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A Just Image: South African Hostels and Contemporary South African Photography

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts in Fine Art by Dissertation.

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Declaration

I Nocebo Bucibo declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Masters of Fine Art at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

_____ (Signature of candidate)

_____15___day of_____March_____2018_____in_____

BUCIBO…

Nyathi! Kombaas! Mnguni Ombuhle.

Wena ongabukwa ngaphambili ngoba kusatshwa ubuhle bakho

…

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the representation of the South African migrant hostels within the conceptual frame of a 'just image', adopted here from Roland Barthes's text *Camera Lucida* (1987). Barthes (1980:71) used this term to describe a photograph he found of his mother as a child: not only did the photograph offer what he sees as a truthful physical description of her but, also describes the photograph as 'indeed essential' because it achieved 'utopically, *the impossible Science of the unique being*', a characterisation of her 'essential being'. This dissertation argues that despite common narratives about the hostels and their history, hostels have become a complex environment with various structures, traditions, and cultures which cannot be pinned down to their impoverished conditions. Using the medium of photography I also argue that the photographic description of the elements in the frame (a document of past presence), has the ability to trigger aspects which are not physically seen. I describe these affects in terms of their 'spiritual' senses. One aspect is memory. I look at Santu Mofokeng in: *Chasing Shadows* (2011) where he uses photography to capture presence and absence, and to trigger memory which is drawn from one's subjectivity. I also look at Yto Barrada's project *A Life Full of Holes: The Strait Project (*1998 - 2004), where she speaks about her hybrid status of growing up in two countries with different cultures. This allowed me to interrogate photographic hybridity and my own hybrid identity, which I have utilised to compile this research.

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Introduction

This dissertation explores Roland Barthes's (1980:70) concept of a 'just image' and its potential function in the theory and practice of photography, with particular reference to my photographic practice engaged as it is in the complex act of photographing the social experience within the South African migrant hostels[1]. The concept of a 'just image' is adopted from Roland Barthes's text *Camera Lucida* (1987) where he employs the term to describe a photograph he found of his mother as a child, which he perceived as a good likeness, but also as holding or representing an 'essence' (1980:71). After the death of his mother, Barthes (1980:67) found himself looking through photographs of her in search of a 'just image' of his mother, and not 'just an image' of her (64-71). During his search, he came across several photographs of her as an older woman that he felt described her physical appearance. In one instance he describes the photograph as follows: 'I recognised her gait, her health, her glow – but not her face, which is too far away' (Barthes 1980:63). However, it is clear that Barthes (1980:63) was looking for more than just an image of her face, or a simple physical representation of what she looked like. Indeed, he goes further to question the photographs and asks 'did I *recognise* her'? And answers by saying that,

> [A]ccording to these photographs, sometimes I recognised a region of her face, a certain relation of nose and forehead, the movement of her arms, her hands. I never recognised her except in fragments, which is to say that I missed her *being,* and that therefore I missed her altogether. It was not she, and yet it was no one else. I would have recognised her among other woman, yet I did not "find" her. I recognised her differentially, not essentially. Photography thereby compelled me to perform a painful labour; straining toward the essence of her identity, I was struggling among images partly true, and therefore totally false (Barthes 1980: 65-66).

In his deliberations Barthes realises that the photographs were unable to give him a full recollection of his mother because he could only get fragments of her essence by looking at her physical body captured by the photographs, but not her full being. Still looking at the first set of photographs, he describes them further and states that 'none seemed to me really

[1]The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2004:50) definition of hostels is a 'budget-oriented, shared room that accepts individual travellers or groups for a short-term stay, and that provides common areas and communal facilities'. The *South African Oxford Dictionary* (2002:903) definition is: 'A single sex barracks for black migrant workers, in urban areas or for mine workers'. Therefore, a hostel is a place of temporary lodging, were the black inhabitants share the same living space, with people from all walks of life and they do not own the rights to the buildings, but live there on a lease agreement.

“right” neither as photographic performance, nor as a living resurrection of the beloved face. If I were to show them to friends I could doubt that these photographs would speak’ (Barthes 1980: 63-63).

By stating that the photograph would not speak to his friends, Barthes (1980:65-66) suggests that a ‘just image’ can be shared rather than pertaining to the individual. Therefore a ‘just image’ is one that is both subjective and objective; it is about the possibility of collective understanding: an ambition I strive to realise for the viewers of my images of the hostels.[2] Viewers can look at the photograph and draw different interpretations, which could all lead to one common theme of what the photograph represents. Thus defined by Barthes (70), a ‘just image’ is an image which could represent both justice and ‘justesse’. Justice can be defined as the ’condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; free from error’ (dictionary.com 2018:1), which is similar to accuracy. While *Justesse* may be defined as ‘only just’ (2017:1): this definition makes reference to the notion of time, an important notion in relation to the photograph, which operates to arrest time in the photographic representation.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (2002:693) defines 'just ‘as 'guided by truth, reason, justice, and fairness, based on right; rightful; lawful: a just claim, in keeping with truth or fact; true; correct: a just analysis’ and ‘actual, real, or genuine'. However, 'just' can also describe a less durable concept: 'within a brief preceding time; but a moment before; by a narrow margin; barely’.

These two definitions have a tense relationship. On one hand there is an issue of truth or morality that can be regarded as cementing an ethical principle. Meanwhile the adverb grasps at a much more ephemeral moment, and suggests a ‘hit-or-miss’ conception of the

[2] Here I would like to distinguish my interest in a ‘just image’ from Barthes’s more popular concepts of ‘studium’ and ‘punctum’, from the same book. Barthes (1981:26) explains that in order to get an emotive response from the image one needs to take time and study the objects within the frame ‘whether I receive them as political testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes: for it is culturally this connotation is present in *studium* that I participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings, the action’ (26). It is from the above definition of *studium* that I can conclude that it is an in-depth analysis of the objects within the frame, that are able to trigger a subjective response, which Barthes refers to as the *punctum*. He defines this term as ‘sting, speck, cut, little hole-and also a cast of the dice. A photograph s punctum is that accident ... which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)’ (27). Therefore, the punctum goes beyond the physical description offered by the photograph, but rather includes another dimension. This can refer to the ephemeral or spiritual, but also the merely accidental things that occurs in photographic images: I am more focused on the intentional act of generating a just image, by the photographer.

subject, in this case, something similar to what occurs in image-capture of photography. For example, photography is a medium that captures a moment in time that may never be repeated, yet the photograph is evidence that that moment and time existed: therefore the reading of the image expands beyond that moment. In other words, he sees a 'just image' in terms of photography's integrity in regard to the past, as well as its truth-value in representing the real conditions of existence or "being". However, much contemporary theory sees notions of truth as infinitely more complex and fluid in representation, as it differs from person to person depending on their personal experience, for example, an image that contains the colour red may be interpreted as either love or danger depending on one's cultural experience or state of mind, which forms part of my stance towards the concept of a 'just image'.

I see the hostels as hybrid spaces in terms of gender and culture. Both men and woman occupy the hostels from a myriad of different cultural backgrounds, where they speak different languages, and have different practices. In the hostel, they live in confined spaces and have to navigate communication amongst themselves and the mine bosses[3]. These physical, psychological, and cultural conditions require a certain mode of approach through my photographic practice that I see signified and unpacked by the notion of a 'just image'.

The above-mentioned conditions of language and cultural practices taking place within the hostel and their relations to the contemporary theory of photography form the three tiers of my inquiry into a 'just image'. These are: the physical description, the representational function of photography in these spaces, and the psychological, or even spiritual, affect of the spaces that photography may convey. From Barthes' original conception and onward, I feel that the term a 'just image' requires a critical approach to photography from the perspective of the photographer. The concept of a 'just image' here deals with three aspects of photography specifically. One is that in its traditional form, photography represents three-

[3]In the hostels in general, men and women move in from different cultural spaces, where they speak different languages and have different practices. But once in the hostel, they live in confined spaces and have to navigate communication amongst themselves and the mine bosses. These results in the formation of a new Hostel culture: for example, historically the language of Fanakalowas formed. Being made up of isiZulu, Dutch, English and Afrikaans; it is considered a 'pidgin' Zulu language.

dimensional reality, and a state of existence or 'being'. The second is that a 'just image' invokes the notion of time and the moment, 'just' capturing a moment that is otherwise lost. As I will discuss, this capacity makes reference to longing and desire, and is linked to memory. The third involves the self-reflexive stance of the photographer who takes account of his or her position behind the lens.

