrow, but their social stratification within bars and clubs was allocated according to race rather than

[89] 'Anger over CP's Hillbrow plan', *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 September 1984.
[90] Morris, 'Race Relations and Racism' p. 673.
[91] GALA. AM3160 (B): C4.1.1. Joburg Tracks. Tracks Interview: Paul.
[92] S'Bu Kheswa. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 04 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.

where they come from, their financial status, or their style.[93] Black patrons sat separately to white patrons, whilst whites separated themselves from other whites according to class.

S'Bu Kheswa highlights the class aspect of living in Hillbrow that helped contribute to movement in the city. Living in a flat in Hillbrow in the 1980s and 1990s, and with his own transport, S'Bu was able to distance himself from the homophobic violence he noticed in Soweto:

> By living in town then we also escaped [homophobic violence in Soweto] while the people who remained in the township, all those stories that we know, mostly, almost, ja almost all of the hate crime and stuff that people were mad at happened in the township, so living in town protects you somehow. Even later on, for instance, you own a car, so you not in taxi ranks and stuff like that, you can go to parties and stuff if you are in your car or [your] friends' car. So all those little things protect you.[94]

People who were able to move out of Soweto and into Hillbrow and its surrounds found relative safety in the city for the time being. But this safety for queer black people was quickly followed by the 'white flight' and with it the decline of a pink inner-city.

White Flight

With the breakdown of the Group Areas Act, Hillbrow's white residents and commercial ventures began moving out of the inner-city. White flight was inextricably linked to capital flight which saw "large-scale business enterprises, mining houses, banks and other financial institutions, and real estate holding companies" abandon the inner-city and relocate in the expeditiously urbanizing northern suburbs.[95] A vast majority of middle class whites had migrated out of the inner-city towards the northern suburbs, and in the process "old iconic bars and nightclubs located in Hillbrow … such as Skyline, [had] been abandoned" and with it, Hillbrow's white queer community slowly disintegrated during the 1980s.[96] Hillbrow's white middle-class queer community had dispersed into northern suburbia, leaving Hillbrow without its commercially flourishing queer identity it maintained throughout the 1970s.

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[93] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 42.
[94] S'Bu Kheswa. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 04 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[95] Martin J. Murray. *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008) p. 127.
[96] Hugo Banham. 'Mapping the Black Queer Geography of Johannesburg's Lesbian Women through Narrative'. *PINS (Psychology in Society)*. (2017, 55), p. 98.

Throughout the 1980s there were "rumours of rising crime rates and plunging prices [which had] caused housing prices to plummet" in Hillbrow and its surrounds.[97] A study composed by SAIRR found that there was no link between the increase presence of black bodies and increased crime rates, and that it was more likely due to South Africa's economic recession and high levels of unemployment.[98] Rumours of increased crime, decreased housing prices, and a fear of racial mixing in the inner city subsequently led to the 'white flight' from the city, with many of the inner city's white residents moving into the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. Hillbrow's "racial transformation" quickly became associated with depreciation and urban blight" through the 1980s.[99] Hillbrow's 'white flight' was well and truly underway, with more black residents moving in whilst white residents fled the inner city.[100]

Whilst not everyone noticed the greying of Hillbrow, it did contribute to its eventual decline as a commercial pink neighbourhood. When questioning him on the increased presence of black bodies and people of colour in Hillbrow and its surrounds, Levi doesn't recall noticing their presence in the 1980s, most likely due to the areas in Hillbrow he would have patronised, but by the 1990s he believes that Hillbrow had already begun to gain a reputation as being crime-infested, leaving him with fewer gay clubs and bars he felt were safe to frequent in the area.[101] If the 1980s can be defined as the 'greying' of the Hillbrow, the 1990s had been the decline and subsequent loss of a pink, multi-racial inner-city. The lack of any meaningful approach by the NP to Johannesburg's inner city in the 1980s meant that by the 1990s deterioration of buildings was taking place as they lacked the maintenance they once received. This was further propagated via landlords who had become uncertain over the value of their investments with the oncoming change the country was headed towards.

> The apparent inability of the housing market to free itself of the shackles of manipulation and discrimination has resulted in 'white flight' in most newly opened areas.[102]

The NP as well as the impact of capital flight had meant that much of Hillbrow's community had dispersed into the suburbs, taking with it the main clubs and bars that had proliferated the area during the 1970s.

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[97] Glen Elder. 'The Grey Dawn of South African Racial Residential Integration'. *GeoJournal*. (1990, 22:3), p. 264.
[98] 'No link between crime and grey areas – report', *The Star*, 12 June 1986.
[99] 'Rather share the franchise than the pool', *Frontline*, 30 April 1989.
[100] Elder, 'The Grey Dawn', 264.
[101] Levi. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 19 August 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[102] Elder, 'The Grey Dawn', p. 264.

Black queer residents moving into Hillbrow during this time did take residency in clubs and bars which had remained in the area. Skyline, after initially declining following with the white flight, became a domain for many of the black queer residents in Hillbrow. Skyline's patrons in the second half of the 1980s were 95 percent black. The increased number of black residents in Hillbrow "had fundamentally altered the clientele" of Hillbrow's clubs and bars, with most of them being the domain of queer black people with a few whites.[103]

Conclusion

It had been evident that there were spaces to be created for queer bodies within heteronormative space, and queer people had used these self-imposed spaces to find safety for themselves. Although they still had to navigate heteronormative society, queer people were able to use dress to identify each other, often within lesbian spaces – *butch* and *femme* identities were created in this way.[104] Beyond dress, distinct spaces were created to welcome queer people. Familial spaces were occasionally welcoming, but clubs and shebeens were the most prominent spaces for queer people to find safety amongst one other.[105]

The increase in hate-crime and police raids on clubs towards the end of the 1970s, as well as an increased connection between queer people made Hillbrow an ideal location for ideas of chance to take place amongst queer people. The first half of the 1980s would become characterised by apolitical stances by South Africa's fastest growing gay organisation, the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) which acted as a space to connect gay people across the country. By the end of the 1980s, Hillbrow was no longer the commercially pink area it once was. It had largely lost its relevance social space for queer people, but had fallen into its own role as a participant of radical queer politics largely driven forward by Braamfontein, and particularly the activists in the Gay and Lesbian Organisation (GLOW).[106]

White flight throughout the 1980s contributed to two different approaches of garnering support from queer people in Hillbrow, with the first half of the decade being dominated by GASA, a predominantly white organisation which started in Hillbrow. The second was GLOW, also starting in Hillbrow, but due to its stance on racial inclusivity, maintained generous support

[103] Morris, 'Race Relations and Racism' p. 692.
[104] S'bu Kheswa. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 04 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[105] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 53.
[106] GALA. GAL0001. GLOW – B1.1 Draft constitution (as drafted at meeting held at Wits, 9 April 1988).

from Soweto. These two organisations will be analysed in the following chapter, and their development can be mirrored to Hillbrow's own white flight and increase of black residents.

Chapter Three

GASA: Non-radical, apolitical, and hopelessly white

> By virtue of the fact that we were oppressed, we were stigmatized, we were marginalized, we were criminalized, sexual expression was the one definable, assertive act of political self-identification [and] political self-awareness.[1]

Introduction

On the first of April 1982 the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) was formed, combining three small, local groups: Lambda (formed only two months previously), Alternative Men's Organisation (AMO), and Unité. All three were considered to be insignificant local initiatives, and within months of combining to form GASA, the new organisation had nine branches across the country. Within a year it had signed up over 1 000 paid-up members. GASA had formed what was seen to be the first local grassroots movement in the country which could be compared to those found in Western Europe and the United States of America (USA).[2] The only previous attempt at establishing a gay rights movement in South Africa happened in the early 1970s at the University of Natal in Durban. Mark West, a member of the Students' Representative Council, announced to the press in 1972 that "homosexuals should come forward and demand their rights. We shall not be forced to meet in dark bars". The attempted gay rights' movement motioned by West immediately failed, signifying the NP's role in shutting down political dissent, as three weeks after West's claim he had been forced to sign a statement disbanding the movement after he was intimidated by police.[3] GASA's central aim was directed towards "catering to the needs of the gay community" in South Africa.[4] Much of their work consisted of running autonomous counselling services in both Cape Town and Johannesburg, hosting informal social gatherings, group gatherings which focused to specific needs or particular interests of gay people, and had a newspaper, *Link/Skakel*, later *Exit*, which helped spread news of gay groups, social spaces, and gave telephonic information for

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[1] Justice E Cameron. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 2 July 2019, Transcript in possession of author.
[2] Mark Gevisser. "A Different Fight for Freedom: A History of South African Lesbian and Gay Organisation from the 1950s to 1990s" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 48.
[3] Ibid, p. 43.
[4] GALA. AM2975. GASA. A1.3.1. International Correspondence.

sympathetic and legal advice for gay individuals.[5] GASA's early meetings reflected on the need to create a safe space for the lesbian and gay community, both a physical space as well as an organisation which would uphold certain "principles of liberation", which Ann Smith argued were aimed at creating space in which "gay men and women could meet and interact without fear" of condemnation, brutalisation, shame, humiliation or possible arrests.[6] Ann Smith, one of GASA's founding members, and Karen Lotter's contributions to the associations official newsletter, as well as Smith's articles on "radical lesbian opposition to gay liberation" helped establish a small but vocal lesbian presence in GASA.[7] As an organisation, GASA catered to the needs of the gay and lesbian community, but had attempted to remaining apolitical, a move which Ann Smith notes that in hindsight helped perpetuate "the myth … that it is possible to compartmentalise forms and expressions of oppression" by not joining in the anti-apartheid struggle.[8]

GASA's creation came out of a need to maintain safe spaces for queer people, and particularly white gay men. The relative safety of queer spaces was brought into question amongst queer people when a popular gay club in Johannesburg was raided multiple times at the end of the 1970s, prompting a response by gay men calling for gay rights.[9] GASA was able to provide a network for queer people to remain connected and create spaces with queer-friendly functions. Having been established in Hillbrow, GASA advertised multiple queer-friendly clubs, restaurants, and hotels in the inner-city. As an organisation GASA was seen as South Africa's first attempts at politicizing queer people, albeit largely aimed at white gay men. It was also an organisation which created space with multiple gay events throughout its lifespan, and was used by many as a social space in which they could find safety amongst other queer people.[10]

This chapter will scrutinize GASA's uneven relationship with gay and lesbians in Johannesburg across race and space, and the organisation's spatial imaginaries and special politics. Using the Gay and Lesbian Archive's (GALA) magazine collections, specifically *Link/Skakel* and *Exit*, as well as interviews and secondary material, this chapter analyses GASA's unequal relationship with black gay and lesbians and white gay and lesbians. GASA's

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[5] GALA. AM2975. GASA. A1.3.1. International Correspondence.
[6] Ann Smith. "Personal Testimony: Where was I in the Eighties?" in Neville Hoad, Karen Martin and Graeme Reid (eds.) *Sex & Politics in South Africa*. (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005) pp. 60 – 61.
[7] Kanika Batra. 'Worlding Sexualities under Apartheid: From Gay Liberation to a Queer Afropolitanism'. *Postcolonial Studies*. (2016, 19:1), p. 41.
[8] Smith, "Personal Testimony", p. 61.
[9] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 47.
[10] Ibid, p. 49.

lack of support for black queer people is evidently seen in the lack of branches located in townships, and rather focusing on recruiting and supporting white queer people. It is also important to examine GASA's relations with the ruling National Party (NP) and its fractious relations with the International Gay Association (IGA). GASA's foundation as South Africa's first local grassroots movement for gay and lesbians arose in the context of increased homophobia perpetuated by the state, which gave leeway for homophobic violence in and around Hillbrow. These developments occurred in a political context of increased mass mobilisation against apartheid and direct challenges to racial segregation, including the deracialisation of Hillbrow, leading to the white-flight out of the area and a notable increase in racism within the suburb's white gay community.[11] GASA's membership was predominantly white, middle-class men, and as such it operated purely in the confines of white society and ignored larger racial issues in the country.[12] Its constituency informed its apolitical stance to be regarded as "non-alignment in broader South African politics and secondly, following a moderate, non-confrontational, and accommodationist strategy" which effectively excluded the few womxn and black bodies that were present in the organisation.[13] The organisation had chosen to prioritise its efforts on claiming urban and national spaces for gay and lesbian men and womxn without challenging apartheid in what Kanika Batra regards as being a "narrow conception of rights based on consumerist sexual identities.[14] This was perhaps largely due to its racial makeup, effectively excluding issues other than those addressed by its largely male, largely white membership and attempting to gain some form of approval from the NP by actively ignoring racial issues plaguing the country.