I began my photographic research on the hostels in 2010, when my lecturer gave the class the task of creating a research question. This question had to be linked to our medium of choice: mine being photography. The question I came up with was: *How can I use social documentary photography to depict hostel life in 2010, after the 1990 - 1994 war between the* IFP and the ANC? Initially, my intention was to photograph the living spaces of the hostels. However, I soon came to realise that these spaces were more than just a form of housing in brick and mortar. The physical space is most often characterised by single-storey face-brick walls that form a square-like structure. Its inward-facing seclusion separates the hostel-dwellers from the rest of the township beyond. Inside the walls, the inhabitants are subjected to poor living conditions, such as burst sewerage pipes, the smell of human waste, rundown buildings, and showers that do not work. Despite these conditions I was amazed at how people navigate these spaces in as normal and functional a way as possible. An example of this is the traditional music that one can hear throughout the hostel, reminding people of home. Certain traditional cultural practices are still acknowledged in this urban context. For example, when men are sitting under the tree, women are still not allowed to join them[4]. I also realised that to begin with I lacked the visual language and theory to express the perspective I was gaining. In order to remedy this, and increase my visual and theoretical literacy on hostels and photographic theory, I registered for a Master's degree in Visual Art at the University of the Witwatersrand (2012).

The hostels that I have chosen to work in for this dissertation are all based in Gauteng, South Africa. They are the same ones I worked in during the earlier period of research. I also took advantage of the fact that *Mai Mai* hostel (Central Johannesburg) is easily accessible to the public,

[4] This practice is used as a form of therapy, a session where men sit discussing issues they have, and successes within the council of other men. Women in the hostels also keep each other's council in this way.

because of the market that opens daily inside the compound. Further to this is *Mshaya'zafe* hostel in Thokoza (Thokoza is a township situated South of Johannesburg); *Merafe* Hostel, and Diepkloof hostel, both situated in Soweto (South of Johannesburg); and *Madala* hostel in Alexandra (northern Johannesburg).

Creating a 'just image' requires specific approaches within each hostel. Johannesburg hostels may have similar functions and operate in parallel ways: for example, each hostel has an *Nduna*, defined as the 'headman' by the *Scholar`s Zulu Dictionary* (1998:422), who is in charge of making decisions that affect the dwellers. The hostels also hold distinct differences. Each hostel makes use of the buildings in different ways, which leads to the residents partaking in different activities. For example, *Madala* hostel in Alexandra is built like a group of apartments as compared to *Mshaya'zafe* hostel which is made up of multiple single-story buildings. From my experience in *Mshaya'zafe* and the other single-story hostels, it is easier for people to open their doors and get fresh air and to see what is happening in the rest of the hostel. People are able to greet each other as they walk around. But in the *Madala* hostel, the corridors are very dark: the only form of light that the people have is their windows, which they also use to dispose of bath water and other waste. For the individuals to meet up with other people they have to walk up and down numerous flights of stairs. Therefore, there is a sense of isolation created by the numerous floors.

I was introduced to Madala hostel by a student I taught, Nqobile. I was uncomfortable walking in the dark corridors of a space I was not familiar with. As a result of this internal discomfort, I decided that any pictures taken there would have to be outside, in the communal areas: a 'just' viewpoint that spoke to my outsider position.



Figure 1: *Shisa'inyama, Madala hostel, Alexandra*, 2012-2017.
Photograph by Nocebo Bucibo.

In the above photograph of Madala hostel (Figure 1), I decided to use the smoke coming from a *braai*[5] stand to create a picture that allowed the viewer a glimpse into the communal space of Madala, but also serves to obscure their vision. The man in the foreground was telling me the story of how Orlando Pirates football club is his favourite team. As he was relaying this story, he proceeded to show me the symbol for the team which is placing hands in a form of a cross. At that moment I decide to capture the image, with the smoke further blocking the view of the cross. For me the image encapsulates the closed off, secluded nature of the hostel and its uninviting nature, influenced by the architecture that I had experienced there. It is therefore a 'just image' because it shows that the photograph was taken at a particularly ephemeral moment, while it represents a physical description of the sections in the hostel, the people and activities taking place. Finally, it offers a 'just' or accurate account through signification of my memories and emotional reaction to being in these spaces. In Figure 1, the

[5] South African term for barbecue where meat is grilled on an open fire.

smoke obscuring the camera's view (my view) serves this function, alluding to my outsider position.

The more time I spent in the hostel, it was no longer solely about my university project: my experience of love and support there has influenced my critical position as a photographer of the hostels. I added personal purposes for visiting the hostels: firstly, to understand more about the Zulu culture, practices and African spirituality, and secondly, I wanted to get to know and understand the people I was spending time with. This has resulted in relationships being developed outside of the project. As a result, I visit the hostels socially and on a regular basis to get fatherly advice, relationship advice or counselling, especially when I am overwhelmed by life. Since the death of my own father, it is through these visits that I have become aware of the humane side of the space. Therefore my project emphasises intimacy, love and respect**.**

From the above experience in both Madala and *Mshaya'zafe* I came to realise that hostels are hybrid spaces that harness a harsh architectural structure that is uninviting and intimidating, forging a tight-knit social structure within that is hard to penetrate as an outsider who may have no respect for the hostel customs, no intention of learning about the hostel culture, or is condescending towards the dwellers temporary-home. Despite the above-mentioned harshness and exclusiveness of the space, I came to realise that these spaces encompass the spirit of home and love, which has been shown to me on numerous occasions. Gogo`Thembi who lived in *Mshaya'zafe* hostel is one person who demonstrated the above spiritual attributes to me. Because of the personal relationship that developed over the years, I was able to access her private space where I further experienced the humane side of the hostels.

The image below (Figure 2) is an example of a photograph that I feel embodies the humane side, love and intimacy in the hostel. The image was taken in gogo`Thembi`s bedroom at her unit in *Mshaya'zafe* hostel, the week leading up to her funeral, which was held at her home in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Before her body was transported home, the mattress she slept on was lowered to the ground, as a sign of mourning. Since the activity was taking place at ground level, I had to lower my tripod to its lowest setting. By choosing to photograph at this angle I

wanted to demonstrate my respect for gogo`Thembi, and to show that I am not superior to the people in the room. I chose to capture the image as a tight crop, which only focuses on what is happening in the room, to further demonstrate the intimacy amongst the people in the room.



Figure 2: *Bazilile kwa gogo'thembi Mshaya'zafe hostel*, Thokoza, Johannesburg, 2012-2017
Photograph by Nocebo Bucibo

Figure 2 depicts gogo`Thembi's grandmother and aunt seated on the mattress, engaged in a private meeting, discussing the preparations for the upcoming week. They are seen sitting with their backs bending forward and faces close to each other. The figures on the mattress are not clearly visible, with their faces turned away from the camera creating an ambiguous object. On the floor and bench which is on the left side of the frame, are numerous plates with cakes and mugs that have tea, these are served to visitors who have come to pay their respects to the family. One of the servings was given to me on my arrival, making reference to the love shown by the family despite being busy with funeral preparations; also indicating the spirit of giving and community. At the back of the room on the floor there is a candle burning, representing gogo`Thembi's spirit, and the relationship we all shared with her. On this particular day the family was faced with a dilemma as they did not have enough money

to pay the local mortuary in Thokoza to house her body, and the government mortuary could only hold her for a limited time. As a result of this, and my wish to assist the family and pay my last respects to a woman who showed me unconditional love, I offered to pay the required fee.

The body of this dissertation is presented in four chapters. Chapters one, two and three are used to frame the stories of the hostels according to the tiers or 'rules of engagement' I have drawn from the notion of a 'just image' (1980:70-79). Chapter one is titled: *A 'Just Image'*. In this chapter the term is explored in greater detail. Here I refer to Roland Barthes's (1980:70) concept of the 'just image' and discuss it with reference to relevant theory on and practice of photography, such as Martha Rosler and John Tagg's writings, and Jo Ractliffe's photography. In this chapter, I also introduce certain critical themes which support my thinking about the 'just image' (70) such as the function *studium and punctum* as explained by Barthes (26), and the notion of the fugitive as explained by Tagg (1988:693) and Penny Siopis (1997:65).

Chapter Two is entitled, *The History of the Migrant Hostels*. In this chapter I explore the history of South African hostels, and the role they played in shaping the history of the country. This historical background on the hostels allows me to frame the first tier of a 'just image', which is a description expressing the context and environment of the hostels: when, how, why and for whom they were built. In the second phase of this chapter I introduce my personal experience of living near the hostels, having never set foot in them in the early 1990`s. During this period I classified myself as an outsider: this stance has changed since 2010, to being both outsider and insider (a migrant of sorts), since I do not live in the space but have built relationships with the inhabitants and spent a lot of my social time with them. By doing this I will be reflecting on my interest in these hybrid migratory spaces.

Chapter Three is entitled*: The Photographic Representation of Hostels in South Africa*. This chapter looks at how hostels have been photographically represented, and how these photographs are linked to the political climate of South Africa over the past century. This will be done chronologically by making reference to one photographer and their image of the hostel from the following periods that I categorise as: Colonial and apartheid era: photography from 1800`s – 1989; Transitional photography: 1990 – 1994; and Post-apartheid

photography: 1995 - current. I have chosen to look at these models to further my understanding of how other photographers have represented the hostels and their purpose, so that I can articulate my reasons for engaging with the hostels.

Chapter Four, titled *Personal Work,* looks at the process that I have taken to create the 'just image' of the hostels. Here I reflect on the different experiments I have undertaken over the past years, and I elaborate on what has failed for me and what was successful in conveying my experience. This chapter also contains two sub-headings, where I reflect on two photographers, Yto Barrada and Santu Mofokeng and how they engage with the themes of hybridity and memory: *Yto Barrada and the Poetics of Hybridity*, deals with artist Yto Barrada's photography with particular attention paid to the theme of hybridity in her work: *A Life Full of Holes- the Strait Project (1998 - 2004)*. I provide a brief historical background on Barrada, reflecting on how her personal experience of being raised in two countries with different cultures has directly impacted her photographic approach. I also analyse Barrada's use of the hybrid nature of photography, to create images that are both objective of conditions in the Middle East, and subjective: they are open to interpretation by the individual viewer. Understanding Barrada's approach has allowed me to draw more from my personal encounter of being raised in both an African and Western environment and to assess how this has affected me as a young Black woman living in South Africa's post-apartheid era, thus influencing my photographic process in the hostels and leading to a more profound personal understanding of the hybrid nature of the hostel spaces.

The second subheading is titled *Santu Mofokeng and Memory*. Here, I am focusing on Mofokeng's photographic project *Chasing Shadows (*2011), from which I select one photograph and analyse it in relation to the tiers of a 'just image' explored earlier in the introduction. As stated earlier, Mofokeng is interested in the memories photographs evoke. I will be interrogating his use of analogue photography to evoke memory, and linking this affective photographic output to the notion of a 'just image'.

In the conclusion of this paper I have reflected and made concluding remarks on the themes of spirituality, hybridity and memory and how I have made use of them. The themes are discussed in greater detail in chapters one to four. I have also made commentary about the

iHostela Ngeliny'iKhaya: Regarding Photography as a Just Image (2012-2017) exhibition, which is the practical component of my Master's research.

Chapter 1

A 'just image'

In this chapter, I will be exploring the concept of a 'just image' (Barthes 1980:70), a term extrapolated from Roland Barthes's seminal text on photography *Camera Lucida*. I contend that in photography, the term can signify an image which evokes the physical, psychological and cultural space of the South African hostels. As noted in the introduction of this dissertation, Roland Barthes (70) defines a 'just image' as 'an image which would be both justice and accuracy-*justesse'.* In other words, he sees a 'just image' in terms of its truth-value in representing the real conditions of existence or 'being'. Barthes (70) analyses what he sees as an accurate photographic representation of his mother as a child, because the photograph captures both her physical description and spiritual qualities ('being'). I analyse the 'just image' (70) from a close reading of the pertinent aspects of Barthes's text, and consider the conditions of existence or 'being' captured in photography of the hostels, with a view to identifying what can be called 'spiritual' aspects. For the purpose of this study, I would like to refer to the non-physical aspects of the photographic representations as *spiritual*. The *South African Oxford Dictionary* (1995:1386) defines the word 'spiritual' as 'relating to the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things'. In the second half of this chapter, I juxtapose a 'spiritual' or emotive reading with the objectivity as well as the ethical 'justness' required of social documentary. Ultimately, it is in the tension between these two meanings that I argue a 'just image' can be analysed in some contemporary modes of photography.

Whilst looking through a collection of old photographs, Barthes (67) came across one image of his mother at the age of five, which he refers to as 'the winter garden photograph'[6]. He describes the process of analysing 'the winter garden photograph' as 'gradually moving back in time with her, looking for the truth of the face I had loved' (Barthes, 1980:67). However, his search for this 'truth' of his mother's face does not, as Barthes writes, mean that he finds

[6]Barthes describes the photograph thus: 'He was leaning against the bridge railing, along which he had extended one arm; she, shorter than he, was standing a little back, facing the camera; you could tell that the photographer had said, 'step forward a little so we can see you'; she was holding one finger in the other hand, as children often do, in an awkward gesture. The brother and sister, united as I knew' (Barthes 1980:67-69).

it, but rather that he has 'rediscovered' the truth there. Therefore, this truth is not new, but it has already been in existence for Barthes: it is an aspect of his mother that the photograph has enabled him to remember.

From reading Barthes text, I agree with him that the 'winter garden photograph' is convincingly the rediscovery of his mother because he begins to describe not only her physical qualities, but also includes her mannerisms and characteristics. An example of this is when Barthes (1980:69) describes her face and hands, by stating that:

> [T]he distinctness of her face, the naïve attitude of her hands, the place she had docilely taken without either showing or hiding herself, and finally her expression, which distinguished her, like Good from Evil.

Here, Barthes (69) makes reference to how she physically places her hands, and by analysing the poses in such terms such as 'naïve', which denotes a sense of character and personhood, and are thus non-physical attributes that the photograph reveals.

Thus, Barthes (69) says that 'the winter garden photograph' is a 'just image' of his mother, because it not only offers an adequate physical description of her features, but also includes another dimension which describes her 'essence' and 'being': what I think of in terms of her *spiritual* being, an internal experience evoking a particular emotional state unique to the individual's own experience – whether it is a belief system or a sense of humanity, or a memory. Therefore, a 'just image' as an external object that contextualises the composition of different elements within the frame, can evoke the spiritual/emotive response within the viewer. In this way, a photograph can do 'justice' to its subject, since it reveals the *true essence* of the subject, resulting in a connection between the viewer and the image.

Through my research on the hostels, and after being exposed to its many different facets, I am in the process of rediscovering something about the personhood of the hostels. Most valuable to me has been the humane side that I recognise. This experience is in conflict with what I was exposed to in the early 1990`s, as spaces associated with violence and aggression. For example, there is a committee that has been formed at *Merafe* hostel which is made up of both men and women to deal with the social issues of the dwellers and their well-being.

Some of the services provided are to have a social worker come in twice a week that provides counselling to individuals. The committee also assists in instances where a person falls ill and needs medical attention, and communicates with their families back home. Their efforts sometimes result in the collection of money to assist in transporting the individual back home. These instances of care within the community have affected my approach to photographing the spaces within them. I am no longer photographing from a space of fear, instead, I now approach the hostels with respect and understanding of individual dwellers.

After searching for the 'winter garden photograph' both in the book *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* and on the internet, I was unable to find it. Nowhere in the book does Barthes reveal the photograph. I read his exclusion of the photograph from the book in two ways. Firstly, a 'just image' can be subjective, and it is up to the author to evoke the sense of his mother's 'being' or soul through writing. Secondly, Barthes is exploring the more general nature of photography as a material document of the external world as well as the psychic or spiritual reception of photography. Both these readings highlight the complexity of subjective responses to a medium that often presents an 'objective' document of reality.

I came to understand the complex subjectivity of viewers' responses to photographs after searching for a 'just image' of my father, who passed away in 2011. The photographs I looked through assert that my farther existed and that my memories of him are real, and assist me in rediscovering his face. For the first time after his death, photographs of his life enabled me to recollect who he was both physically and spiritually. Each photograph allowed me to remember certain attributes of him. I chose to follow Barthes's (1980:67-71) process of looking at different photographs of my father. One of the things that is common to both searches is the painful act of rediscovering our loved one's spiritual sense, or 'being' (67-68). After looking through the photographs I encountered one of his home, which my father had photographed. Unlike Barthes (76-71), my 'just image' of my father is not a portrait but a structure.



Figure 3: *Bucibo family home*, *Frankfort, Free State* (sa).
Photograph by Themba Bucibo.

Figure 3 is a photograph of my father's home where he grew up in Frankfort, in the Free State. This is a horizontal black and white photograph taken from an off-centre standing vantage point. In the foreground there is sand, but on the bottom left of the photograph there is a patch of flowers. On the right side of the frame there is a metal dustbin that is covered with board. On the far-left side of the middle-ground there is a large brick house, making the shack look more diminutive. In the background of this image there is an open space with no houses, signifying that this is a rural area. The central subject is a white shack that is built with corrugated iron, and sits on top of a concrete foundation. The size and strongly-exposed white tone of the house overpower the greys and blacks of the rest of the image, making it the main focal point of the image. There is a brick structure that is attached to the shack, with a metal bowl leaning against it. Only the front of the shack is visible, and has two small windows and a door. There are carpets sitting on the concrete foundation and there are bricks on the roof. At a glance, the structure looks as though it is solid because it stands on a thick foundation,

yet the strength of the structure is contradicted by the unstable, cheap material used, giving the dwelling a sense of vulnerability to the elements.

When I look at this photograph I recall the stories of my father growing up in this house: helping his mother make ginger beer and selling it at the local stadium during community football matches. I also wonder how his six siblings and parents navigated living in such a confined space. Since my grandfather was working, and my grandmother worked as a domestic worker (she had to leave the house before her children woke up so she could go get her employers' children up and ready for their school day), probably meant that my father, being the second born, had to assist his eldest sister in getting the kids ready for school, and assist them with their homework. The two elder siblings had to be parents to the younger siblings.