Claiming Space, Maintaining Segregation

During the holiday season of 1978/79 police raided a popular gay bar in Johannesburg. Many patrons caught at The New Mandy's were locked in the bar overnight as police individually processed each person.[15] This raid, has become regarded as South Africa's 'Stonewall' as

[11] Gerald Kraak. "Homosexuality and the South African left: The ambiguities of exile" in Neville Hoad, Karen Martin and Graeme Reid (eds.) *Sex & Politics in South Africa*. (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005) p. 123.
[12] Daniel Conway. 'Queering Apartheid: The National Party's 1987 'Gay Rights' Election Campaign in Hillbrow'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (2009, 35:4) p. 856.
[13] Jacklyn Cock. 'Engendering Gay and Lesbian Rights: The Equality Clause in the South African Constitution'. *Women's Studies International Forum*. (2003, 26:1) p. 37.
[14] Batra, 'Worlding Sexualities under Apartheid', p. 39.
[15] Jacob Tobia. "Out of the Laager, Into the Streets: The Origins, Rise, and Fall of Gay Reform Organizing in Apartheid South Africa". Honours Thesis. (Duke University, 2014) p. 75.

clientele actively fought back. Following the raid, and a subsequent one the following year also at The Mandy's, some gay people felt motivated to "move beyond the 'social support' model" offered by clubs and start directing efforts towards claiming rights for gay people.[16] These crackdowns on gay clubs had become increasingly prominent in the late 1970s as clubs such as The New Mandy's and Zipps became more popular, even among heterosexual clubbers. Gay identity, according to Mark Gevisser, had become "more obvious and blatant in such clubs, particularly in the drug use" taking place in the clubs.[17] Due to their increasing popularity amongst both heteronormative and queer people in Johannesburg, as well as the well-known drug use taking place within the clubs, the NP and police viewed it as necessary to put more pressure on partygoers in order to dismantle and destabilise the increased visual presence of known gay spaces. Gill Valentine and Tracey Skelton argue however, that drugs are prominent in other commercial club scenes:

> Drug-taking is just as much part of the ritual of going out on the lesbian and gay scene as it is on any other commercial club scene. Drugs make clubbers feel more sociable, more in touch with their bodily sensations and more alive.[18]

Hillbrow was perceived as a hub of permissiveness to all things social, including sexuality, drug-use, and other factors deemed illicit by the NP. Prior to being regarded as the "centre of gay socialization and activism in the 1980s" Hillbrow was already considered to be a bohemian inner-city area due to its relation with real-estate capitalism which had allowed for an increased number of cheap, high-rise buildings prime for rent from newly relocated young middle-class whites, a proliferation of clubs and bars, and a gay identity which had made its roots in the area during the 1970s.[19] The attacks on gay clubs in the area, as opposed to 'heteronormative' clubs, was seen by many partygoers and queer people as an attack on the gay community due to their perceived influence on respectable white society.[20] It was in South Africa's urban centres where the "very tenets of apartheid Calvinism were being challenged", and where gay men had already begun to organise socially. The establishment of GASA as South Africa's first national gay organisation was due to a combination of all these factors, and Hillbrow,

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[16] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 47.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Gill Valentine and Tracey Skelton. 'Finding Oneself, Losing Oneself: The Lesbian and Gay 'Scene' as Paradoxical Space. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. (2003, 27:4) p. 856.
[19] Batra, 'Worlding Sexualities under Apartheid', p. 41.
[20] Glen Retief. "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager: State Repression of Homosexuality in Apartheid South Africa" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 104.

being the predominant social sphere of gay urban culture, was where GASA was formed in April 1982.[21]

The official mission of GASA was "to serve the gay and lesbian community by combatting homophobia and the oppression of gay people through providing needed services to the gay community and taking positive social action".[22] GASA's early objectives in the 1980s were focused on "claiming [safe] urban and national spaces" for the gay and lesbian community.[23] Normalized homophobic violence had become common in and around Hillbrow, the pink triangle of Johannesburg, as the visibility of queer bodies was bravely on display thanks to the openly gay clubs, bars and restaurants in the city. The people frequenting these spaces had made themselves identifiable to the heteronormative community of the city, many of whom maintained heterosexist ideals based on a faux-morality perpetuated by the NP, religious organisations, and a socially conservative population as explored in previous chapters. By choosing to fight only for gay rights, GASA had explicitly maintained an apolitical position in regards to the racialized hierarchy of apartheid. For GASA to remain apolitical required them to remain detached from broader South African politics, thus refraining from directing any efforts against the injustices caused by apartheid, and therefore to maintain a "moderate, non-confrontational and accommodationist strategy" in building a gay and lesbian base of support.[24] GASA was manifestly un-radical and included advertisements to its membership with a reminder that GASA was not a militant gay organisation:

> Remember, GASA is not a militant organization planning protest marches through city streets, and your membership will not imperil your privacy — all mail is posted in unmarked, sealed envelopes.[25]
>
> Join GASA and help provide a non-militant, non-political answer to gay needs.[26]

These advertisements illustrate GASA's commitment to non-radical change, and in doing so, inadvertently made it clear that GASA would not confront the NP and apartheid, choosing instead to use maintain racial norms in the country as a hope of gaining state approval of non-heteronormative sexuality. It was by remaining apolitical that GASA was able to function as a

[21] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 48.
[22] GALA. AM2975. A2.3.1. Governance etc. (file 1 of 2).
[23] Batra, 'Worlding Sexualities under Apartheid', p. 39.
[24] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 51.
[25] *Link/Skakel*, February 1983.
[26] Ibid.

social space, hosting multiple gay functions in order to help gay men find each other with more ease.

GASA's prevalence in the early 1980s was due to the fact that it was able to bring many gay men together in regular public gatherings. Six months after its founding GASA hosted a "Gay Jamboree" in Kyalami. Three thousand people attended and were treated to live music, dancing, braais, competitions, and mud-wrestling at the event.[27] Advertised as an entertainment event, it still claimed space for some of Johannesburg's gay community and should, according to Mark Gevisser, be viewed as an implicit political act.[28] The Gay Jamboree was an extension of club spaces into a more visible public space. While GASA undoubtedly challenged existing norms and the Calvinist ideology underpinning apartheid, the politics that Gevisser points to were always marginalised. The strong notion of maintaining GASA as a more social organisation became an attraction for many members. Henk Botha, one of GASA's founding members, believed that:

> GASA worked for one reason only: it provided people with a way of getting together. Before, you could meet friends and sexual partners only through the bars. Now, you could also meet them at GASA get-togethers – and not only at GASA parties; also at GASA meetings, sports gathering and the like.[29]

GASA's attraction for the white gay community may have been the fact that it remained apolitical. Disinterested in racial equality for the time being, GASA was able to rapidly grow into South Africa's first major gay rights' organisation without actually fighting for political recognition. The constituency had always remained mostly white and male, searching for a safe social space in which they could gather rather than seeking political inclusivity. Whilst a few black gay men were present in GASA, much of the issues raised were brought up by white, middle-class members seeking safe spaces in the city, effectively leaving black voices absent in the organisation.

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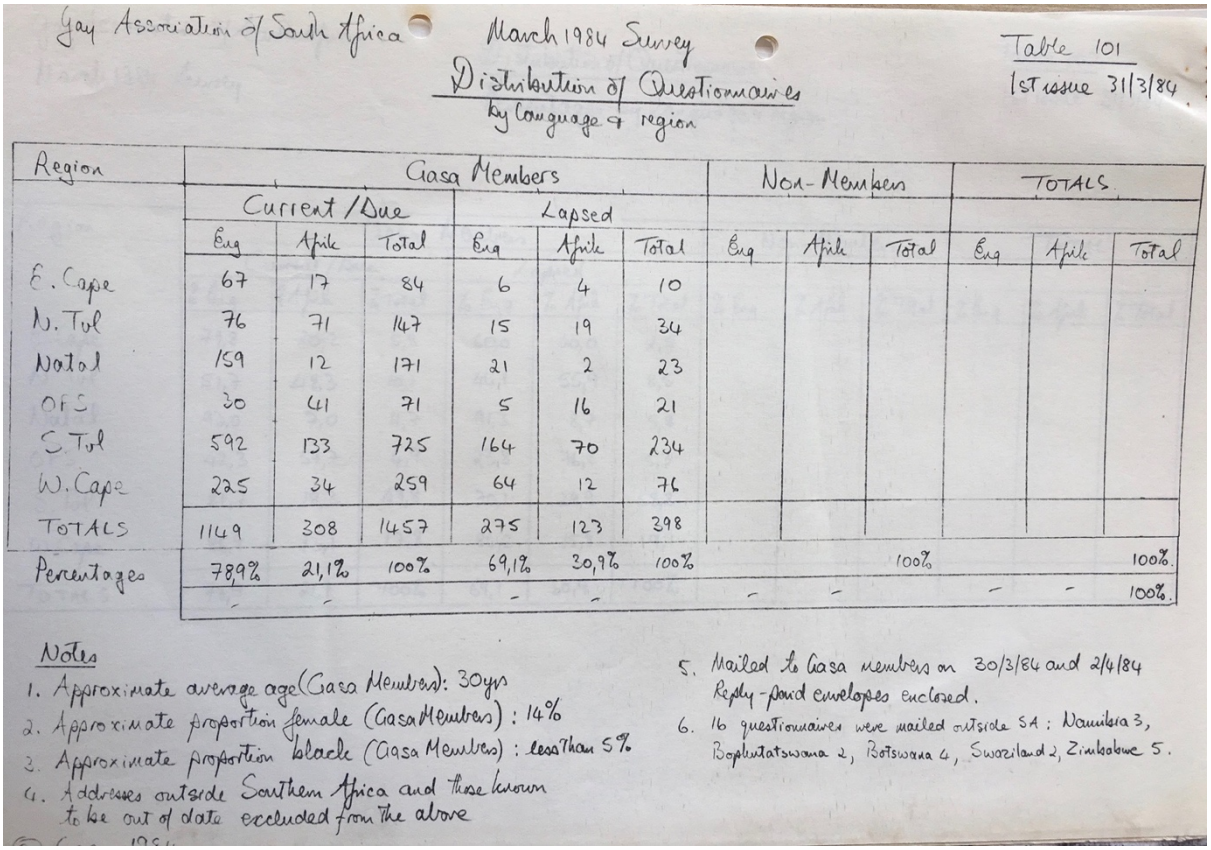
[27] There were at least three times more people at GASA's Kyalami Jamboree than there were at the early Pride Marches in the 1990s. Perhaps most interesting about this is that the Pride Marches were explicitly political events, whilst the Jamboree was a social one, highlighting white middle-class gay men's reluctance at joining political movements.
[28] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 49.
[29] Ibid, p. 50.

Image 1 Gay Association of South Africa: March 1984 Survey.



Gay Association of South Africa — March 1984 Survey — Table 101

Distribution of Questionnaires by language & region

1st issue 31/3/84

Region	Gasa Members						Non-Members			TOTALS		
	Current / Due			Lapsed								
	Eng	Afrik	Total	Eng	Afrik	Total	Eng	Afrik	Total	Eng	Afrik	Total
E. Cape	67	17	84	6	4	10						
N. Tvl	76	71	147	15	19	34						
Natal	159	12	171	21	2	23						
OFS	30	41	71	5	16	21						
C Tvl	592	133	725	164	70	234						
W. Cape	225	34	259	64	12	76						
TOTALS	1149	308	1457	275	123	398						
Percentages	78,9%	21,1%	100%	69,1%	30,9%	100%			100%			100%
	-	-		-	-		-	-		-	-	100%

Notes

1. Approximate average age (Gasa Members): 30yrs
2. Approximate proportion female (Gasa Members): 14%
3. Approximate proportion black (Gasa Members): less than 5%
4. Addresses outside Southern Africa and those known to be out of date excluded from the above
5. Mailed to Gasa members on 30/3/84 and 2/4/84 Reply-paid envelopes enclosed.
6. 16 questionnaires were mailed outside SA: Namibia 3, Bophuthatswana 2, Botswana 4, Swaziland 2, Zimbabwe 5.

GALA. AM2975. A1.3.1. GASA. Internal Corresp.[30]

Image 1, a questionnaire which showed the language percentage of GASA members by the end of March 1984 (note that it only asks if members are English or Afrikaans) also shows the percentage of black GASA members countrywide. Only five percent of all GASA members were black, a statistic which doesn't vary in the following years.[31] The disproportion between black and white members indicates that black members had their issues, largely relating to mobilizing against apartheid, ignored in favour of gay access to space. GASA's founding member's concern with creating safe urban space for gay people had ignored that many in the country were unable to access large swathes of urban space due to their race.[32] GASA's appeal to white gay men in urban spaces was that it was apolitical and did not strive to take an anti-apartheid stance in South Africa, thus drawing in many conservative white men.

[30] GALA. AM2975. A1.3.1. GASA. Internal Corresp.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Batra, 'Worlding Sexualities under Apartheid', p. 39.

Contradictions of the Apolitical

GASA's apolitical stance was considered to be crucial in its appeal to white gay South Africans, but for the organisations founders being apolitical meant two things: firstly, GASA would not involve itself in broader South African politics, and secondly, it would adhere to a moderate, non-confrontational and accommodationist strategy.[33] Even though they directed their efforts at cultivating an apolitical organisation, their mission statement included several explicitly political objectives:

> Uniting all gays under a democratic banner to offer an identity and foster confidence and self-respect amongst gays.
>
> Changing the distorted, prejudice and uninformed image held by the broader public.
>
> Encouraging law reform by setting a positive example to the authorities and the non-gay society.[34]

There was an obvious contradiction between the apolitical image they attempted to create, and even included in their mission statement, and the politicized facets of the same mission statement. Their political ideology was about creating unification among gays, changing public perception, and encouraging law reform, but all the while trying to remain apolitical. Their focus on being apolitical was largely directed towards larger political issues facing South Africa at the time. They would not involve themselves in any stance against the NP when it came to any racial issues in the country, further highlighting a pull factor amongst gay conservative men who did not want racial inclusivity, but rather only gay representation and recognition. This single-issue approach by GASA had made it clear from the beginning of the organizations introduction into South Africa that while it claimed all races were welcome, focus would remain on white gay issues as they were the ones who had unvetted access to urban spaces.[35]

GASA's maintenance on single-issue politics, that of striving for gay rights and nothing else, was an approach borne into the organisation by taking ideas from pioneering gay organisations in the United States, Canada, England, and Western Europe. In order to move towards the single-issue gay rights within South Africa GASA had turned their focus to working with the apartheid state "to gain respect for gay and lesbian people within its existing structures" and

[33] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 51.
[34] 'Become involved and work for a positive image of gay life', *Link/Skakel*, December, 1982.
[35] Tobia, "Out of the Laager, Into the Streets", p. 133

not posing any challenge to the racial hierarchy already in place.[36] Raewyn Connell cites that single-issue politics within gay liberation has been "marked by caution and a desire for respectability" within an already structured state without challenging any other norms already in place.[37] Whilst it was the norm in much of the Western world to approach issues of sexuality as a single-issue problem, their need to approach racial issues did not have the urgency which was required in South Africa. When gay people had come together in the United States or Western Europe they had to do so only as gay people, in places where the majority was already white. The issue in South Africa was that the current ruling political elite was part of a minority citizenship and were oppressing a majority, so when gay and lesbian people did come together, and ignored the rights of the black majority, they were ignoring the larger portion of queer-identifying people than what the Western world was.[38] Using this approach in South Africa at a time when apartheid was coming to its demise in the late 1980s, and with international scorn aimed at South Africa, it seems that GASA was bound to fail as anything more than a social organisation. GASA's membership largely encapsulated one section of queer South African society – white, conservative, middle-class men who were interested in safe social spaces rather than political activism.[39] Henk Botha, a founding member of GASA and later editor of *Exit* believed that GASA worked because of its apolitical stance:

> For this reason, GASA made it quite clear that it was apolitical and wouldn't enter the political sphere. Because that was a minefield. That's why we grew so quickly. If we had taken a political line, we would have collapsed much earlier than we did.[40]

By focusing on the single-issue of gay rights GASA was able to avoid being shut down by the government, and they were also able to grow their membership quickly amongst socially conservative, white, gay men. Ann Smith had claimed that GASA's leadership had noticed that political protests in the country were immediately banned. According to Smith, had GASA come together to protest they feared being banned, which would "not only … discredit the gay movement, but … would not be able to provide vital services to gay people".[41] Yet their promise of protecting gay and lesbian people, especially in the workplace, would require them

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[36] Ibid.
[37] R.W. Connell. *Masculinities – Second Edition*. (Berkely: University of California Press,2005) p. 216.
[38] Tobia, "Out of the Laager", pp. 156-157.
[39] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 48.
[40] Ibid, pp. 50-51.
[41] Tobia, "Out of the Laager", p. 112.

to tackle some political issues, regardless of their supposed 'apolitical' stance they prescribed to.