This photograph hung on my father's office wall as a reminder of his roots and foundation, indicating where he came from. It is also a reminder of the struggles he had overcome growing up, to become a medical doctor. This photograph reminds me of his teachings regarding taking pride in my culture, morals, education, love for all people, and, most importantly, responsibility for my life and the decisions I make.

This photograph is also a 'just image 'of my late father because it indicates his 'being' and 'essence'. He was a man with a hard exterior, which is indicated by the shack and soil on the ground, but had a kind and caring nature to him, which to me is represented by the flowers on the bottom left. I am able to recognise his face in many of the elements in the frame: it is a depiction of the facets of his character, and evokes my sense of his soul. It is a sign of his life: as a result, I have strong emotional responses when I look at this photograph. It is in this photograph that my father is resurrected and rediscovered.

Even though this reading is dependent on my subjective knowledge, the notion that I find a certain personal truth in a photograph can also be critically productive for my research. In my view, the notion of a 'just image' is critical because it refers to the human desire for photographs to reveal 'hidden personal truths' in photography. Here, I include certain arguments which challenge Barthes's concept of a 'just image' and incorporate them into my

practice. John Tagg (1988:1) writes that 'his [Barthes] demand for realism is a demand, if not to have her back then to know she was here: the consolation of a truth in the past which cannot be questioned'. Tagg (1) implies here that Barthes's description of his mother describes more truthfully his longing for his mother, over and above the accuracy of her physical description. Photography enables a validation of his longing with proof of her real existence in the past. Importantly, Barthes's desire and sense of loss affects his analysis in this case. For the purpose of this study, I also include Tagg`s (693) more fluid notion of 'truth' within Barthes's notion of a 'just image'.

Both adjectival and adverbial connotations of the term 'just', as defined in the introduction, relate to the perceived value of traditional analogue photography. Traditional photography is a physical trace of light in an empirical moment in time and space. Via the medium, it captures an objective and specific condition. Furthermore, these conditions are unique to the moment: as Tagg (1988:1) suggests, 'the thing has been there: this was a reality that once existed; though it is a reality that one can no longer touch'. A 'just image' suggests something of a moment both captured and lost in time and space.

Social documentary photography could be considered a metaphor for both adverbial and adjectival definitions of the word 'just'. Artist and writer Martha Rosler (1993:306) suggests that social documentary photography is concerned with carrying 'information about a group of powerless people to another group addressed as socially powerful'. Her statement defines the adjectival understanding of the word 'just' in the photographic context, whereby photography is concerned with documenting the indexical 'truth' of a situation in building awareness amongst an educated viewership. This is similar to South African photography pre-1994, where those characterised as 'struggle' photographers were concerned with exposing the harsh brutality of the apartheid government`s attitude towards individuals who opposed their rules and laws. Furthermore, their photographic documentation of violent events, as they happened in the moment of action, is seen as irrefutable proof of the historical injustice of apartheid.

The shifts in social documentary practices make defining its operation in opposition to artistic practices difficult. Social documentary photography has traditionally been concerned with

touching on social issues that people face on a day to day basis, e.g., disease, poverty, illness, human rights and many other issues, and strives to create awareness in the greater public of these issues, in order to promote change in people's life situations (Kaplan 2007:448). When working with social documentary or the journalistic photographic image, manipulation is regarded as something that is discouraged, because it is seen as a means of losing the 'truth' or 'justice' offered to and by the subject. With the introduction of digital photography, image manipulation has become more acceptable in social documentary photography. As Martha Rosler (1989:259) writes, image manipulation can be used to 'make a larger point about the truth-value of photographs' (Rosler 1989:259). From Rosler's observation I can deduce that the introduction of image manipulation has seen the introduction of the photographic hybrid, which is discussed in greater detail in chapter four, where the documentary image may be altered to make a political commentary.

However, there is another kind of truth to the moment and medium of photography involved in how I conceive the concept of a 'just image': that is the photographer situating her own role in creating conditions specific to the moment of capture, and the question of her desire in capturing certain images. Martha Rosler (1993:321) confirms that there is a 'new' type of social documentary photography which now involves the personal and self-reflection: 'a new generation of photographers has directed the documentary approach toward more personal ends'. Penny Siopis`s (1997) essay titled 'Domestic Affairs' addresses this new generation of documentary photography present in Jo Ractliffe's photographic installation *Re-shooting Diana* (1990-1995).

During this period Ractliffe came across Richard Avedon's essay 'Borrowed Dogs' (1992). This essay discusses Avedon's family-snapshots archive in which his family posed next to elaborate cars and houses which did not belong to them (Avedon 2002:1). The family also almost always posed with a dog, yet they did not own any dogs. Avedon (1) comments that his family's album reveals a lie about who they were, but a truth about who they desired to be (1).

This story encouraged Ractliffe to interrogate how 'truth' is represented in photography and how South African political history has been represented visually (Ractliffe 2011:1):

> *[D}iana* was intended to raise questions about what we expect from photographs, particularly in relation to how history and memory have been constructed in South Africa through documentary photography, which privileged ideas of objectivity and truth. In *Diana*, both the subject matter - the incidental, the everyday of ordinary life - and the mode - seemingly random 'snaps' - challenged some of the conventional notions of how photographs should look and function. Ironically (one does not usually associate the snapshot with any degree of photographic skill), the Diana, with its fixed focus, plastic lens, light leaks and no exposure controls save 'sunny' and 'cloudy' dials, was not an easy camera to use. My first pictures were terrible and I had to rethink how I saw the world, also in photographic terms, and find a new approach to making images.

The way in which Ractliffe foregrounds notions of 'truth' in photography and her installation of the work, *ReShooting Diana 1990-1995*, heightens the idea of a slippage in time and representation of the outside world (Ractliffe 2011:1). The personal aspects of desire infiltrate representation, and this leads to a complex understanding of the past and present (Ractliffe 2011:1). The image below (Figure 4) is an example showing the slippage that takes place in this version of her documentary photography.



Figure 4: *gun boy*, 2004.
Photograph by Jo Ractliffe.

The *gun boy* photograph is a black and white image, which makes reference to the use of traditional analogue photography and its ability to capture objects in that moment in time that can never be repeated, as suggested by Tagg (1988:1). The image has a vignette surround, which breaks the conventional rules of social documentary photography. The foreground of the image has grass with a path that starts at the bottom right corner of the photograph. This line divides the image in half, indicating a form of separation that creates two scenes in one image. Most of the objects are found on the right side of the line and the left side consists mostly of open space that is made up of grass. The path leads the viewer into the frame and guides the viewer's eyes to the middle ground. In the middle of the image there is a boy sitting on the grass. He is seated with his body facing to the right and has a gun in his right hand. His left hand is balanced on the ground. The boy is the focal point of the image. He is photographed alone, which isolates him from other objects. He is sitting on the ground whilst holding a gun, and seems both innocent and dangerous. His posture makes it look as though he is playing an innocent game, yet the gun looks like a weapon which can be used to protect himself and the community from outsiders. In this instance the viewer can be considered as an outsider. The childish, inviting posture welcomes the viewer, resulting in a sense of inclusion in the community. Thereby the viewer is both allowed in, and kicked out of the frame, allowing for the viewer to both observe the image 'objectively', and simultaneously experience a subjective emotive response to what they see.

To go on, the foreground has no objects in it and the background is busy, because it has people walking around, and houses. The background of this image has two housing structures representing community. People are walking facing both the left side and right side of the frame. The houses, trees and people in the background are out of focus. Looking at the following elements such as the tone of the image, with the slight darkened vignette (a trademark of Ractcliffe's work) and the large open space in the foreground can make the viewer feel isolated. The separation from the activity taking place in the middle and background sets them apart from the community. The use of new photographic techniques, the slippage between the viewer being both inside and outside, and the boy's body posture, can lead one to read this as a 'just image' because one is confronted with an emotive response, which may not be pinned down to one interpretation: it is constantly changing.

My written documentation and photographic exploration reflects the day-to-day sense of flux and engagement in the hostels. John Tagg (1988:222) suggests that in the act of photographing, 'chance effects, purposeful interventions, choices and variations produce meaning, whatever skill is applied' (Tagg 1988:222). Penny Siopis (1997:65) describes the 'reShooting Diana' photographs as '… fragmentary, conveying time suspended ... in respect of both the moment and larger historical narrative'. In the essay she acknowledges Ractliffe`s efforts at foregrounding what Siopis describes as the 'fugitive', which she defines as 'that which cannot be fixed, which cannot be located' ('Siopis 1997:65). Siopis's explanation of the 'fugitive' also offers a theoretical perspective on what I consider to be a 'just image'. A 'just image' has a 'fugitive' status because it cannot be tied down to singular understandings; rather its meaning is dependent on subjective associations, emotions, memories, expectations and desire. Siopis (1997:65) suggests this dichotomy in her article on Ractliffe, saying 'the imagery contains traces and clues which trigger muffled associations, evoke half memories, and stimulate dispersed desire'.