GASA's first introduction to the political sphere came seven months after its formation, in November 1982 when the Railways Police Commissioner, Lt-Gen Hannes Visagie, stated that "gays [were] not welcome in the force". Following a five month investigation, four womxn and nine men were dismissed, and sixty officers resigned of their own accord.[42] Given that homosexuality among womxn was not criminalized, GASA had legal grounds to defend those dismissed, and many of the organisation's members had turned to GASA in the hope of a reaction to defend the dismissals.[43] GASA's mission statement – "to serve the gay and lesbian community by combatting homophobia and the oppression of gay people through providing needed services to the gay community and taking positive social action" – required them to challenge this action, but the organisation remained apolitical on the issue, and also lacked advocacy for lesbians.[44] GASA failed to immediately respond as they attempted to maintain a balance between being an apolitical organisation and a political one. Mark Gevisser argues that this was also largely due to the lack of advocacy for lesbian issues in the organisation.[45] A GASA member told *The Star* that "if we started waving banners, we would only increase the animosity towards us" in order to defend that little effort GASA made.[46] Ann Smith's work forced GASA to issue a statement which argued that "lesbianism is not illegal" and that the womxn's dismissal and forced resignations was based on moral issues rather than legal ones.[47] GASA's response, however, never went further than writing a letter to the South African Transport Services and issuing a media statement. GASA's defence of their minimal response was that their small membership made them susceptible to censorship if they were to be proactive, as quoted in an issue of *Link/Skakel* where it was argued that:

> An organisation which has only over a thousand members is highly vulnerable to official censure. Had GASA made representations on a political level, we may well have been annihilated.[48]

[42] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 51.
[43] Tobia, "Out of the Laager", p. 112.
[44] GALA. AM2975. A2.3.1. Governance etc. (file 1 of 2).
[45] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 51.
[46] *The Star*, 4 April 1983.
[47] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 51.
[48] 'A Reason for Caution', *Link/Skakel*, May, 1983.

This fear of censure by the state caused GASA to remain largely silent on an important issue facing gay and lesbian workers, who lost their jobs. It wouldn't be the last time GASA had failed to adequately respond to a political need of its members.

GASA's inability to politically mobilize on gay and lesbian issues showed once more in 1985 when the NP called for an investigation of the Immorality Act of 1957 and the amendments of 1968. President P.W. Botha tasked the President's Council, an advisory body to the president, with examining whether provisions of the Immorality Act were "sufficiently stringent" on prohibiting homosexuality within the republic.[49] By July of that year GASA had submitted an 18 page memorandum to the President's Council calling for the decriminalisation of homosexuality. In total, the President's Council received seventeen memoranda – one from GASA, eleven from other gay organisations in favour of decriminalisation, and five others requesting the continued criminalisation which were submitted by the Baptist Church, the NG Kerk, the Association of Law Societies, the South African Police, and the Department of Justice.[50] In August 1985, GASA decided to revive the Law Reform Fund which had worked towards protecting gay rights in 1968, with the goal of raising R100 000 towards legal services and the preparation of oral testimonies to the President's Committee.[51] The campaign to raise the funds struggled to gain momentum and by May of 1986 it was announced in *Exit* that only R50 453 had been raised nationally.[52] Hearings which were expected to take place in 1986 never materialized and the following year the President's Council issued a report entitled *Report on the Committee of Social Affairs on the Youth of South Africa* which considered homosexuality to be a challenge South Africa was facing. The report stated that:

> Homosexuality in men and in women is a serious social deviation and is irreconcilable with normal marriage … the fact the homosexuality is increasingly regarded as normal by the community is cause for concern. Since the discovery that the dreaded disease Aids occurs mainly among homosexuals the lenient attitude towards this acquired behavioural pattern has once again come under the searchlight in an effort to counter this disease.[53]

Still linking homosexuality to a perceived idea of immorality, the NP now used HIV/Aids to further attack and ostracise gay South Africans. Whilst GASA struggled locally to protect gay

[49] Tobia, "Out of the Laager", p. 114.
[50] "Law Reform: Now is the Time for Effort". *Exit*, August, 1985.
[51] Tobia, "Out of the Laager", p. 115.
[52] 'Fund Halfway', *Exit*, May, 1986.
[53] Republic of South Africa President's Council. *Report of the Committee for Social Affairs on the Youth of South Africa*, 1987.

and lesbian individuals, their international struggle was just as troublesome, with many opposing their involvement in an international queer community.

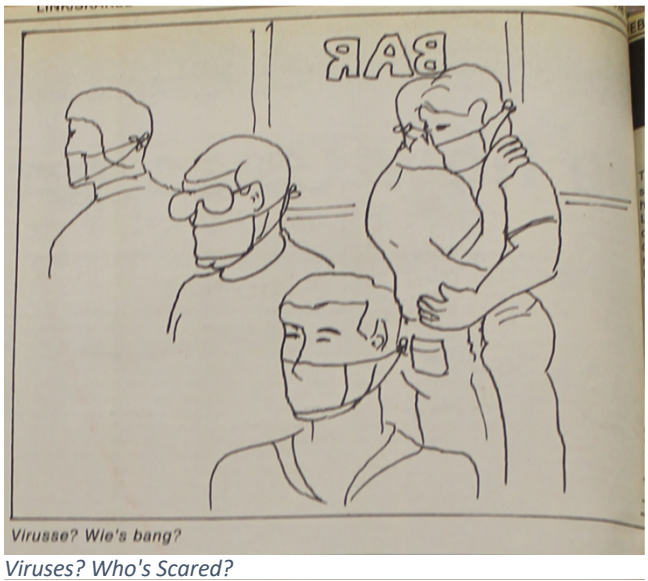
HIV/Aids

> The tragedy of your generation is that you will never know what it means to have unprotected sex. The tragedy of my generation is that we do know.[54]

'AIDS PANIC IS OVER-STRESSED' ran across the front page of *Link/Skakel* in February of 1983 as Pieter Bosman, the Executive Chairman of GASA tried to minimize the "epidemic proportions" felt by the crisis. Although Bosman did state that "the seriousness of the situation cannot be denied", his overall argument was that AIDS was not as critical as other media outlets had made it appear.[55] In the same issue of *Link/Skakel* in an interview with an unnamed medical doctor, he stated:

> The recent sensational reporting in the press may seem alarming, however the problem should be reduced to its proper perspective. The risk of contracting AIDS is small, far less than that of contracting VD.[56]

While it should be noted that GASA's Cape Town branch, GASA-6010, had established an AIDS Action Group in 1984 to counsel men with Aids, GASA's Hillbrow branch had chosen to underestimate the perceived threat of AIDS.[57] The approach of GASA's Hillbrow branch was perhaps intended to combat the media's reporting on AIDS where it was called a "killer disease" that had "a strong connection with male homosexuality" when it first appeared in the country.[58] *Link/Skakel* had published a cartoon showing men dancing together wearing facemasks captioned "Virusse? Wie's bang?"[59] as a way of highlighting how media was over-reacting to AIDS and that



Viruses? Who's Scared?

[54] Mark Gevisser. *Lost and Found in Johannesburg*. (Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2014) p. 185.
[55] 'AIDS panic is over-stressed', *Link/Skakel*, February, 1983.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 59.
[58] "Department warns on rare killer disease". *Rand Daily Mail*, January 5, 1983.
[59] Translation: Viruses? Who's scared?

gay men should still be able to be sociable without any fear of the virus.[60] The lack of information on HIV/AIDS, as well as the media's representation of the virus as "The Gay Plague" culminated in GASA's response of showing AIDS as a disease which should not be feared too much.[61]

It appeared that HIV/AIDS had "unleashed a new wave of homophobic paranoia" in South African, as gay men were blamed for the crisis.[62] Understandably GASA had attempted to defend gay men, but beyond that members in the Hillbrow branch had also reached out to Johannesburg based doctors working on treatment for the disease. Pieter Bosman, GASA's president, encouraged its members to practice discretion in their sexual encounters and avoid recreational drugs.[63] GASA's efforts were limited due to the lack of knowledge on HIV/AIDS, and as such their efforts in Johannesburg were largely aimed at defending gay men from a media onslaught, and working with doctors as best they could. GASA's Hillbrow reacted towards AIDS in much the same way many gay men did; apathetically, understanding that it was dangerous, but unaware of the widespread damage it could bring. Activism never reached any disruptive heights urging people to be mindful of HIV/AIDS, and this was seen in GASA's *Link/Skakel* comic strips which made light jokes about the disease.[64]

GASA's reaction to HIV/AIDS appeared to suggest that rather than take the necessary precautions required, gay men should still go to bars and clubs, remain sexually active, and not fear the impact that the disease could have.[65] This approach highlighted GASA's ignorance to the disease, but also suggested that the disease should not become a reason for gay men to surrender their club spaces, rather still going out and claiming space in Johannesburg. *Link/Skakel's* March 1983 issue, the one immediately after the 'AIDS PANIC IS OVER-STRESSED' issue, had no mention of HIV/AIDS, and continued with its normal publication of advertisements, opinion pieces, and the occasional update on membership numbers.[66] Their inability to confront the virus within its main communicative space and its attempt to continue advertising clubs and bars highlighted GASA's belief that queer spaces should continue to be

[60] 'Virusse? Wie's bang?', *Link/Skakel*, February, 1983.
[61] 'Search for origin of AIDS continues', *The Sunday Star*, February 3, 1985.
[62] Tobia, "Out of the Laager", 83.
[63] 'AIDS panic is over-stressed', *Link/Skakel*, February, 1983.
[64] Ibid.
[65] 'Virusse? Wie's bang?', *Link/Skakel*, February, 1983
[66] *Link/Skakel*, March 1983.

frequented. GASA's inability to deal with HIV/AIDS only further perpetuated their stance on not taking any substantial action in order to protect queer people in the country.

GASA's International Debacle

> GASA should be subjected to boycott [from the International Gay Association] until they demonstrated their opposition to apartheid.[67]

On the fourth of August, 1983, GASA announced that their application to join the IGA had been rejected by 34 votes to 18, largely due to lobbying by the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group (SHRG) which claimed that GASA's "non-racist, non-sexist and not political" claims were inconsistent. By being 'non-racist', GASA should, according to SHRG, oppose apartheid, which would make them political. SHRG highlighted that *Link/Skakel*, GASA's newspaper, was printed only in English and Afrikaans and was "silent about the activities of gays in the black townships" as a way for the white gay community to "[sell] out to the authorities in return for the police ignoring the (segregated) gay bars and discos" in white areas.[68] SHRG had argued that "[I]f IGA admitted GASA to membership it would open IGA to the accusation of indirectly supporting the South African policy of Apartheid" and as such show that IGA would not meet its own standards of non-racialism.[69] IGA's own constitution demands that for any organisation to be admitted to should be: "1) non-profit making; 2) open to membership from Lesbians and Gay Men; 3) open to all racial groups; 4) in agreement with the Aims of IGA, and 5) the application must be in writing".[70] The IGA had initially found no objections to these demands upon GASA's application procedure and only following the SHRG's circulation of written objections was it agreed that GASA's application would be studied with more scrutiny.[71]

GASA responded to the rejection, stating they were "disappointed by this news as we find it surprising that an anti-discriminatory organisation should be using discrimination as a weapon" against them.[72] Yet SHRG's lobbying made little difference when, in the following year,

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[67] 'SA gays get the cold shoulder', *Rand Daily Mail*, August 6, 1983.
[68] GALA. AM2975. B3. IGA.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.

GASA had sent a representative to Helsinki to persuade the IGA to grant GASA full membership.[73]

> Convinced that the gay liberation movement of South Africa is also a genuine part of the struggle for human rights, the IGA welcomes the membership of the national gay organisation of the Republic of South Africa and declares its opposition to Apartheid.[74]

GASA's attempts to join the IGA were an explicit attempt for the organisation to locate itself within a global space, rather than focusing on local space and queer citizenship. With membership in the IGA, GASA had created the impression that they would oppose the NP and apartheid, but this notion was tested when Simon Nkoli, a member of GASA and the anti-apartheid struggle was arrested, prompting an inquiry by the IGA into why GASA would not support one of their own members.

Simon Nkoli, an anti-apartheid activist and queer-rights activist, joined the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) in 1979, having previously been arrested four times during the student protests in Soweto in 1976.[75] Also a member of GASA, Nkoli's "racial and sexual identity politics intersected" when he was arrested with 21 other United Democratic Front (UDF) members after a march in protest against government-imposed rent hikes.[76] GASA had refused to support Nkoli during his trial, eventually prompting more negative reactions from the IGA.

Nkoli's trial, and GASA's lack of efforts to substantially help him, brought GASA to the attention of the IGA and its stance of racial relations and apartheid once more into questions. Nkoli had been involved with GASA whilst still in detention from 1985 and 1988.[77] In a letter to the SHRG, GASA attempted to reason why they were unable to assist Nkoli with his imprisonment, writing:

> I have the miserable task of informing you that Simon Nkodi [sic] has been held under the detention without trial provisions of the Internal Security Act since the unrest in Vaal Triangle started. This is due to his having been a student leader and therefore involved in organising stay aways etc. He kept this part of his life secret … The people who are involved in assisting

[73] Jens Rydström. "Solidarity—with whom?: The international gay & lesbian rights movements and apartheid". in Neville Hoad, Karen Martin and Graeme Reid (eds.) *Sex & Politics in South Africa*. (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005) p. 35.
[74] IGA World Conference 1984, Press Release.
[75] Ruth M. Pettis. 'Nkoli, Tseko Simon (1957-1998)'. *GLBTQ*. (2005) p. 1.
[76] Ibid, pp. 1-2.
[77] Batra, 'Worlding Sexualities under Apartheid', p. 46.

> detainees … have the situation in hand, and there is nothing practical we can do at this stage.[78]

In order to justify their stance on Nkoli's trial, GASA argued that because Nkoli was not detained because of "his gay activities" and that it was rather because of his role as a political leader, they had no means or reason to pursue justice for him.[79] This argument further highlighted the non-political sway of GASA's leadership.

Early in 1986 the IGA began their own investigations into why GASA had not supported Nkoli, who had already been in prison for more than a year. Henk Botha, a prominent member of GASA, was sent to discuss GASA's continued participation in the IGA, and had managed to convince the IGA that GASA was dedicated to an anti-apartheid struggle, thus allowing GASA to maintain its membership. In the August/September 1986 issue of *Exit*, former GASA chairman James Willet-Clarke praised Henk Botha for his role in keeping GASA within IGA, writing that: "the despised 'moffies' have succeeded in staying in a world organisation where the respectable straights have failed to achieve so often".[80] His "mix of gay pride and South African nationalism reeked of gay liberation and racist oppression" at a time when GASA was still struggling to maintain their international façade of protecting gay people of all races.[81] Writing from his cell to the IGA and SHRG, Nkoli expressed his concern at being used as a propaganda piece by GASA:

> I am absolutely difficult now for GASA. I don't want to be used by them to further their own propaganda. They have never supported me, since ever I was arrested. They failed to even organising reading materials for me, so what is there for them to do.[82]

Nkoli's plight showed that GASA was unwilling to protect its own members against the apartheid state, choosing instead to remain 'apolitical' as a way of gaining political favour.

GASA's inactive role in opposing apartheid was its eventual downfall as the organisation was constantly "not able to meet the demands of local politics" at a time when other gay organisations were beginning to oppose the apartheid regime.[83] One of the early groups was Cape Town's Congress of Pink Democrats (CPD) which was founded in April of 1987 and was "committed to non-racism, non-sexism, non-heterosexism and non-collaboration with

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[78] GALA. AM2975. A2.3.3. Rand Correspondence 3/3.
[79] Batra, 'Worlding Sexualities under Apartheid', p. 46.
[80] 'ILGA Vote Was Triumph', *Exit*, August/September, 1986.
[81] Tobia, "Out of the Laager, Into the Streets", p. 133.
[82] Rydström, "Solidarity—with whom?", p. 39.
[83] Ibid.

apartheid's structures and their ramifications in economic, political and social structures".[84] Whilst other organisations were taking shape in South Africa directly opposed to apartheid, the IGA had two votes on GASA's participation in the IGA. The proposal to expel GASA was defeated, but the vote to "suspended their membership while investigating its standpoint regarding apartheid was carried with 48 votes to 7" and GASA was immediately suspended.[85] GASA's inability and lack of will to confront apartheid and to support queer black people in South Africa lost them international support and recognition. It was announced at a meeting in late July of 1987 that "GASA no longer existed" although they still had individual branches throughout the country which would have to organise as independent separate organisations.[86] GASA's 1987 venture into politics would come at the expense of both GASA and of South Africa's black queer bodies, as GASA exemplified its conservative, racist stance moments before its collapse.

Exit's Support for NP Gay Rights' Election Campaign

In what seemed a contradictory move considering the constitutional alienation of gay people, the NP fielded Leon de Beer, a pro-gay rights candidate, in the Hillbrow constituency during the 1987 parliamentary elections. The NP sought to garner white support in Hillbrow, an already increasingly cosmopolitan location in South Africa, by appealing to white gay men who, although may be considered the antithesis to the Afrikanerdom espoused by the NP, were seen as a vocal enough support constituency in which the NP could "reconstitute white unity" by those who felt excluded by NP policy.[87] The growing anti-apartheid movement called on white South Africans to boycott the elections, but *Exit*, the successor to *Link/Skakel* of GASA, had signalled its support for De Beer and stated that gay voters should vote in order to gain a gay-rights' member in parliament.[88] But while GASA's white male constituency may have sought a more public social life, politically they remained conservative.[89] The racism of Hillbrow's white gay community had made its ways into *Exit's* pages, which, despite the States of Emergency in 1986 and 1987, "focused almost totally on parochial affairs, with some token coverage of … Simon Nkoli" but ultimately became an agent of GASA's founders and the

[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Conway, 'Queering Apartheid", pp. 849 – 850.
[88] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 61.
[89] Ibid.

white gay community.[90] Giving his support to De Beer, Henk Botha, then editor of *Exit*, stated that:

> Like most gay people in the constituency, I would never have voted [NP]. But it was an exciting moment for us. Here was this handsome, charming man, and he was talking in favour of gay rights. It was the first time any candidate was prepared to stand up openly and support gay rights.[91]

By supporting De Beer, *Exit*, and by extension much of GASA's constituency, made it clear that white gay rights were the only rights they were interested in protecting. Recalling the problems of GASA, Edwin Cameron stated that "[GASA] started politicizing [gay rights] but they were hopelessly middle-class and hopelessly white" in their pursuit of legalizing homosexuality.[92] GASA's lack of intersectionality restricted the organisation to the perseverance of whiteness being inclusivity of white gays.

Gerald Kraak brought to light the "most grotesque racism" present amongst Hillbrow's white gay community during the 1980s and argues that "for white gay political activists the spheres of political and gay identities" were unable to intersect as they may have in other countries.[93] Mark Gevisser recalls that the only time black gay men were welcomed into the social lives of white gay men in Hillbrow was when it would be "younger black men with older white men" in clubs.[94] Kraak agreed with this sentiment, stating that there "was a sense that the few black men that were allowed in the clubs were only there because they were with much older white men" and were thus able to enter the white gay social sphere.[95] Other black men and womxn in these spaces would be classified into their own social sphere comprising only black gays and lesbians, in the same space, separated by racial stratification.

Hillbrow's bars, restaurants, and accommodation may have operated as gay-inclusive spaces, but they were still spaces centred around class and capital, a commercial hub focusing on a specific subculture.[96] White middle-class gay and lesbian people financially contributed to

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[90] Gerry Davidson and Ron Nerio. "EXIT: Gay Publishing in South Africa", in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 227.
[91] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 62.
[92] Justice E Cameron. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 2 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[93] Kraak, "Homosexuality and the South African left", p. 123.
[94] Mark Gevisser. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 23 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[95] Kraak, "Homosexuality and the South African left", p. 123.
[96] Justice E Cameron. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 2 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.

businesses in Hillbrow. Those who ran the businesses in Hillbrow saw them as a source of income, one which should be protected. GASA, itself situated in Hillbrow, prioritised gay business owners and their paying customers over black queer people who were often unable to afford the luxuries of middle-class white gay life. Later in 1988 the NP highlighted their change in view towards homosexuality when three NP councillors for central Johannesburg sponsored an advertisement in *Exit* which read: "Gay People have normal rights … They are an essential part of the economy … [Gays] are ratepayers".[97] The views expressed highlighted "sexual citizenship in capitalist terms … by conceptualising gay men as consumers who benefit the market" and thus should be incorporated fully within a white-only democracy.[98] The neo-liberal politics of capital sought to include those who had money, whilst still remaining exclusionary to those who, due to apartheid, did not. Percy indirectly speaks to the exclusionary politics of capital in Hillbrow, saying that:

> Gay life for blacks was very expensive then … I would say gay life was not for blacks because you needed [money to have] a place of your own. Whites were enjoying it because they [had money to] go to hotels … But with blacks then you will have to go behind the toilet or in the toilet [because you couldn't afford] … an enjoyable thing.[99]

In an interview, Mark Gevisser recalls the class dynamics of gay clubs and bars in Hillbrow as being "alienating" because these spaces were completely stratified in specific class structures, and as such were also transactive in how gay men, specifically older white gay men, would interact with younger black gay men.[100] It was in these class dynamics that GASA and *Exit* situated themselves, looking out for the rights of those with power in order to maintain a hierarchy which benefitted white gay men at the expense of others. The fact that they chose to have no offices in Soweto or other townships, and rather in predominantly white spaces further excluded black queer people who were unable to find transport to Hillbrow.[101] Protecting capitalism as a means of upholding apartheid can stem from PW Botha, South African president from 1984 to 1989, who "denied any charge that he was personally racist" and rather sought to defend apartheid on the basis that it protected civilised government and capitalism.[102] As Daniel Conway explains, Botha's approach to "South Africa as a 'country of minorities'

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[97] 'Advertisement', *Exit*, October 1988.
[98] Conway, 'Queering Apartheid', p. 861.
[99] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[100] Mark Gevisser. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 23 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[101] S'Bu Kheswa. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 04 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[102] Conway, 'Queering Apartheid', p. 857.

who needed protection" included white gay men as a minority within the minority.[103] De Beer had argued that the NP was committed to protecting the rights of minorities, and that those minority rights should extend to gay citizens. *Exit's* articulation of 'gay rights' coincided with De Beer's support to white gay citizens, and helped reinforce the "NP's claim to be maintaining white rule protecting the interests of white voters" in an increasingly desegregated section of Johannesburg.[104]

With the support garnered by *Exit's* campaign, De Beer managed to win by a narrow margin of 89 votes.[105] *Exit's* campaign and De Beer's victory "raised the question of whether a white gay constituency had been created in South Africa" as well as the role *Exit* had in the Progressive Federal Party's (PFP) defeat in Hillbrow, historically an area of near-certain victory for the PFP.[106] Shortly after De Beer's Hillbrow victory, *Exit* interviewed him on the application of the Group Areas Act rather than his stance on gay rights.[107] De Beer responded that the Group Areas Act "must not be seen in isolation. Scrapping the Act has other political implications. This is my concern".[108] He made it clear that black residents were the cause of overcrowding in central Johannesburg and that the Group Areas Act had to be reformed, but still maintained its importance for the "stability of the country's wider political and social structures" which contributed, in the NP's ideological viewpoint, to law and order, and thus the continuation of white power.[109]

> The NP has always stressed group rights strongly … One must always protect minority rights.[110]

Minority rights, which had always been viewed as white rights, had now come to include gay (white) rights, and *Exit's* collaboration with the NP and De Beer signified GASA's stance on the racial disintegration of Hillbrow, highlighting once more that as an organisation they were predominantly targeted towards the protection of white gays and lesbians, regardless of what they had told the IGA. *Exit's* explicit support of De Beer and the NP in Hillbrow further showed that their main constituency, and the remnants of GASA's too, were conservative white gay men who wished for the status quo to remain.

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[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid, p. 858.
[106] Ibid.
[107] 'Gay Rights MP Speaks After Victory', *Exit*, June/July 1987.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Conway, 'Queering Apartheid', p. 859.
[110] 'Gay Rights MP Speaks After Victory', *Exit*, June/July 1987.

Despite *Exit's* strong campaign towards the election of De Beer, there was a strong backlash against the paper from "key figures in the white gay and lesbian movement" in the country.[111] Edwin Cameron, at the time a human rights lawyer and prominent character in the queer community, described *Exit's* support for De Beer as "a debasement of the gay cause and a profaning of its responsibilities to the South African gay community as a whole" by perpetuating whiteness as something to be protected.[112] Whilst much of the conservative white gay community of Hillbrow had supported De Beer and the Group Areas Act, key members of the white gay and lesbian movement in South Africa strongly criticized *Exit's* role in helping to elect an NP official in Hillbrow. The University of Witwatersrand's Gay Movement (WGM) wrote a letter to *Exit* which was published in the post-election issue of the paper which stated that "gay rights are one facet of the struggle of universal rights" which are denied to a large majority of the population, and announced that *Exit* was only interested in white gay rights and as such the paper's claim to "speak for the entire gay community" was completely arrogant.[113] A Cape Town based organisation, Gay Action Group, called *Exit* "an elitist, sexist paper designed for the large conservative white gay male community" which ignored the needs of the majority of black gay and lesbian people. International gay organisations which funded gay activist organisation and publications in South Africa refused to fund *Exit* as they had shown that they cared more for white gay men than anyone else.[114]

Conclusion

GASA's myopic, single-issue approach to gay rights at the expense of South Africa's black majority, and their eagerness to side with white conservative gay men without truly opening up for black gay men or lesbian womxn at a time when much of the international world was boycotting apartheid and many liberal-leaning queer organisations in South Africa were opposing the NP proved to be its downfall. Its swansong was supporting De Beer, but it also highlighted the racist and conservative thought behind many of GASA's officials, making the organisation as a whole seem as though it was a supporting tenet of apartheid so long as the NP would begin to include white gay and lesbian people a political voice. Having ignored the broader anti-apartheid it seems that GASA was destined to fail, as it ignored a large number of

[111] Conway, 'Queering Apartheid', p. 860.
[112] Davidson and Nerio, "EXIT", pp. 228 – 229.
[113] 'WGM Stand Clear', *Exit*, June/July 1987.
[114] Davidson and Nerio, "EXIT", p. 229.

gay and lesbian people in the country, and specifically focused its efforts on apolitical, conservative white gay men. GASA's ignorance about the anti-apartheid struggle, coinciding with their refusal to support Nkoli proved to the IGA and other queer people in the country that GASA had only cared about, and fought for the needs of the white gay community, regardless of what they may have claimed.

By positioning themselves in Hillbrow, GASA had been able to situate themselves amongst queer people who had already helped turn the inner-city space into a pink triangle. Their defence of the space had developed on the notion that queer people required their own safe space, and they had attempted to help provide that for them.

GASA had been able to create a new space for queer people in South Africa, one which allowed queer people to engage with political rights. By advertising for queer-friendly spaces, and by organising large queer events, GASA was able to let queer people throughout Johannesburg know where to find safe spaces in the city. Their political involvement, whilst limited to white gay men, was the beginning of politicizing queer rights in South Africa, and provided a space for ideas to be discussed nationally.

GASA's shortfalls had highlighted the need more a multi-issue, politically active approach to queer rights which, in Johannesburg, would predominantly be called for by the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW). Gay politics, in the form of GASA, during the 1980s had failed because it was unwilling to align itself with the struggle for black liberation in South Africa, and it was only when the queer struggle aligned itself with the anti-apartheid struggle that queer liberation was able to truly gain a footing in the political realm.[115]

[115] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 48.