When referring to the phrase a 'just image' I look at it as a term that opens up a discussion not based in moralistic notions of truth, but can rather indicate 'fugitive' realms of representation such as spirituality, longing and desire. The notions of hybridity and evoking memory, which are discussed in greater detail in chapter 4, are also fugitive concepts that add to my understanding of this notion.

Post-colonial theorist Bill Ashcroft (2003:118) defines hybridity as 'the creation of new trans-cultural forms within the contact zones produced by colonization... in horticulture, the term refers to cross-breeding of two species by grafting...to form a third'. Therefore, hybridity can most basically be defined as when two separate cultures come together to form a third hybrid culture that invokes both ways of living in and seeing the world, and thus offers something singular in its own form. The term, 'hybridity' has also been used as a derogatory racial term to describe individuals of mixed race, by the colonial rulers (Nederveen [ED] 1989:361). Hybridity has therefore not always been seen as positive. For example, it has been associated with the 'illegal' unions of different races during colonial years (Young 1995:18). However in much contemporary theory, notions of hybridity are often seen as more of 'a strength than a weakness' (Ashcroft 2003:183). Ashcroft (2003) goes on to say that:

> [H]ybridity and the power it releases may well be seen as the characteristic feature and contribution of the post-colonial, allowing a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth.

I agree with Ashcroft that hybridity is not negative, and it may be a 'fugitive' strength to be deployed in photographic practice. My own experience of being exposed to multiple cultures has allowed me to venture into different worlds and form an independent sense of my identity. Growing up in a traditional Zulu home, while being educated in former model C schools, I have come into contact with numerous cultures, traditions and languages. As a result, I am able to communicate in and understand six of the eleven official South African languages. I also know what protocol to follow when I am in the presence of different ethnic groups. I see myself making use of my hybrid status, my Zulu traditions and my Western influences, to navigate the hybrid nature of the hostels. My position enables me to explore the challenges and benefits of different cultures coming together in an empathic yet complex way.

According to Robert Young (1995:22), hybridity can be classified into two groups: the first is 'intentional hybridity', which is defined as something that 'enables a contestatory activity, a politicized setting of cultural differences against each other dialogically'. The second is 'unconscious hybridity', which is defined as 'the imperceptible process whereby two or more cultures merge into a new mode' (21). In my opinion these two definitions have allowed me to identify my hybrid status. My hybrid status has made a shift from 'unconscious' hybridity, where the combination of the two different worlds that I have grown up in have fused together to create a new identity, to an 'intentional' form of hybridity. Through my master's dissertation and recent events in South Africa such as *#Feesmustfall*, I have become increasingly aware of how my 'intentional hybridity' allows me to gain a critical position towards cultural forms, rather than just absorbing them unconsciously. Photography has allowed me to express this duality. Guignery (2011:5) discusses how hybridity is linked to notions of identity in artistic representation, and how it may be used.

> [L]iterary and artistic works represent those people of multiple identities and mixed origins who experience their hybridity with more or less serenity and whom society welcomes with varying degrees of benevolence. (Guignery 2011:5)

The concept of a 'just image' could be considered a hybrid concept, as it is not only interested in the physical description but rather is a combination of both the physical and spiritual to create a new meaning.

Before going into how a 'just image' evokes memory, I would like to foreground the basic theory of memory and how it operates. According to Joan Tumblety`s (2013:1) introduction in the book *Memory and history: understanding memory as source and subject* (2013*),* numerous people from different disciplines have spent time trying to understand the theory of memory and how it operates. The study of memory was mainly associated with institutes that preserve the history of particular times and events. The institutes she is referring to are museums, historical books and documentation such as police reports. In more contemporary times, the study has expanded to what she refers to as the 'memory boom' (1). Tumblety (1) defines the 'memory boom' as:

> [S]omething that applies equally to the apparently renewed enthusiasm for the past in popular culture and to the scholarship that seeks to understand it – it extends far beyond the disciplinary boundaries of history, to encompass not only other humanities and social science disciplines such as music and sociology, but cognitive psychology and neuroscience as well.

The study of memory is therefore no longer limited to institutions that preserve history, but has opened up to other faculties and is used for different purposes: importantly, for allowing an individual to reflect on their photographic work. Individuals have used the theme of memory as a vessel to explain different theories that have been formulated such as 'the narrative expression of autobiographical memories' (1). This theory indicates that memory is a form of knowledge of the past, that one experiences in the present. This knowledge is stored in the brain and is recalled by triggers such as smell, colour and taste (Mastin 2010:1).



Figure 5: *iziNgane, Madala hostel*, Alexandra. 2012-2017
Photographed by Nocebo Bucibo

(Figure 5) is an example of one of my hostel images which, illustrate the three tiers of a 'just image', which are: the physical description, the representational function of photography and the psychological, or even spiritual, affect of the spaces. These tiers also relate to my experience of photographing the hostels. The photograph makes reference to both the objective and subjective view of the hostel, but its effect is to trigger memory.

The foreground of the image is made up of a large space that consists of grass. On the grass there are sewer lines that run across at different angles forming multiple shapes, which segment different activities taking place in the foreground. In one of the segments there is a group of children playing; yet the viewer is unable to see the identity of the children. The obscured identity of the children allows the viewer to reflect on their memories of growing up as children. For example, during the exhibition opening, which makes up the practical component of this research titled *iHostela Ngeliny'iKhaya: Regarding Photography as a Just Image* (2012-2017), a guest made a remark about how the tree stump reminds them of the imaginary creatures they would create whilst playing with friends as a child. In the next segment there is a child that is running towards the other children. In the same section there is a tree that sits in-between the background and middle plane. The tree has no leaves or

branches, as they have been cut off. In the background there is a vegetable garden that has been planted. Above the garden one can see the walls of one section in the hostel unit, with its windows, and this structure runs to the top of the frame.

The building structure that runs up to the top of the frame creates a tight crop, prohibiting the viewer from looking beyond the hostel walls. I initially chose this crop to symbolise the prison like structure of the hostel, where it is difficult to enter as an outsider, but on further analysis I came to realise that the structure may have multiple responses, for example, when one reads the wall in relation to the children, it could be interpreted as a form of protection. People living in the hostels have developed strategies such as sharing meals to survive the city, as a result the children and other individuals have a home away from home within these stark walls. The wall further makes reference to separation between the hostel and the township, which is invisible.

The windows on the wall make reference to the individuals living in the hostels. As much as they occupy a single space, each person has their own characteristic and is an individual in this context. This is represented by the different markings on the windows, for example, the black windows, where one is unable to see through may represent an individual who is an introvert and is private about their space. This is the opposite of windows where one can see through them.

The children playing in the foreground represent the spirit of not giving up that people present in the hostel. On that particular day, the children were not at school since their parents had not paid the necessary fees. Despite this they kept each other company for the day and looked out for each other as they played. In my mind the children are a representation of innocence, youthfulness, learning, happiness, and renewal that I have experienced in the hostel. Whereas the child running towards the others who are out of focus in the image, speaks to the instability and uncertainty experienced by people migrating to urban areas from rural areas, in search of better opportunities. The distorted dead tree stump that sits in the middle of the frame and is not linked to the hostel structure, because of its isolation, speaks in my mind to the obscured view people have of the hostel. It also engages the viewer to question their views of the hostel and whether they are ‘just’.

These aspects of photography and my experience in approaching the hostel-dwellers all fall under the eventual rubric of producing a ‘just image’: one that will reflect and respond to the complexity of hostel life both past and present.

Chapter 2

The History of the Migrant Hostels

This chapter investigates the history and current structures of the hostels. This contextualisation of the hostels will allow me to foreground the various social and architectural dimensions of the hostels, and the role they played in shaping the country's history: for example, the hostels house migrant workers who work on the mines, in factories, gardens and kitchens, all of whom contribute towards the economy of the country. I also look at the locations where the hostels are built, and who they were built for. Looking at the history, physical presence, and purpose of these spaces allows me to better comprehend the social milieu of the hostels today and supports my efforts to write meaningfully about my personal experience in and of the hostels. In as much as the hostels have shaped the history of the country, I see their structures contributing to the process and practice of my photographic project; and that of other photographers past and present.

My interest in how South Africa`s history has been shaped by the hostels came about in 2010, when I worked on my first project in *Merafe* and *Mshaya'zafe* hostel. During that year I became interested in more than just the physical structure of the hostels. I also became intrigued with the social and 'spiritual' units that make up the space, such as the camaraderie amongst the men and women. For example, some of the men and women living in the hostels are unemployed, which means that they are unable to buy food for the day or have money to transport them to a job interview. In other communities this would lead to depression and inability to progress, but the hostel inhabitants combat this by sharing the little they have. For lunch, people will come together and contribute towards buying food for everyone in the room at that time. They have created a family structure that provides support both financially and emotionally. This unit provides peace and some form of stability in a temporary environment.