Chapter Four

GLOW: Politicizing Queer Space

> I am black and I am gay. I cannot separate the two parts of me into secondary or primary struggles. In South Africa, I am oppressed because I am a black man and I am oppressed because I am a gay man. So, when I fight for my freedom I must fight against both oppressions … All those who believe in a democratic South Africa must fight against all oppression, all intolerance, all injustice.[1]

Introduction

The collapse of the mostly white, politically conservative Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) lay the foundations for a profound shift away from apolitical, single–issue politics endorsed by GASA towards a radically political, non-racial gay movement led mostly by black gays and lesbians. Regarded as "charterist" organisations because of their ideological alignment with the African National Congress's (ANC) Freedom Charter, and their own work towards developing their own "Charter of Lesbian and Gay Rights", organisations sought to fight for all human rights, which meant an end to apartheid as well as inclusive political movements for gays and lesbians.[2] With a need for an organisation centred on queer rights which would be inclusive of all races and politically active, Simon Nkoli founded the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW). The organisation, located in Johannesburg, effectively lobbied the ANC to include gay and lesbian rights in the new democratic constitution, and politically mobilized to claim traditionally heteronormative spaces as their own. A large portion of its membership, as well as its founding members came out of Soweto, and the organisation had a large membership based in Hillbrow. Those in Hillbrow had often recently moved into the inner-city having grown up in Johannesburg's surrounding townships. When the need did arise, they pressured the ANC to confirm that they would defend gay and lesbian rights in a democratic South Africa, but to reach that point they first had to confront the ANC after their own homophobic vitriol.

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[1] Simon Nkoli. "I am black and I am gay". GLOW. Braamfontein. 13 October 2019.
[2] Mark Gevisser. "A Different Fight for Freedom: A History of South African Lesbian and Gay Organisation from the 1950s to 1990s" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 63.

The student protests of 1976 in Soweto and elsewhere across the country had their own impact on queer black Sowetans in much the same way the youthful influx into Hillbrow had due to its rejection of traditional hierarchies. It differentiated youth from older generations, allowing them to oppose what was deemed appropriate:

> [1976] shook society to its roots, as a profound rupture of traditional hierarchies, had the effect of splitting young people from the roots and conventions of their elders. Suddenly, young people found themselves in opposition to many things their parents stood for – and this meant challenging not only conservative politics but all conservative mores.[3]

Coupled with a collapse of racial boundaries in Hillbrow and queer leaders like Simon Nkoli and Bev Distsie moving into Hillbrow in the 1980s, "ideas of a gay community filtered into" Soweto's gay-friendly networks.[4] Linda, a teacher from Soweto who passed away in 1993 due to HIV/AIDS related complications, who was a key informant for Hugh McLean and Linda Ngcobo, stated that 1976 allowed gays to be more confident in the townships because "[protestors] said they didn't mind [if queer people joined] and we would go to march in drag".[5] Whilst this was unlikely to have been true for everyone, it suggests some solidarity shown by at least a few heterosexual youths. In some cases this meant that queer people were beginning to find space in Soweto where they were able to express their sexuality in ways others before them were unable to. This mostly took form amongst township youth, as Percy, at this stage in his forties, recalls that it was the youth who were visible, whilst older queer people still remained closeted.[6] Youthful resistance in Soweto, however, did not guarantee that all black people opposing apartheid felt the same. Peter Tatchell highlighted some exiled ANC members' ambivalent views to queer people, and Simon Nkoli brought the notion of queer rights' to his UDF comrades whilst in prison. Queer rights were beginning to be discussed with a real sense of political involvement by the end of the 1980s and start of the 1990s.

GLOW had sought to create a political space for queer people to mobilize in ways which were not possible in previous years. The organisation aimed to move from queer hideouts out into open space, explicitly doing so with South Africa's first Pride March in 1990 as a way to gain public support for queer rights. GLOW's use of Hillbrow, an already existing queer metropolis

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[3] Ibid, p. 69.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Hugh McLean and Linda Ngcobo. "Abangibhamayo Bathi Ngimnandi (Those who Fuck me Say I'm Tasty): Gay Sexuality in Reef Townships" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (ed.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 180.
[6] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.

which had begun to deracialise during the 1980s, attempted to use the influx of new people in the inner city to mobilize support for queer people. The organisation turned old gay clubs into local nodes of communication for Johannesburg's queer community, whilst maintaining links to Soweto and other townships through various chapter's in the organisation.

ANC Grapples with Gay and Lesbian Rights

In August 1987, Peter Tatchell, an anti-apartheid and pro-gay rights advocate interviewed Ruth Mompati, one of the leaders of the 20 000 strong 1956 women's anti-pass march of to the Union Buildings. Having heard of homophobia within the ranks of the ANC, and fearful that once black citizens gained liberation in South Africa the ANC would "pursue the same kind of anti-gay policies that were common in other revolutionary states, such as Cuba, the Soviet Union and China", Tatchell deemed it necessary to challenge homophobia within the ranks of the party in order to ensure that should the ANC come to power it would not discriminate against queer bodies in a democratic South Africa.[7] Tatchell would go on to interview various people aligned with the ANC in order to discover their opinions about queer South Africans and their place within ANC policy. Using the interviews, he would go on to publish them in order to highlight homophobia within the party for the general public to see. Tatchell's interview with Mompati sought to address concerns of homophobia within the ANC, and to establish whether the ANC had any policy regarding gays and lesbians, yet all that was established was that fears of a homophobic contingency within the ANC were valid, as Mompati unequivocally expressed gays and lesbians did not have issues which needed to be addressed:

> I cannot even begin to understand why people want lesbian and gay rights. The gays have no problems. They have nice houses and plenty to eat. I don't see them suffering. No one is persecuting them … We haven't heard about this problem in South Africa until recently. It seems to be fashionable in the West … They are not doing the liberation struggle any favour by organising separately and campaigning for their rights. The (gay) issue is being brought up to take attention away from the main struggle against apartheid … I hope that in a liberated South Africa people will live a *normal* life. I emphasise the word *normal* … Tell me, are lesbians and gays normal? No, it is not normal.[8]

[7] Peter Tatchell. "The moment the ANC embraced gay rights" in Neville Hoad, Karen Martin and Graeme Reid (eds.) *Sex & Politics in South Africa*. (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005) p. 141.
[8] 'ANC dashes hopes for gay rights in SA', *Capital Gay*, September 18, 1987.

To confirm that this wasn't the solitary view of a single member within the ANC, Tatchell contacted Solly Smith, the ANC's chief representative in Britain, who stated similar concerns:

> We don't have a policy. Lesbian and gay rights do not arise in the ANC. We cannot be diverted from our struggle by these issues. We believe in the majority being equal. Those people (lesbians and gays) are in the minority. The majority must rule.[9]

Gay rights and women's rights had been related as secondary issues to the main struggle against apartheid, and were viewed as issues which would only need to be addressed following the demise of apartheid. These interviews were brought together and published in the London newspaper *Capital Gay*, and then further circulated by Tatchell for republication in international gay and anti-apartheid press with the aim of inundating the ANC with protests which would hopefully pressure them to confront the issue of homophobia. Response to the interviews was swift, and many English, Dutch and Scandinavian anti-apartheid and civil rights organisations threatened to withdraw their support for the ANC if the party did not retract and condemn Mompati's statements.[10] The ANC received letters of condemnation, with many people "appalled that a 'liberation movement' like the ANC ignorant, bigoted and intolerant" of other persecuted minorities.[11] Tatchell sought to win over a now embarrassed ANC to the issue of gay and lesbian rights, and offered "the leadership a face-saving solution and a constructive way forward" by privately appealing to exiled leadership in Lusaka.[12]

On the advice of two exiled ANC contacts, David and Norma Kitson, Tatchell wrote a letter to Thabo Mbeki because they had considered him to be "the most liberal-minded of the ANC leaders and senior enough to be able to push for a radical rethink of official policy" which could include gay and lesbian rights. Tatchell's letter to Mbeki helped cause the exiled leadership of the ANC to re-evaluate its stance on queer issues in the anti-apartheid struggle. After internal debates the ANC officially committed itself to support lesbian and gay human rights for the first time.[13] Writing back to Tatchell in November 1987, Mbeki stated that:

> The ANC is indeed very firmly committed to removing all forms of discrimination and oppression in a liberated South Africa … That commitment must surely extend to the protection of gay rights … I would

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[9] Ibid.
[10] Derrick Fine and Julia Nicol. "The lavender lobby: Working for lesbian and gay rights within the liberation movement" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 270.
[11] Tatchell, "The moment the ANC embraced gay rights", p. 143.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid, p. 144.

> like to believe that my colleagues, Solly Smith and Ruth Mompati, did not want to suggest in any way that a free South Africa would want to see gays discriminated against or subjected to any form of repression … We would like to apologise for any misunderstanding.[14]

This happened quickly after Tatchell had published in September, highlighting the ANC's recognition that they had to allow the public to know that they were taking a stand against all forms of discrimination. This new stance taken up by the ANC could be linked back to their debates about feminism when, at the Nairobi Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1985 the ANC reiterated that "there could be no women's liberation without national liberation" in the struggle for equality.[15] The ANC's feminist project was political – a challenge to pro-American intervention which advocated for apolitical feminism separate from national politics – in its link to national politics, much in the same way gay and lesbian rights became politicized when the ANC sought to protect gay and lesbian people against all forms of discrimination.[16] Peter Tatchell reflects on the ANC's changing stance towards gay and lesbian rights, claiming that it was not his doing alone that brought about the change. Others before him had "pressured the ANC to change its homophobic stance" without any success. It appears, according to Tatchell, that the negative publicity generated from his *Capital Gay* article, as well as Tatchell's letter to Mbeki requesting clarification on Mompati and Smith's opinions had, with those pressuring the ANC before Tatchell, all culminated to make the ANC rethink its attitude towards homosexuality.[17]

Whilst Tatchell's intervention was largely directed towards a few exiled ANC leaders, other factors also contributed. Prominent anti-apartheid figures had come out as openly gay, including Simon Nkoli and Zackie Achamt, both ANC members, and Edwin Cameron.[18] There were also threats from "British anti-apartheid lesbian and gay groups" to withdraw their support for the ANC if Mompati's statements were accepted by the ANC.[19] These factors likely combined to force the ANC to take a pro-gay stance on queer rights.

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[14] Ibid, p. 145.
[15] Shireen Hassim. 'Nationalism, Feminism and Autonomy: the ANC in Exile and the Question of Women'. *Journal of South African Studies*. (2004, 30: 3), p. 449.
[16] Zethu Matebeni. "Exploring Black Lesbian Sexualities and Identities in Johannesburg". PhD Thesis. (University of the Witwatersrand, 2011) p. 31.
[17] Tatchell, "The moment the ANC embraced gay rights", p. 145.
[18] Thomas Brown. 'South Africa's Gay Revolution: The Development of Gay and Lesbian Rights in South Africa's Constitution and the Lingering Societal Stigma Towards the Country's Homosexuals'. *Elon Law Review*. (2014, 6:455) p. 464.
[19] Ibid, 465.

Another important figure towards making gay and lesbian rights a political issue rather than a non-political one was Simon Nkoli, whose detention in the Delmas Treason Trial was regarded by Graeme Reid as being a "watershed moment in gay politics here [in South Africa]. [Nkoli] represented that engagement between the gay movement and the broader liberation struggle" by defining his political stance as being both against apartheid and homophobia.[20] During Nkoli's time in prison he had openly come out as gay to his comrades and co-accused, and had discussions with the other Delmas trialists regarding the validity of the queer struggle as being a part of the broader, anti-apartheid struggle. Nkoli believed he had to "raise the issue" of his sexuality with his co-accused before the trial, as his sexuality affected his alibi for the trial. He had been planning on doing it discreetly, but due to unforeseen circumstances, Nkoli told his co-accused he was gay when they had begun harassing another convict for sleeping with another prisoner.[21] At the time, many of the others in the Delmas trial refused to be tried with him because of his sexuality. Their main reasoning for this was that they believed they would lose international support if it was discovered that one of the trialists was gay. Nkoli recalls that "overtime attitudes did change" and the trialists became supportive of him. There were also many letters of support sent to Nkoli from "anti-apartheid organisations and gay organisations the world over" which likely convinced the other Delmas trialists that there was little risk involved in standing trial with Nkoli.[22] Patrick Mosiuoa 'Terror' Lekota, another of the Delmas trialists and eventual senior official in the ANC, recalls the importance of Nkoli in a speech during Nkoli's memorial:

> [Nkoli] had the courage and the daring ability to challenge those around himself on the issues that were not urgent at that time, but important, and would have to claim central attention sooner or later, So if our Constitution today acknowledges the right of everybody, whatever their orientation, those of us who were in the Delmas Trial will be failing history if we didn't acknowledge that Simon became the leading light that raised this issue within that collective of the 22 accused on trial there … but as a result of the participation of [Simon] within that trial, we suddenly became aware of large numbers of South Africans, black and white, who saw and understood the lead that [Simon] was giving. That if this issue was to be resolved, the black–

[20] Jacklyn Cock. 'Engendering Gay and Lesbian Rights: The Equality Clause in the South African Constitution'. *Women's Studies International Forum*. (2002, 26:1) p. 37.
[21] Simon Nkoli. "Wardrobes: Coming out as a black gay activist in South Africa" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 254.
[22] Ibid, p. 255.

> white question had to be resolved as the foundation building onto a Constitution that would recognise everybody.[23]

At first Lekota was the most shocked at Nkloi's coming out, but as can be seen by his speech at Nkoli's memorial, he had grown closer to Nkoli, and aware of the need to have rights regarding sexuality introduced into the broader anti-apartheid struggle.[24] The attention garnered by the Delmas Treason Trial, and the political involvement of those involved, helped raise the awareness of the need for gay liberation to be included in the over-arching theme of black liberation in South African politics. During Nkoli's imprisonment, he had received little help from GASA and upon his release [date/year] the organisation had been in decline, prompting Nkoli to start a new organisation dedicated to both the anti-apartheid movement and queer rights which would be inclusive of people regardless of race or gender.