However, the hostels have a darker purpose than many of the surface elements present, and are beset by poor living conditions, frequent crime, and violent abuse. These negative aspects are rooted in the history of the construction and purpose of the hostels. In order to understand this history, I am going to begin by looking at a brief history of slavery and

colonisation in South Africa. My reason for beginning here is that with the introduction of slavery, the movement and freedom of native South Africans was restricted and controlled, an ideological structure that played out in the mining compounds, amongst other industrial arenas.

According to historical records, colonisation and slavery in South Africa began in 1652 (Hunt, 2005:1-10). The country was colonised for its agricultural benefits and served as a half-way station for ships enroute to the East for the spice trade. This allowed for agricultural trade between the colonies and Europe. One of the results of colonialism was slavery, where the colonisers were allowed to own native South Africans. The slaves were not allowed to move as they pleased without their 'master's' consent (53-58). The duties of the slave were to work the land and serve their master: failing to do so would result in punishment.

The abolishing of slavery in 1834 meant that the 'natives' should have the freedom to move around as they pleased. However, many of the tools of oppression and inequality developed during the age of slavery became integrated in the new models of 'free labour' (Berger 2009:10). As stated earlier, the colonisers were attracted to South Africa by the agricultural benefits that the country had to offer. Now that the slaves were allowed to move freely, most of them migrated to the farms, the shipping docks in the Cape colony, or worked for the government by building roads.

Minerals were mined at the time, but at a small local scale. In 1867, a diamond was discovered on a farm on the banks of the Orange River near Kimberley. This discovery was the beginning of the diamond rush in Kimberley. The rush saw an influx of people moving to South Africa from different places in the world (Turrell 1987:17). This meant that there was a greater need for labourers that would dig on the mines. Diggers on the mines were made up of different races and ethnic groups, but the majority of migrant labourers were of African descent. It is estimated that between 1871 and 1875, there were fifty thousand black Africans working on the mines (19).

The movement of migrant labourers over the last century and a half is explained by the 'push-pull' theory of migrant labour (Thomas 2013: 60-67). The push factors are those that push

individuals away from a specific area, such as natural disasters and war, and the pull factors are those that attract people to a specific area, such as jobs (60-67).

There are two types of push-pull factors: these are the rural push-urban pull and urban push-rural pull (Duignan, Gann, 1969:534-535). Migrant labourers are affected by both forms, but the most common is the rural push-urban pull (534-535). For instance, the black labourers on the mines worked to earn money to buy cattle to help support their families or to pay a dowry for the brides who resided in their homelands (Turrell 1987:23-24). In other cases, men were sent to the mines by their chiefs to earn money so that they could purchase guns to protect communities from the White settlers and other tribes (23-24). The migrant labourers were therefore forced to move into urban areas to seek employment to help support their families in the rural areas. This is still the case today. When the men arrived in the urban areas they could be housed by families who already lived in the urban area. Many Black townships developed in the urban areas through this 'push-pull' economic force (Thomas 2013: 60-67). A further housing option available to migrants was hostel accommodation. Here, men from all over Africa would live together in a mingling of different tribes and nations. This diversity led to tension, and at times violence. When these inevitable conflicts took place, the *nduna* would play a role mediating between different parties, and resolving the conflict: for example, by suggesting that the individuals in conflict move to separate sections of the hostel.

With the founding of DeBeers Company[7] and the introduction of underground mining, more African migrant workers had to be recruited to work on the mines. The mining companies used various methods of recruiting African workers. These methods included but were not limited to outsourcing workers from different areas in South Africa and other African countries.[8] Compound managers often went directly to the chiefs, like the *Basutos,* to make remunerative arrangements regarding the recruiting of mine labourers (Turrell 1987:156).

[7] Rhodes formed DeBeers Consolidation Company, which was made up of the richest mining companies on the Kimberley mines. The formation of this company saw Rhodes officially controlling the diamond mines in South Africa (Turell 1987:222)

[8]Turrel (1987:146) explains the different recruiting methods by stating that 'the closed compound system began with 110 African workers who were recruited from KwaZulu Natal formally known as Natal by the Compagnie Francaise', and that 400 African migrant workers were employed from *Inhambane*, Mozambique by the Kimberley Central company.

Turrell (159) states that the increase of Black workers 'threatened new political and social problems, and aroused deep-felt fears amongst Europeans'. With the increasing number of Black migrant workers making their way to mining areas, the mine owners were becoming uncomfortable with the fact that they could not control the movement of the workers, and the employer was unable to confirm the miners' return after their contract had expired (154-155). This made it difficult for mine owners to keep a constant labour force for a longer period, meaning they would have to train new miners, resulting in a decrease in productivity. This became a liability to the companies.

In order to control the influx and outflow of Black migrant workers on the mines, mining magnate and Prime Minister of the Cape Colony Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902) devised a model of housing Black migrant workers in 'controlled compounds' (155). Schoeman (1996:83) writes that, 'As monopoly companies took over from amateur diggers and operations grew more complex, diamond mining became better organised and more stringently controlled'. Before the 'controlled compounds', both Black and White migrant workers were housed in 'compounds or encampments in tents or sheds … but were free to come and go as they please' (Zhuwakinyu 2011)[9]. The result of the mines becoming more controlled meant that one could no longer settle on land and start digging. Allen (2003:7) states that the main reason that Rhodes gave for building the compounds is that 'diamonds were small and valuable and where relatively easily secreted out of the Mines; extraordinary steps had to be taken to prevent them from being stolen'. However, even the question of theft was racialised for migrant workers: Allen (7) goes on to say that:

> F]rom the outset the white miners had refused to co-operate with any of the mine owners' proposal to stop the illicit diamond trade, with the consequence that only blacks were constrained and treated as if they were all potential diamond thieves'.

Following the closure of the 'open compounds', larger compounds had to be built to house the workers on the mines and closer to the mine shafts. Later, the compounds were built in the townships. In the early years of the closed compound, miners were given contracts that lasted anything from two to twelve months; since most of them were illiterate they signed

[9]Schoeman (1996: 86) goes further to describe the lodgings on the gold mines in Johannesburg as 'tents and corrugated iron huts have been erected amongst the excavations'.

their contracts with their thumb print (3). The contracts would include terms and conditions related to their accommodation while working on the mines. Black workers were also required to carry a permit that needed to be signed by a supervisor. This system is similar to that of the pass law[10]. Their white counterparts were not subjected to living under the same terms and conditions (Turell, 1987:146). Svea Josephy (2014:4) notes that the different treatment of black and white workers shows racist thinking. Because of this separation, White workers were given preferential treatment, a mindset that repeated itself under apartheid.

In these barracks, one would find two or more men from different cultural groups and nationalities living in an enclosed area, which is similar to a prison. Figure 6 is a photograph of the first closed compound that is described in a newspaper article sourced from the DeBeers stock library.

[10] The pass law was a system that was introduced in South Africa by the Apartheid government and required black people to carry a passport like document on them at all times. The document would have information pertaining to the individual's employment and residents. Individuals where restricted to reserves also known as homelands, this system was created to monitor the movement of African citizens (Boddy-Evans, 2017:1)



Figure 6*: De Beers compound at Kimberley in the 1890`s-the model on which closed compounds were based*, Kimberley, Not dated. [Image Online]

The Daily Independent (1885) ran an article on the first closed compound where they gave a physical description, making reference to the architecture and amenities found in there. The headline of the article reads as follows: *Inauguration of the compounds system.* The observation of the journalist is:

> [T]he compound is situated on the North side of the North Circular Road, at the point where the bridge crosses from Central Company's works. It is a rectangular enclosure and covers several acres of ground. The Compound itself is again surrounded a few yards away from its walls by a railing, indicating unmistakably that the property is private property and trespassers will be prosecuted. No unauthorized person will be able to approach the walls of the compound unless to be able to elude the vigilance of the guard. In this way also the whole of the Central Company`s works have been wired in so that the Kaffir will never be off his employer`s ground. He will betake himself to the mine on a pathway well inside this fence and will never, without a permit, go outside it. One of the searching houses has recently been moved from the edge of the mine to the vicinity of the compound on the other side of the bridge, and he will pass through it and will be subjected to a thorough search whenever he leaves the compound. At first sight, the new compound strikes the observer as admirably adapted to the purpose it is intended for. In the words of one of our honorable judges, it may well be described as (for the Kaffir) an 'eligible residential situation'. Plenty of breathing space is granted him within its four walls, and room for the full indulgence of the antics in which he delights to disport his supple limbs. Entry is obtained through a guard-house at the corner, which is turretted, and on the summit a big 'C' is a landmark. Along one of the four sides of the enclosure are ranged the offices and sleeping rooms for such a white employee as chose to avail themselves of the accommodation, the general store, refreshment room, Kaffir dining room, dispensary, infirmary etc., whilst the remaining three sides are devoted to the Kaffir sleeping rooms, capable of housing about 400 boys. Clean urinals and latrines are provided and also the

> unusual luxury of a bath in the center of the enclosure, the use of which the boys were not slow to appreciate.