GLOW, Actively Opposing Apartheid

After Nkoli was acquitted on treason charges he was still forbidden from meeting with more than three people at a time. Ignoring the ban on meeting with large groups, Nkoli formed a group of politically charged gays and lesbian and founded GLOW.[25] The early meetings took place in a shebeen in Soweto called Lee's, with the initial plan to establish an organisation for black gays and lesbians, but it was soon realised that it would be more beneficial to include white gays and lesbians from town as well. Meetings taking place in Soweto excluded white queer people, whereas moving the meetings into Johannesburg's largely deracialised inner city allowed participation from both white and black gays and lesbians, and effectively a largely group of people supporting queer rights in the anti-apartheid struggle. Shortly after the initial meetings, Nkoli placed an advertisement in *Exit* calling for a meeting to be held at the University of the Witwatersrand. At the meeting there were mostly black gays and lesbians present, with a few whites too.[26] GLOW was founded on the need for black queer bodies to have a politically mobilised space where their issues could be voiced within the broader political issues of the country. GASA's expulsion from the International Gay Association

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[23] Patrick Mosiuoa ('Terror') Lekota. "Address at Simon Nkoli's memorial service, St Mary's Cathedral, Johannesburg, December 1998" in Neville Hoad, Karen Martin and Graeme Reid (eds.) *Sex & Politics in South Africa*. (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005) p. 153.
[24] Nkoli, "Wardrobes", p. 256.
[25] Beverly Palesa Ditsie. "Today We are Making History" in Shaun de Waal and Anthony Manion (eds.) *Pride: Protest and Celebration*. (Johannesburg: Fanele, 2006) p. 19.
[26] Paul Mokgethi. "Those were our First Pride Marches – Nine Young Gays and One Lesbian Marching through the Streets of Soweto" in Shaun de Waal and Anthony Manion (eds.) *Pride: Protest and Celebration*. (Johannesburg: Fanele, 2006) p. 25.

(IGA) in 1986 had made it impossible for queer organisations to operate outside of South Africa's political and social contexts. GLOW's immediate position as the "outspoken advocate of gay people's political demands" and its predominantly black membership demonstrated that homosexuality was not merely a white issue, instead it was also linked to queer struggles within the broader anti-apartheid struggle.[27]

Unlike GASA which actively remained apolitical, GLOW was founded with the aim of opposing apartheid. In their constitution, GLOW stated that one of their primary aims was "to oppose the apartheid system at all levels", indicative of the increased political awareness of gay and lesbian people in the country.[28] Mark Gevisser recalls the racial and class dynamics of GLOW, where the organisation had "middle-class rich white kids from the suburbs, like me [Gevisser] and Graeme Reid, and … black activists from the township like Simon (Nkoli) and Bev (Ditsie)" which was crucial for GLOW's ability to reach out to South Africans of various demographics.[29] GLOW had sought to encompass all races, expressly different to the largely white, largely male realms of GASA.[30] More than 60% of GLOW's members were black, and the organisation had multiple chapters in townships in Johannesburg, and held its Annual General Meeting in Soweto.[31] In order to efficiently organise its black membership, GLOW provided various activities and forums in townships. The popular Miss GLOW drag competition, hosted in Soweto after the Annual General Meeting, was the highlight of these activities. Spectators from townships all over Johannesburg attend the event, but it does also highlight a fundamental issue – GLOW's political campaigns such as the Annual General Meeting had a much lower attendance rate than the drag show which followed.[32] Whilst GLOW's racial dynamics reflected the country's demographics, its gender make-up struggled to achieve the same level of cohesion, with only 20% of GLOW's member being female by 1992 and not going up much over the following years.[33]

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[27] Sheila Croucher. 'South Africa's Democratisation and the Politics of Gay Liberation'. *Journal of South African Studies*. (2002, 28: 2) p. 319.
[28] GALA. GAL0001. GLOW. B1.1. Draft constitution (as drafted at meeting held at Wits, 9 April 1988).
[29] Mark Gevisser. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 23 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[30] Donné Rundle. "Our Biggest Concern was that there would only be Twenty of Fifty People …" in Shaun de Waal and Anthony Manion (eds.) *Pride: Protest and Celebration*. (Johannesburg: Fanele, 2006) p. 20.
[31] 'Is homosexuality foreign to black culture?', *GLOWletter*, March, 1991.
[32] Mark Gevisser and Graeme Reid. "Pride or Protest? Drag queens, comrades, and the Lesbian and Gay Pride March" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 279.
[33] Ibid, p. 279.

Even though GLOW was considered to be an organisation for all queer people, lesbians often found that women's rights issues were often "seen as secondary to the struggle" by the male-dominated space of GLOW.[34] Mark Gevisser, a leading figure in GLOW, confirms that womxn's issues were often seen as secondary to gay rights, and as such were often left out of conversations which took place in the organisation.[35] The male-centric approach of GLOW meant that there was a need for a space within the organisation for womxn's issues to be addressed. The Lesbian Forum, which functioned alongside GLOW, was founded in 1990 by Tanya Chan Sam, a prominent lesbian member of GLOW, in order to provide a safe space for womxn as well as lobbying for lesbian issues which were being largely ignored in GLOW.[36] Kim Berman, a lesbian member of GLOW who helped establish the Lesbian Forum, explains the need for the group:

> [W]e had no option but to look after the immediate needs of our members; women who were very traumatised by having been rejected by their families. Almost every black teenager in the group had made at least one suicide attempt, and there was nowhere to refer them to. And so we became their support structure, a sort of Lesbians Anonymous. Of course this is critical work. But it meant we had to put more expressly political concerns on hold.[37]

The social importance of the Lesbian Forum was its more important role, as it helped lesbian womxn find space where they were welcomed having been ostracised by friends and family, and where their concerns were listened to more directly than in male-dominated spaces like GLOW. The Lesbian Forum "focused its activities in townships by holding meetings … with social events" which catered to its largely-black membership as a way to raise consciousness amongst queer womxn.[38] Advertised in the December 1990 issue of *GLOWletter*, GLOW's pamphlet, the Lesbian Forum their need to raise visibility of queer womxn both within the "Gay and Lesbian Community" and broader society, as well as using the Forum as a space for enjoyment and socializing.[39]

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[34] Margaret Auerbach. "Come on, Sweetie-Pie, Join the March" in Shaun de Waal and Anthony Manion (eds.) *Pride: Protest and Celebration*. (Johannesburg: Fanele, 2006) p. 59.
[35] Mark Gevisser. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 23 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[36] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 80.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Gevisser and Reid, "Pride or Protest?", p. 279.
[39] 'Lesbian Forum', *GLOWletter*, December, 1990.

> [Simon Nkoli] conceived the first Pride as a political statement but also as an opportunity to assert gay right, for self-expression and to have fun – a combination of everything Pride should be.[40]

The first Pride March in Africa, organised by GLOW, took place in Johannesburg on 13 October 1990. Conceived by Simon Nkoli and Bev Ditsie, two of GLOW's leading members and both from Soweto, the aim was to follow the motivation of other Pride Marches around the world where "the sense of moral indignation that forces people out of the privacy and relative safety of their homes and ghettoes and onto the more dangerous, more tenuous forum of the street" could be achieved through the March.[41] Donné Rundle, a leading figure in GLOW, recalls that by the time Nelson Mandela was released from prison in February of 1990 GLOW was "already well into the organisation of the march" but his release and "the unbanning of the ANC emphasised the importance of gays and lesbians becoming part of the struggle" and not being seen as a side issue which could be ignored until after democracy.[42] By being visible on the streets, Pride overtly challenged the idea of a perceived heteronormative space, its own "coming out" process from hidden clubs, out into the open, to show the city and the country that queer people were in the city.[43] The physical production and occupation of queer spaces in the Johannesburg had disrupted the notion of heteronormative hegemony and "visibly queer[ed] and eroticiz[ed] pockets of public space" in order to produce queer space.[44]

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[40] 'Politics and Play: Looking back with Pride in Joburg', *Sunday Times*, October 10, 2019.
[41] 'Gay GLOW', *Weekly Mail*, October 18, 1990.
[42] Rundle, "Our Biggest Concern", pp. 20-21.
[43] Matebeni, "Exploring Black Lesbian Sexualities", p.144.
[44] Marius Pieterse. 'Perverts, Outlaws and Dissidents: (Homo)Sexual Citizenship and Urban Space in Johannesburg'. *Urban Forum*. (2015, 26), p. 100.

The first Pride March in South Africa, hosted in Johannesburg in October of 1990, began at the University of the Witwatersrand and made its way through Braamfontein, an emerging gay hub in the late 1980s and 1990s, and Hillbrow, Johannesburg's traditionally gay pink triangle of the 1970s and 1980s.[45] The choice to host the March in the inner-city allowed residents from Soweto, as well as residents in town and the surrounding suburbs, to have easy access to the event. Buses were organised by Paul Mokgethi, a co-founder of GLOW and the founder of the Hope and Unity Metropolitcan Church (HUMCC) and some of his friends, Tsidi, Mpho and Zaza. The buses would leave Soweto from the Ipelegeng community centre to help attendees gain access to the March, highlighting GLOW's stance that it should be an event where as many people as possible were able to have access.[46] The shift in queer visibility is expressed perfectly in Gevisser's chapter, "A different fight for freedom", in *Defiant Desire: gay and lesbian lives in South Africa*:

Image 1: When the gays go marching in

"When the gays go marching in". *Sunday Times*, October 14, 1990.

> In the 1960s, gay men and lesbians embraced either in dark parks or behind bolted doors. In the 1990s, some are beginning to embrace, defiantly, on the streets in full view of the nation media at the annual march. In 1968, that first public meeting of Law Reform at the Park Royal hotel was strictly controlled to prevent unwanted entry by police or the media; in 1992, the police are called out to protect lesbian and gay marchers and the media is encouraged to record them.[47]

The shift was spearheaded by many organisations fighting for queer equality, and culminated in queer people being able to take to the streets. Still fearful of repercussions, however, GLOW had handed out paper bags to people in attendance who wished to remain anonymous on the day of the first Pride March. The decision to hand out paper bags was made in the few hours

[45] Gevisser and Reid, "Pride or Protest?", p. 278.
[46] Mokgethi, "Those were our First Pride Marches", p. 24.
[47] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 63.

before the March, but the organisers felt it important to give people the choice of anonymity.[48] It provided a "bizarre spectacle of people marching incognito for openness and pride" but in doing so also highlighted the difficulties of being open about one's sexuality in South Africa.[49] During the March it had begun to rain, and as the rain fell, bags came off, read as an unintentional and symbolic reference that people had come "out from the closet" in *Glowletter* after the March.[50]

What should be noted is the shift that had taken place from the 1960s, when queer people were regarded as near invisible in public spaces, but by the 1990s they were able to take to the streets, something that would have been thought of as impossible during previous decades. It was still a space in transition, but comparing this space to the 1960s shows how spaces had opened up more for queer people to participate in previously heterosexually coded spaces. Hillbrow's transition through the 1970s and 1980s, as a space continuously regarded as queer-friendly, made it the ideal location for Pride to take place, claiming space which had been friendly to queer people, but where a vast majority still had to stay hidden behind closed doors. Pride had politicized Hillbrow's streets, but many still saw it as a "fun [event] … essentially not anything more than [being fun]", which may have contributed to its draw to people who weren't politically aligned.[51] In a similar manner, Hillbrow in the prior decades, with its prevalence of clubs would also be regarded as spaces which may not have been regarded as political by all its clientele, and rather seen as a space of escapism. Pride took both queer politics, and queer escapism to the streets in a way which was not possible in prior decades.

Whilst more than 60% of GLOW's members were black, Pride was a largely white event, with only 5% of those marching in 1990 being black.[52] Hillbrow and many of its surrounding areas may have been largely deracialised by 1990, but there were certainly aspects which contributed to this skewed racial statistic in participation. Mark Gevisser and Graeme Reid have argued that one of these aspects may be that GLOW's organisational work in townships did not do enough to raise sexual awareness, rather focusing on the organisations' chapters and internal politics than showcasing defiance in townships like Soweto. The also mention that the media attention attributed to Pride may have caused many to be fearful to attend, with the possibility

[48] Lee Randall. "I Deicided to Pull off the Brown Paper Bag I Wore … There was this Feeling of Elation about the March" in Shaun de Waal and Anthony Manion (eds.) *Pride: Protest and Celebration*. (Johannesburg: Fanele, 2006) p. 28.
[49] Gevisser and Reid, "Pride or Protest?", p. 280.
[50] '800 March!', *Glowletter*, December 1990.
[51] Levi. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 19 August 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[52] Gevisser and Reid, "Pride or Protest?", p. 279.

of job losses and public outing attributing to that fear.[53] Percy remembers being invited to the first Pride March by some of his white friends in GLOW, and recalls how he wanted to go but not be involved, so instead he went and took his place on the side, watching in from the outside.[54] Instead, like many others, Percy would go to the Pride afterparties without actually being a visible attendant of Pride.

Whilst GLOW remained an expressly political organisation, it had to combine the need for militant queer activism with the needs of its members, which was predominantly directed towards the provision of a safe social space, itself a political act.[55] In organising the March, GLOW had attempted to combine both the "carnivalesque tradition of the annual New York Pride March … [with] South Africa's own tradition of the anti-apartheid protest march" to attract as large a cross-section of queer people as possible.[56] S'Bu Kheswa, one of GLOW's members during the 1990s, recalls how Pride was multifunctional in its attempts to attract its crowds, but also highlights the problems it has cause in the turnout:

> Pride, I'll say, served two purposes. It was Pride March; we are marching, we are claiming space, we are visible. But it was also a big party. So it offered those two things – celebratory and political. That's what Pride served for us … it has always been the case that the marchers are fewer than the people who will be at the party.[57]

The March was a powerful political act but in the first few years it attracted fewer people than the Pride afterparty, which was attended by both black and white queer people, even those who saw Pride as being too political. Perhaps the afterparties provided a safety for those who attended but did not attend the March. Those that only attended the afterparties were not actively involved in the political aspect of claiming space in a March where there were many onlookers who openly expressed their homophobic disgust towards those in attendance.

Lee Randall, who was one of the early members of GLOW and had helped organise the March, recalls that there were many "onlookers who were gay themselves but not daring enough to join the march" and, like Percy, remained supportive from the outside looking in.[58] As the March continued through the city some onlookers joined the March. There were other groups

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[53] Ibid, p. 280.
[54] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[55] Gevisser and Reid, "Pride or Protest?", p. 279.
[56] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", pp. 63-64.
[57] S'Bu Kheswa. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 04 October 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.
[58] Randall, "I Decided to Pull off the Brown Paper Bag", pp. 28.

who were vociferously critical of the march, especially Christian groups, which, starting during the 1991 March, held a counter-march to harass Pride participants. They became "as much part of the spectacle as the drag queens" who have been ever-present during the March.[59] In Ditsie's documentary on Simon Nkoli, *Simon & I*, asking onlookers what they thought of the March, statements such as "homosexuality is a sin against God. Homosexuality is a curse on the nation. Homosexuality leads to eternity in hell" and "they have no right to do this, you know. We as Christians, we believe it is a big sin" were expressed by some.[60] Another man also expressed his disgust by saying "You know what, this is bullshit. Bullshit".[61] There is another man, standing with a loudspeaker aimed towards the marchers calling out that "there is hope for you. Every man and woman, there is hope for you today. Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus. Thank you father".[62] The animosity expressed towards queer people exemplified the need for Pride. The 1992 March was one of the more politically charged Pride Marches, the theme – 'Marching for our Rights' – was linked to the inclusion of a 'gay rights' clause in the ANC's Bill of Rights.[63] In their chapter in *Defiant Desire*, Mark Gevisser and Graeme Reid recall "something menacing" about the "bible-punchers" protesting against Pride, with one "prophet brandishing a firearm" after a marcher attempted to kiss him.[64] Another problematic aspect of the Marches in the early 1990s was that many white gay men found the Marches to be too political and too black.

Although Pride Marches have been predominantly white affairs – the 1992 March, perhaps the most political, had 75% white participants – many men, when questioned through publicity campaigns in gay bars such as Champions and Connections claimed that they did not attend the Marches because they were "too political, too closely linked to the ANC, and … too black".[65] These white gay men, based on where they were questioned, would most likely have been part of an older generation aligned with the conservative politics associated with GASA, refusing to acknowledge a need for a cross-racial political movement during the dying years of apartheid. The queer activism of the 1990s countered the white conservative gay's deeply-entrenched racism, as they were hopeful of a gay-liberation in the future, but had preferred to

[59] Gevisser and Reid, "Pride or Protest?", pp. 280.
[60] Beverly Palesa Ditsie and Nicky Newman (directors). 2001. Film. *Simon & I*. South Africa: See Thru Media/Steps for the Future.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Gevisser and Reid, "Pride or Protest?", p. 279.
[64] Ibid, pp. 280-281.
[65] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 82.

maintain the racial dynamics of apartheid and the comforts afforded to them through entrenched racism.

Whilst the first Pride March was largely a success, with many queer people joining in, some coming from as far away as Zimbabwe to take part in Africa's first Pride March, there were unintended consequences too.[66] The relative safety the March provided gave many the opportunity to be open about their sexuality, with many prominent figures taking to the stage, in front of television cameras, and speaking to the crowds. Ditsie, wanting to give a voice to black womxn, and in the safety provided by the March as well as Hillbrow's historic space as inclusionary towards queer bodies, took the opportunity to speak, and for the first time many in Soweto would discover her queer sexuality when they saw her on TV. She was highlighted on a religious talk show which criticised the March, and afterwards people in Soweto threatened her:

> That first Pride was one of the best days of my life. But I was shown on TV that night taking part in Pride. It was a religious show and the priest was saying, "These people should be killed." All of a sudden I was getting funny looks from people in the street. I thought "Uh-oh. What have I done?" My grandmother got scared and thought I was going to be killed. Two days later I was sitting in my room when I heard voices outside calling my name. I ran into the lounge and my granny opened the door and told me to hide. About twenty angry men were surrounding our house demanding I come with them so that they could teach me a lesson. They wanted to rape me. The worst thing is that they threatened to take my grandma if I didn't come with them. My grandmother stood at the door and said, "Come in, but one of you will die with me". The men mistook the iron rod she was carrying for a gun … I was so terrified I couldn't leave the house for weeks. Gender-based violence is a problem in South Africa, but coming out as a lesbian is even harder because you are putting yourself in the firing line … But the best thing that could have happened did. Instead of being rejected I had gained my family's full support.[67]

Ditsie made her speech during the March, in Johannesburg's inner-city. Less than twenty kilometres away, in Soweto, being open about her sexuality presented its own issues, placing both her and her family in danger. The contrasting nature of a relatively 'safe space' in Hillbrow during Pride, and Soweto is highlighted here, as well as the "common notion of associating homosexuality with whiteness" as Hillbrow and Pride were at the time mostly white.[68] Hillbrow's history as a bohemian, accepting space towards queer people was the defining

[66] '800 March!', *Glowletter*, December 1990.
[67] Ditsie, "Today We are Making History", pp. 19 – 20.
[68] Matebeni, "Exploring Black Lesbian Sexualities", p. 107.

reason for Pride's organisers to host the March in the historically inclusive space. But Ditsie's story of her grandmother also highlights another aspect of safety in Soweto, showing that the township was not a complete space of homophobia, but rather a space of complex relations surrounding sexuality. Whilst homophobia existed, as it did in Hillbrow too, there were spaces of safety, and Ditsie found that safety in her familial home.

After the first March GLOW called it a success which helped "increase [gay and lesbian] visibility … [and] force[d] people to see [gays and lesbians] exist" in South Africa.[69] The second Pride March was also regarded as a success, and followed much of the same formula as the first, but it was the third March, in October of 1992, which had been more political than the previous two, "drawing the traditions of pride and protest together" in order to demand the need for a clause in the ANC's Bill of Rights which would protect queer people.[70] The theme of the March, 'Marching for our Rights', had strayed from the previous themes of 1990 (Unity in the Community) and 1991 (March for Equality). Whilst the first two Marches were political in claiming space, they were not fundamentally directed towards Constitutional inclusion in the same way the 1992 March was. 1992 attracted a wider range of queer people than previous Marches as queer participants all saw the need to influence political parties to recognise gay rights'. There was more involvement from other organisations who came to Johannesburg to participate. The Transvaal Organisation for Gay Sport (TOGS), a predominantly white gay social organisation, provided marshalling services for the March while the Association of Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians (ABIGALE), a mostly-black organisation from Cape Town had transported 50 of its members to Johannesburg to join the March.[71] Whilst the need for protest and politicization had already been established during the 1980s, Winnie Mandela's trial in 1991 had forced GLOW to respond to a resurgent, persistent homophobia which was being used in her defence and reiterated by her supporters.

Winnie Mandela's Trial: Homosex is not in black culture

Winnie Mandela was brought to trial on 4 February 1991 for the abduction and abuse of four youths from the Methodist Church Manse in Orlando West, Soweto on 29 December 1988. Kenny Kgase, Thabiso Mono, Pelo Gabriel Mekgwe and Stompie Moeketsi Seipei, all ranging

[69] '800 March!', *Glowletter*, December 1990.
[70] Gevisser and Reid, "Pride or Protest?", pp. 278-279.
[71] Ibid, p. 279.

in age from 14 to 29, were taken to the Diepkloof Extension home of Mandela where they were "allegedly questioned, subjected to a variety of accusations, seriously physically assaulted and then held captive" under Mandela's watch.[72] When testifying, Mandela alleged that Xoliswa Felati, another of the co-accused:

> [A]lleged that Rev Paul Verryn had been sexually abusing several youths who had taken refuge at the mission house [and had] informed me that some of the youths were following Verryn's example in indulging in homosexual practices and that a youth Katiza Cebekhulu had, as a result of indecent assault on him by Verryn, become mentally disturbed.[73]

The premise of Mandela's argument was that the boys had been take from Paul Verryn's care because they were being sexually abused. Verryn, the reverend of the Methodist Church Manse, had been accused by Mandela of sexually assaulting those taken into his care. Kgase, Mono, Mekgwe and Seipei were reported to have been "beaten until they admitted being sexually molested by Verryn" with Seipei apparently refusing to admit to it.[74]

What Mandela had attempted to do was deny the existence of homosexuality within African society, thereby disrupting safety for queer Africans. The public homophobia displayed during the trial exemplified the need for support towards queer people. Without public support, space would once more be limited for queer bodies, and safety would only be found in secluded locations within the city. As with the NP's politicisation of sexuality, Mandela's trial attempted to disregard safety for queer bodies, suggesting that gay people did not exist within African society, and that homosexuality only came about through the abuse of boys by white men.[75] This argument was a case that queer people should not be granted safety in society, and should remain criminalised, and in doing so should not have space in society where they were able to recognise any fundamental rights already granted to other sections of society.

Mandela's defence case was an attempt to invoke public homophobia by connecting homosexuality as an "exploitation of the vulnerability of disadvantaged people" and was seen in both the public's defence of Mandela. At the time of her trial, Mandela had already been ostracised by ANC and former United Democratic Front (UDF) leaders, but she still had followers who held the same views as her, as demonstrated in one supporters' placard reading

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[72] Rachel Holmes. "'White rapists makes coloureds (and homosexuals)': The Winnie Mandela trial and the politics of race and sexuality" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 285.
[73] 'Kidnap: Witness in Winnie trial goes missing', *Sowetan*, February 12, 1991.
[74] 'Mandela and her football club', *Business Day*, February 24, 1989.
[75] 'Kidnap: Witness in Winnie trial goes missing', *Sowetan*, February 12, 1991.

'homesex is not in black culture', as well as the way the press regarded the case.[76] On March 14, 1991, Radio 702 broadcast a programme in which homosexuality was discussed and public opinion was heard. One person "demanded that all gays should be gassed" while another called for them to be shot.[77] It was this homophobic public opinion that Mandela's case was strongly based on, hoping to maintain public support for herself as a self-appointed saviour of a perceived heteronormative, African culture.[78] Rather surprisingly, Bizos, Mandela's lawyer during her trial, had been one of Nkoli's strongest supporters during the Delmas Treason Trail, and Nkoli noted that "Bizos was always supportive … He won my respect. It is very sad for me to see him using the gay issue in this trial" as a defence for Mandela.[79] When under cross examination Kgase had confirmed that he had been tickled by Verryn whilst in bed, and even though Verryn had stopped doing so when Kgase had expressed his displeasure, Bizos had attempted to ask the court to accept that tickling constituted sexual abuse. This was the closest that any testimony in the case came to forming any physical encounter at the Manse.[80] Furthering the case, Bizos implicated Verryn by stating he "slept between two young men in a double bed in the manse's main bedroom" every night.[81] This line of questioning ignored the fact that there was limited space in the Manse, and that residents would usually share beds with each other.[82] Whilst Mandela and Bizos attempted to use public homophobia as a spectacle for the case, GLOW used their lobbying power and established connections in the ANC to decry Mandela's defence.

In response to the homophobia taking place in the trial, GLOW sent an open letter to the National Executive Committee of the ANC opposing Mandela's defence strategy in the context of Article 7(2) of the ANC's draft Bill of Rights with stated that "discrimination on the grounds of gender, single parenthood, legitimacy of birth or sexual orientation shall be unlawful".[83] In reference to the homophobic slogans displayed by ANC supporters outside the court, as well as Mandela's allegations of homosexuality to detract from her own case, GLOW wrote that:

> [W]e feel that the defence is attempting to capitalise on the conventional and reactionary prejudices against homosexuals. This is particularly disturbing as this defence is being raised by the head of the ANC's Department of Social

[76] Holmes, "'White rapists make coloureds'", p. 288.
[77] Edwin Cameron. "Presentation to GLOW Action Committee and SHOC Workshop" in Neville Hoad, Karen Martin and Graeme Reid (eds.) *Sex & Politics in South Africa*. (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005) p. 179.
[78] Holmes, "'White rapists make coloureds'", p. 288.
[79] 'Homophobia and the Courts: The Story of the Winnie Mandela Trial', *GLOWletter*, March, 1991.
[80] Holmes, "'White rapists make coloureds'", p. 289.
[81] 'The men in the Reverend's bed', *Sunday Times*, Merch 10, 1991.
[82] Holmes, "'White rapists make coloureds'", p. 289.
[83] Ibid, p. 290.

> Welfare [Winnie Mandela]. The line of defence is irreconcilable with basic principles of human rights outlined in the ANC's proposed Bill of Rights … The ANC's failure to respond to the above raises doubts regarding its stated commitment to the recognition of lesbian and gay rights. We therefore demand that the NEC states clearly and unequivocally its position on the rights of lesbians and gay men.[84]

GLOW's response came after debating within the organisation how best to defend queer rights without risking further marginalisation whilst still managing to effectively organise for political constituency.[85] GLOW's efforts to mobilise may have increased with the Mandela case, as they pushed for more recognition of gay and lesbian rights, particularly with the 1992 Pride March which sought for full inclusion of gay rights in the ANC's Constitution.

A GLOW meeting had "decided that some form of action was necessary" to respond to Mandela's trial.[86] After various ideas had been rejected, it was decided that an open letter would be sent to the ANC's National Executive Committee to express their opinion that Mandela had trivialised homosexuality by equating it to abuse. GLOW welcomed the ANC's stated commitment to end discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and asked the National Executive Committee to "reaffirm its commitment to lesbian and gay rights".[87] GLOW did not respond in any substantial way beyond their public letter, but had noted that Mandela's trial and "highlight[ed] the need to consolidate as an organisation … [which] needs to build [into] an effective political constituency"[88].

The Winnie Mandela trial brought queer politics and the validity of constitutional protection for queer people to the fore for the entire country. Whilst Pride took physical space in Hillbrow and its surround, Mandela's trial made the 'gay issue' an issue to be dealt with as the country moved towards democracy, allowing all queer people their space in society.

Political Inclusion of Queer Space

> There is a moment when … at the ANC's Ready to Govern conference in 1992, a comrade stands up during the health policy discussion and asks whether homosexuality should not be discussed under health. No, replies

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[84] 'Open Letter to the National Executive Committee of the ANC', *Weekly Mail*, March 25, 1991.
[85] 'Homophobia and the Courts: The Story of the Winnie Mandela Trial', *GLOWletter*, March, 1991.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

> Barbara Masakela, then an administrator in Nelson Mandela's office … because that is a human rights issue – not a health issue.[89]

The political climate in South Africa after 1994, when the ANC won the national election, was one "in which it [was] 'politically incorrect' for mainstream constitutional players to oppose" rights to any group which could claim a history of social exclusion. With GLOW's mobilization to bring queer rights' into the public's imagination, and a political climate where it was not possible to argue against constitutional equality for any historically excluded group, every major South African political party supported, or did not explicitly oppose, the inclusion of sexual orientation.[90] ANC lawyers had first included a 'sexual orientation' clause in 1991, largely due to lobbying from local gay groups and activists. This was shortly followed by the Democratic Party (DP) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) doing the same.[91] The only large political party which vehemently opposed the clause was the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), formed in 1993, viewed the clause as immoral to their theological doctrine.[92] With large swathes of political support the provision had easily been able to become integrated into the 1993 interim Constitution.