The blatant racist and white supremacist mindset of the period, on display in this obviously white journalist's account makes for uncomfortable reading. Apart from the unabashed use of terms such as 'kaffir' – a word understood in our contemporary South Africa to be a form of racist 'hate speech' – the praiseful account regarding the inclusion of the 'luxury' of one bath in a space designed to serve 400 people is telling of the low expectations of what passed as fit accommodation for migrants to live in. This inadequate bathing arrangement 'in the center of the enclosure' (The Daily Independent 1885) speaks to a shocking lack of privacy while the article's description of the militant restriction of movement exemplified the lengths to which mine owners would go (and were allowed to go by law) in their bid to exploit the workers in full. These incarcerated conditions meant that mine owners could get more work out of workers by making them work longer hours for less pay, because they were closer to the mine.

This form of architecture on display in Figure 6, of high walls that form an enclosure around the migrant workers, with a watch tower used for surveillance, where the guard is able to track the movement of the worker within the space, is similar to that of Jeremy Bentham's design of the Panopticon, a design that was intended to control its inhabitants through surveillance (Foucault, 1977:198-200). The Panopticon was designed to service institutions such as schools, asylums and prisons (Mason 2018:1). Michel Foucault (1926–1984) in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1977), links the Panopticon design to a method of a controlling discipline, and a display of centralised power because its three functions are to 'enclose, to deprive of light and to hide - it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two' (200). Foucault (200) describes the design as:

> [A]n annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in the central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery.

From the above description, the purpose of the structure of a Panopticon building was to limit contact and communication between the inhabitants through the effect of the closed cellular structures; also, the centralised guard in the centre tower structure is able to watch them (200). Foucault (200) describes the experience of being watched as 'He is seen but he does not see, he is the object of information, never a subject in communication'.

Foucault's (1977:200) criticism of the purpose of Bentham's Panopticon can be employed in looking at the South African hostel structures, which bear considerable resemblance to Bentham's Panopticon, built as they were to control the movement of migrant workers by means of permits, walls, fences, and surveillance.

Cecile Rhodes's aim of controlling the migrant workers was achieved through structures that remain in place today. The closed compound is built as *isibaya,* which is a Zulu word, defined as an 'enclosure for cattle and domestic animals'. Every morning, the farmer opens the kraal for cattle and herds them out to graze. In the evening, he will herd them back in a straight line back into the kraal where they will be kept for the evening. They are kept in there to control their movement and are only let out once the farmer opens for them the following day.

The black migrant workers were not in favour of the new closed compounds. The chiefs and their community were similarly opposed to the concept (Turrell 1987:146). The African workers went on a strike that did not last long before they were forced back to work, and moved into the closed compounds (146). Turrell (1987:146) states that 'Africans rejected the system by going on strike, but found their will quickly broken.'

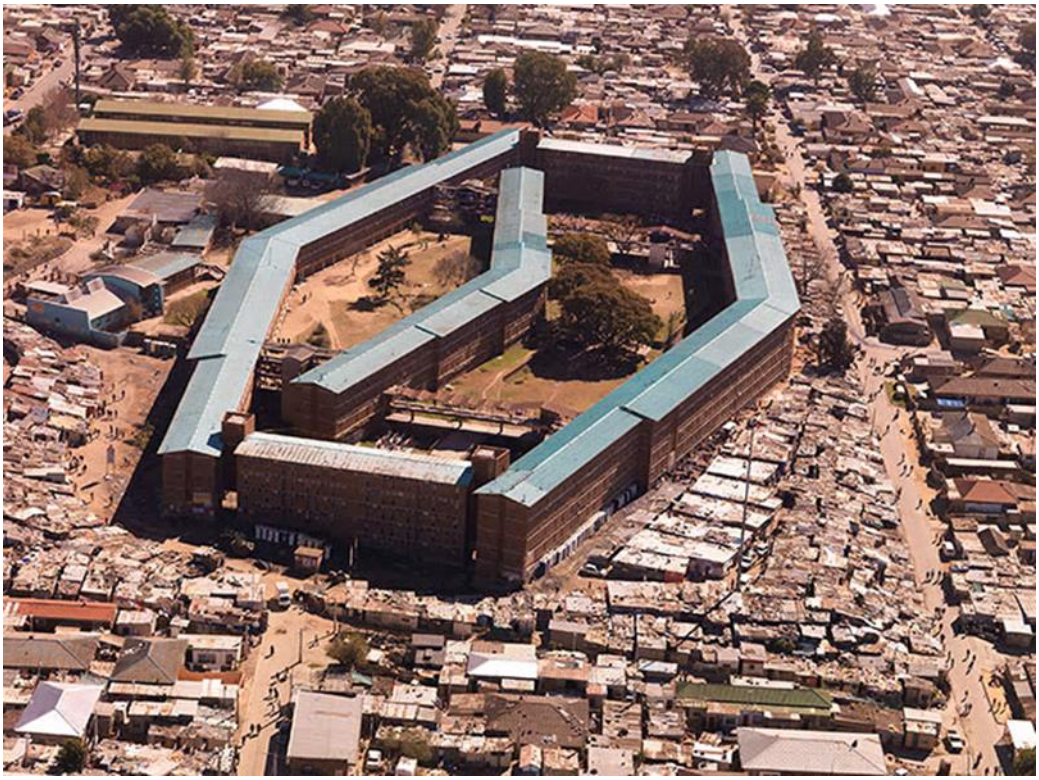

Figure 7: *The woman's hostel, Alexandra Township*, Johannesburg, 2009.
Photograph by David Goldblatt.

Figure 7, by contemporary South African photographer David Goldblatt, is a colour horizontal photograph taken from an aerial view. Because of the camera angle the viewer is able to see inside the hostel which sits in the middle ground of the frame, making it the main focus of the photograph. From this angle one is able to see the surrounding areas, including the large scale of the hostel in relation to the houses and structures surrounding it. On the right side of the frame there is a road that runs from the bottom of the frame to the top, separating the hostel section from other parts of Alexandra (a design factor in line with Bentham's Panopticon [Foucault 1977:200-227]).

The compound structure forms a square that makes an enclosure around the inhabitants. This is evident by the people seen walking around inside the compound. From the angle that the photograph has been taken, it is difficult to see an entry and exit point. On the building, there is an elevated structure in the bottom left corner, which can be considered to be look out points – a Panoptic element (Foucault 1977:201). From the above observation, Goldblatt is making reference to the prison like structure of the space and how it creates a sense of isolation and separation in the city, and its function

of keeping the migrant workers under surveillance. From the description of the square-like, closed off structure and high-rise building structure, which towers over the surrounding homes, I am reminded of Johannesburg correctional services, which is also known as 'sun city' prison and is a few meters from my family home. This prison is positioned close to the residential areas, its height towers over the surrounding buildings, and stands in the neighborhood as a dislocated object, with its harsh brutalist concrete exterior. It is difficult to enter as there is only one exit and entry point, where one is subjected to a system of searches, producing of identity documents, and other invasive processes before reaching your destination within the walls. A comparison of 'sun city' prison and *Madala* hostel above reveals that hostels that were built to emulate a prison-like structure to control the inhabitants by making sure they were constantly being watched, which is similar to the function of Bentham's Panopticon, as unpacked by Foucault (1977:201-213).

Goldblatt also highlights the lack or slow transformation of these spaces. He does this by drawing a visual comparison with earlier aerial photographs of hostels such as the one built on the Kimberly mines (Figure 6). Lack of transformation can be a metaphor for how some structures, laws and activities are still the same as the apartheid years, including the lack of facilities in township or rural schools.

All the hostels that I have worked in still have the same enclosed structure as the closed compounds on the old mines, with only a few upgrades: for example, *Merafe* hostel now has 'bachelor flat' style blocks, where one person may own a room that has its own bathroom, kitchen and bedroom. Lack of transformation notwithstanding, the position and presence of the structure in relation to the township indicates that it still has a place in the society and in contributing towards the country's economy, as it still houses migrant workers and their families coming in from rural area.

In most of the hostels I have visited, however, a man and woman occupy a bed and side table – if they are lucky. These items are provided by the municipality. The beds are lined up across the corridor with a curtain separating the different beds, providing minimum privacy. Individuals move into the hostel with a suitcase housing their personal

belongings. Once they have moved in, some purchase other assets such as fridges, televisions etc. It is very common for an individual who owns these assets to share them with the people who don't have them.

If one is lucky to have a relative in the hostel they can inherit a bed, which is the case with 'ubaba`Ngobese' (a man I met at *Merafe* hostel). He inherited his father's room, and will leave it to his son once he retires. Mamphela Ramphele refers to this system in her book titled: *A bed called home: Life in the migrant labour hostels of Cape Town* (1993). She writes that the bed in the hostel is passed on from generation to generation. With each generation, a son takes possession of the bed, giving it a whole new identity. Since some of the migrants could not afford owning a bed, or could not access other accommodation, they found themselves renting a bed from other hostel inhabitants. This introduced the concept of bed-holders (the individual who the bed is legally registered to) and holdees (the person renting the bed) (Ramphele 1993:20-21).