Due to a planned participative process where the Constitution would be structured on input from the public, the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE) found a political space to operate in which could be mobilised for queer rights. The NCGLE was formed in 1994 "specifically to coordinate the lobbying efforts to retain the sexual orientation clause" within South Africa's draft Constitution.[93] The NCGLE represented 65 member organisations from around the country and focussed its efforts around a single issue. In its submission the NCGLE wrote the "equality and non-discrimination are fundamental and overriding principles of the interim constitution" and that discrimination against gays and lesbians "displays the same basic features as discrimination on the grounds of race and gender".[94] Graham Reid, in an interview with Jacklyn Cock, notes that "it was important that the coalition wouldn't speak about gay rights, only about equality", and in doing so formed a narrative which equated equality with non-discrimination.[95] By framing gay rights' in the form

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[89] 'Moments that made the Constitution', *Weekly Mail & Guardian*, December 19, 1996.
[90] Carl F. Stychin. 'Constituting Sexuality: The Struggle for Sexual Orientation in the South African Bill of Rights'. *Journal of Law and Society*. (1996, 23: 4) pp. 461-462.
[91] A.J.G.M. Sanders. 'Homosexuality and the Law: A Gay Revolution in South Africa?'. *Journal of African Law*. (1997, 41: 1) p. 105.
[92] Stychin, 'Constituting Sexuality', p. 474.
[93] Cock, 'Engendering Gay and Lesbian Rights', p. 37.
[94] National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality. *Submission to the Constitutional Assembly*. 1995.
[95] Cock, 'Engendering Gay and Lesbian Rights', p. 37.

of equality rather than merely gay rights', the NCGLE succeeded in keeping the sexual orientation clause within the Constitution.

Jeffrey Weeks defines political inclusivity [for queer people] as a "moment of citizenship" or "sexual citizenship" whereby queer bodies had come to "redefine the polity to incorporate fully" those who were previously excluded based on sexual identity.[96] The gay rights clause in the Constitution can then be seen as the moment of citizenship for queer people in South Africa who had managed to become fully incorporated into the political ideologies of a democratic South Africa after years of struggle and lobbying. In 1996 the Constitution was officially adopted by South Africa, and included the world's first anti-discrimination clause of sexuality. Queer people's mobilisation in the 1990s to push for Constitutional recognition ultimately proved successful.

Whilst the very liberal Constitution bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, human rights are not necessarily guaranteed immediately, but it is a necessary point of reference which, under the NP, would never truly have taken shape.[97] Constitutional inclusion, an impossibility in the 1960s and under NP rule, allowed queer people the legal right to claim space. The push from GLOW and others forced the ANC and the country as a whole to recognise queer people as people who deserved rights and space in a country which had historically persecuted them, finally allowing them the freedom to move through space which had always been denied to them.

Conclusion

> The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.[98]

The nationalist Christian model of sex was presented as the (white) heterosexual nuclear family under NP rule, and heteronormativity was safeguarded by policing queer sexualities. This was undone with the 1996 Constitution which "allowed for liberal definitions of the family,

[96] Jeffrey Weeks. *The Languages of Sexuality*. (Oxon: Routledge, 2011) p. 32.
[97] Vasu Reddy. 'Homophobia, Human Rights and Gay and Lesbian Equality in Africa'. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*. (2001, 50) p. 86.
[98] Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

promoted gender equality and protected sexual minorities" for all South Africans.[99] GLOW's lobbying aimed at the ANC during the 1990s to acknowledge gay and lesbian rights were ultimately successful, and the Constitution became the first national Constitution in the world to explicitly prohibit discrimination based on an individual's sexual orientation.[100] In a 1990 issue of *GLOWletter*, GLOW's monthly pamphlet, the organisation challenged the ANC to make changes to the Constitution:

> The changes are as follows:
>
> Paragraph 6 in the Preamble to the ANC Guidelines
>
> *The constitution must give firm protection to the fundamental human rights of all citizens. There shall be equal rights for all individuals, irrespective of race, colour, creed, gender, sexual orientation, economic or social status or disability.*[101]

These changes, discussed at a prior general meeting, were "wholeheartedly endorsed" by all members of GLOW and submitted to the ANC in October of 1990.[102]

Through many activist's individual campaigns, as well as GLOW's effective lobbying and mobilization, South Africa had become the first country in the world to guarantee Constitutional rights to queer people. With the demise of apolitical, conservative-leaning associations such as GASA, and a need for mobilisation within Johannesburg's queer spaces, GLOW's rise was able to successfully rally and push for Constitutional recognition. GLOW had its problems – limited participation in Pride Marches as opposed to the after-parties, limited female representation – but the organisation was still able to represent a larger majority of Johannesburg's queer population than GASA could, due to the fact that it truly was open to political representation of black queer activists.

GLOW had managed to create space for queer people to politically mobilize in a way which was impossible in previous years. Queer people had been confined to clubs, bars, and indoor spaces, but with the Pride March in 1990 had been able to garner support for queer rights. Using already existing spaces in and around Hillbrow, queer people who had moved into Hillbrow in the 1980s had reconfigured the racial makeup of the queer population, turning most

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[99] Graeme Reid and Liz Walker. 'Sex Then and Now: Exploring South Africa's Sexual Histories'. *South African Historical Journal*. (2004, 50) p. 77.
[100] Pieterse, 'Perverts, Outlaws and Dissidents', p. 103.
[101] 'GLOW and the ANC Constitutional Guidelines', *GLOWletter*, September, 1990.
[102] Ibid.

clubs into predominantly black spaces as white queer people moved into the suburbs.[103] The influx of new people brought new, politically motivated ideas which gathered momentum through mobilization to successfully include queer rights in South Africa's new democratic Constitution, allowing queer people freedom of movement through spaces which had previously been denied for them. Legal protection gave queer people new rights, and whilst homophobia would still remain, it made navigating space in Hillbrow and Soweto easier than it had been before.

[103] Morris, 'Race Relations and Racism' p. 692.

Conclusion

This thesis explored how queer people navigated and created their own space between 1969 and 1996 within an overwhelmingly heteronormative society which criminalized non-heteronormative sexualities. As an initial position, this study set out to explore the ways in which queer people were able to exert their own agency within Hillbrow and Soweto, and how everyday life was experienced. With the use of archival materials and interviews with queer people who had to navigate these spaces, this research found that queer spaces were vibrant and characterised by ever-changing transgressions. What is clearly identified in this research is that there was no homogenous experience for queer people living in Johannesburg in the timeframe studied, and that class, race and gender contributed to various experiences for all queer people.

The 1966 Forest Town raid in which a party of 350 white men and two womxn was infiltrated and raided, leading to the arrest of nine men, set in motion the formulation of draconian legislation to give more power to police to deal with homosexuality in South Africa.[1] After three years in which a Select Committee gathered evidence on the levels of homosexuality in the country and the dangers it had on white civilization, the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 was promulgated to empower police to increase the surveillance of and to curb the presence of homosexuality. Having looked at the implementation of the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 it was made abundantly clear that the National Party (NP) had been more concerned with maintaining heteronormative relations and sexualities amongst white South Africans. In practice the legislation targeted white men in public areas, although there were several occasions, most notably in the late 1970s, where police raided several high profile gay clubs in Johannesburg.

The 1970s witnessed a proliferation of clubs, including multiple gay clubs in Hillbrow and its surrounding areas as men sought to move away from public cruising areas and into the safety of gay-friendly spaces. Whilst police knew of these clubs, they allowed them to remain in operation, as it seems that the intention "was to segregate [homosexuals] from society … so long as [homosexuals] kept [their] dirty habits off the street [they] were safe" from

[1] 'Nine men arrested in raid on Jo'burg house', *The Sunday Times*, 23 January 1966.

prosecution.[2] Gay clubs helped stratify Hillbrow and its surrounding areas as a gay-friendly location within Johannesburg, but one which was only accessible to white men, and occasionally white womxn in the 1970s.

Due to the racial stratification of apartheid, urban spaces throughout South Africa had been white spaces, and this was largely the case in Johannesburg until the 1980s when the inner-city had started to deracialize. Black queer people had to find other spaces. In Soweto this was limited to cruising or the occasional gay friendly shebeen which would become known via word of mouth. However, gay friendly shebeens were "unstable and capricious" during the 1970s, and only in the 1980s did they become truly identifiable spaces of gay interaction, largely in part due to GLOW's work in Soweto.[3] Cruising was another space for people to interact in, but following the Immorality Amendment Act of 1969 this became more dangerous. Spaces such a Park Station become identifiable cruising locations, but were subject to raids, and black people found in them after hours were subject to Pass Laws, meaning they either had to leave the city on the last train out, or find white spaces in which they were accepted, such as Peter's Place.[4] The gradual process of deracialization changed the inner-city's queer space, as many queer white people left the city, queer clubs slowly shifted out of the inner city and found their way in the suburbs. Queer black people who moved into the city did find refuge in the few clubs which did remain, most notably the Skyline, but otherwise had to reframe themselves in a changing Hillbrow.

In the final two chapters this research broadly separated queer politics which took place in Johannesburg into two distinct political approaches. First there was the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) which predominantly catered to a largely white, largely gay male membership. The second instance of political mobilization analyzed the rise of the Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) which took a firm stance against apartheid and the NP. These two organizations formed during two halves of the 1980s in Hillbrow, and can be linked to Hillbrow's 'greying'. GASA's formation in the first half of the 1980s, whilst seeking to connect queer people across the country, also remained apolitical in its relation to apartheid's racist policies. This brought in a membership that, at best preferred to remain neutral on issues such as the Group Areas Act, and at worst see its implementation

[2] Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron. "Defiant Desire" in Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (ed.) *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1994) p. 37.
[3] Ibid, p. 53.
[4] Percy. Interview by Jonathan Botes, Johannesburg, 30 July 2019, Transcript in Possession of Author.

reinforced during the 1980s while Hillbrow's racial barriers were disintegrating. GLOW, formed at the end of the decade when the NP had already accepted that Hillbrow was no longer a white-only zone, actively opposed the NP and brought in a wide range of members from different racial backgrounds. This was possible due to the number of politically active, black queer people who had moved in Hillbrow in the second half of the 1980s such as Simon Nkoli and Bev Ditsie due the breakdown of the Group Areas Act and the increased presence of permanent Africans moving in from Soweto. Access to Hillbrow affected the political positioning of queer organizations situated in the inner-city and makes for interesting future research which analyses the changing dynamics of queer politics in the inner-city and its connection to the increased number of non-whites in the city.

Whilst queer history and queer experience is not homogenous, what does connect the experience of queer people is agency. Regardless of race, class, or political affiliation, queer people exploring Johannesburg were able to exert their own agency This research sought to analyze the everyday lives of queer people in Johannesburg, and in doing so found that their role, whilst adeptly attributed to GLOW, should find importance in the historiography of South African scholarship. GLOW, building on queer movements before them, challenged the ANC and other major political parties during the moment of democracy in the 1990s to clarify non-discrimination for all citizens in the South Africa.

By the 1960s Hillbrow was a transgressive space dominated by a single, youthful population. Coffee bars, clubs and late-night bookstores made Hillbrow a mecca for white suburbia seeking to join the bohemian residents.[5] In this transgressive space multiple gay bars had begun to flourish as men were effectively moved indoors as police started raiding cruising spaces. Police appeared to not interfere with the presence of gay clubs so long as they remained indoors and away from spaces visible to the public.[6] However, clubs and bars were only accessible to white people during the 1970s, and only by the 1980s with the collapse of the Group Areas Act in Hillbrow, were black people able to go to clubs and bars.[7] The influx of black people in Hillbrow changed the racial dynamics of the inner-city, and as white people left for the suburbs their space were quickly rented to people moving in from Soweto and elsewhere.[8] Gay spaces

[5] Melinda Silverman and Tanya Zack. 'Case Study: Hillbrow & Berea'. *Land Use Management and Democratic Governance in the City of Johannesburg*. (2007) p. 16.
[6] Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom", p. 37.
[7] Saul Dubow. *Apartheid, 1948-1994*. (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014) p. 242.
[8] Martin J. Murray. *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008) p. 127.

that remained had to change policies for customers, and as such queer black people were allowed to access these once white-only spaces.

The constantly changing space of the inner-city between the 1960s and 1990s had allowed for Hillbrow to develop into a multi-racial, bohemian, gay-friendly space. The demise of GASA also coincided with the development of new and more radical queer politics. GLOW, formed with the intention to disavow the NP and apartheid, actively took to the streets with the first Pride March in 1990. This was unimaginable in prior decades, as queer people had largely accepted to remain hidden behind closed doors, but the changing dynamics and the decline of apartheid allowed for this change to happen. For the first time queer people were able to mobilise and challenge the state, calling for equal rights. Whilst there were those opposed to queer rights, GLOW and Pride had managed to bring the notion of queer rights to a larger audience, and helped pressure the ANC to guarantee queer rights in the new Constitution.

The study of queer people, queer spaces, and agency amongst queer people as a marginalized group during apartheid has shown the dynamism within different queer sectors of society. Racial differentiations, class backgrounds, and gender all allowed for different ways in which queer people experienced their lived realities. A study of queer history allows for a deeper understanding in how all marginalized people have to exert their own agency in order to come to terms with all that is around them. Just as there is no homogenous queer history, there is no homogenous history of the marginalized. Whilst this research focused solely on Johannesburg, future research can explore in depth the actions of queer people within different spaces around South Africa, and how queer people across the country were able to exert agency in different settings and create their own space and own lived experience. Surely this changes from urban to rural, and a study into rural spaces of queer interaction can further an understanding of queer history in South Africa. A link between the urban and the rural will enrich the dynamics of how ideas may spread between communities. The history of queer people in South Africa is not yet complete, but with further research into the subject matter a deeper understanding of South Africa's forgotten historically marginalized community can bring clarity to an overarching history of marginalization in the country.

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