With the men moving to the urban areas, women, children and the elders are often left behind in the rural areas to look after the homestead**.** This continues to cause numerous problems, such as the family structure being destroyed. Children are raised by their mothers or grandparents and only see their fathers once a year. During my visits to the hostels, I met men living there who go home once every four months, or only once a year. They have left their wives and children in the rural areas. It is normal for them to have 'hostel wives' who live with them in the city. They are susceptible to contracting diseases such as HIV and unplanned pregnancies with different women. Despite having multiple women in their lives, they have shared with me that they remain committed to their marriage back home. From what I have learnt by being in the hostels, most of the time they are not willing to formalise their relationships with their urban partners. These relationships are temporary and are limited to the duration the male will spend in the city.

From pursuing the history discussed in this chapter, I have gained a clearer idea as to why the hostels where built, for whom and the purpose of them. Initially they were introduced as temporary lodging for the migrant workers with infrastructure that was

inhumane. The introduction of the hostels saw the organised exploitation of black workers, the fracturing of the black family structure due to long term separation, and the introduction of a host of contracting diseases. O`Malley (sa: 1) states that

> '[T]he hostel system has an adverse effect on the health and wellbeing of its occupants. Too many people living together in a small space with inadequate ventilation must inevitably increase the spread of disease.'

The hostel system was not only adopted by mines: it was later introduced by government and private companies who built hostels to accommodate migrant workers employed in their factories. Despite these poor and restrictive conditions, the individuals living in these spaces have historically, and continue to this day, to turn their temporary lodging into a home, where they have created systems that allow them to survive in the city.

Building on this understanding of hostel histories and social life, chapter 3 looks at how photography and photographers have captured these spaces in the past and present and how the above information has influenced their representation of these migrant spaces.

Chapter 3

The Photographic Representation of Hostels in South Africa

This chapter is made up of sub-sections that are arranged in a chronological order of South African political history, which I have titled: 'Colonial-era Photography: from 1800`s-1947'; 'Apartheid-era photography: from 1948-1989; 'Transitional photography: 1990-1994'; and 'Post-Apartheid photography: 1995–current'. This timeline shows the link between the country's political situation at different periods, and modes of photography that reflect that context. Furthermore, this will give an indication of what the different photographer's intentions were when working in the hostels. The shifts that have taken place with how hostels have been photographed are linked to the shifting nature of photography and discourse around intention and style of photographing.

Each category has a general objective that is explained under each sub-section. Over time, the rationales for photographing the hostels have been for ethnographic documentary, corporate promotion and information, social and/or struggle photography, and finally, more expressive modes of capturing the hostels in various artistic modes of photography, which I call a self-reflexive style of photography. The periods that resonate with me the most are the transitional and post-Apartheid periods. This is for two reasons: Firstly, I have personal experience of the hostels linked to both periods, having lived in Thokoza in the early 1990`s, and being exposed to the violence that took place in and around the hostels. Secondly, I relate to the post-apartheid era because I photograph the hostels in the current context. However, I see my contemporary mode of photography as containing traces of its history of production in South Africa. Investigating certain historical modes of photography, and the intentions of various photographers, therefore articulates my own position as a photographer working in the hostels.

Colonial and apartheid era: photography from 1800`s – 1989

For the purpose of this study, I place the photographs of the compounds from the period 1800`s to early 1900`s within two connected genres, ethnographic/documentary photography and/or corporate promotion. The first camera arrived on the continent with

Jules Leger, who was traveling on the *Schooner Hannah Codner.* Legar began photographing what he saw around him and had an exhibition of 'settler portraits and colonial sense' (Hayes 2007:139). By the time the camera entered the mines, photographs of the 'native' people of South Africa had therefore already been produced in an ethnographic mode. Figure 8 is an example of an image taken in the ethnographic photographic mode which Sarah Pink (2013:73) defines as the 'objective device, flourished as a method for the "scientific" documentation of cultural and physical differences'. In the book titled *Ethnography: A way of seeing* (1999), Harry Wolcott quotes A.R. Radcliffe-Brown's definition of anthropology as the 'descriptive accounts of non-literate people' (1952). This is evident in descriptions given to the subject: for example, 'savage' or 'primitive'. I am aware that Radcliffe-Brown's (1952) definition has been contested and is no longer relevant today; however, for the purpose of this study and subheading I will make reference to his definition. John Collier (1986:10) further confirms this by saying 'early ethnographers were enthusiastic photographers, for the camera gathered the descriptive details sought for in the material inventory phase of anthropology'.

Ethnographic photography in the colonial-era is therefore a method of data collection, used by western ethnographers to compile a descriptive analysis of South African tribes and people, in order to 'understand' their biology, culture and traditions. The method of collecting this data included, but was not limited to: taking measurements of the head, as the 'house' of the brain which controls one's characteristic and intelligence. 'Colonised natives were often stigmatised for their small skull sizes and other "unfavourable" physiognomic characteristics – producing a narrative of what today is termed, scientific racism' (Vijayakrishnan 2014:1). Photography was therefore used as a method of recording these findings. This was done by photographing frontal and side-facing headshots, and full body shots of people in their surroundings, to show details of their facial and body structure.

These ethnographic images reveal the power relations between the subjects observed as being inferior to the researcher (observer). This was done by invading the privacy of the subjects: the observer would direct 'the sitter' on how to pose, the sitter having no say in how they were portrayed. Pink (2013:73) states that it was not 'about the subject but the

consumer classification on the knowledge gained'. This is evident in the general captions given to images, for example *A Zulu girl. Hair strung with beads* (sa), Figure 8), where the sitter's name has not been included, but the photographs give a full physical description of who she was, by photographing her face; indicative of a lack of interest in the personal life of the person being photographed.



Figure 8: *A Zulu girl. Hair strung with beads*, South Africa, Late nineteenth century. Retrieved from https://artblart.com/tag/colonial-photography-in-africa/.

Meanwhile, the corporate-promotion mode of photography was a marketing tool for mine owners: before the closed compounds were built, mine owners needed to obtain financial assistance to build them. The proposals for the financial assistance included information

showing why closed compounds needed to be built e.g., in order to curb theft and increase productivity by housing miners closer to the shaft [11](Gastrow 2001:25).

Figure 9 is an example of an image that would have been included in the report, as it shows the functionality of the hostel and the measures taken to reduce and prevent theft of diamonds on the mines. The photograph shows a man being strip searched.



Figure 9: *Looking at bottom of feet*, Unknown, (sa).
Retrieved from:https://soulsafari.wordpress.com/2012/09/21/a-diggers-lament-a-soul-safari-compilation

In the photograph there are two black men. The first is naked, and he is turning his head to face the camera. He is standing with his hands against a wall with one foot on the ground, and the other in the hands of the other man, who is searching his sole. I refer to this man holding the foot as the guard because of his clothing: the design of the cap and long black

[11]After the building of the structure, photographs would have to be taken to show investors where their money went and the functionality of the hostel. Photographers such as Constance Stuart Larrabee, Leon Levson and Alfred Duggan-Cronin were commissioned by different organizations to photograph in the mining compounds. These photographers where funded but not limited to the following organizations. These companies included Union research Grant board, Carnegie trust, and Electricity supply commission (Eskom) (Gastrow 2001:5-45).

pants with a white stripe running down the legs of the pants indicate that this is an official's uniform. It is clear that including a black guard was supposed to have an intended effect, which is that all miners have the opportunity to upgrade themselves to guards, and that there were no racial issues on the mine. It further shows the 'influence' that Western culture had on the 'natives', demonstrating the erosion of Africans' traditions and culture, through the adoption of Western styles of dress, and the rank that went with these styles.

The text also gives a description of the process that is taking place, and reads as follows: 'looking at bottom of feet' and 'they often cut a hole in the bottom of feet and secure a diamond in it'. This goes to show that the mines were run strictly, and that measures were taken to prevent 'natives' from smuggling diamonds. The man leaning against the wall is naked during this inspection, and photographed in this undignified or 'primitive' state, methods possibly used to enhance mine control over workers through fear of inhumane treatment. This could also have been a method used to indirectly show the measurements of the worker's anatomy.

One photographer from this period was distinctive because of his more socially-concerned approach to photographing the compounds, Alfred Duggan-Cronin (1874 - 1954). He worked on the mines as a compound guard and in the dispensary on the De Beers mine in Kimberly (Newbury 2012:257). From all the subjects that he photographed, Newbury (2012:257) suggests that his most successful and unique subject that set him apart was the 'migrant male laborers drawn across from Southern Africa.'

Unlike the photographers who were commissioned or funded to photograph on the mines, Duggan-Cronin can be considered both an outsider and insider because he worked with the people he was photographing. Newbury (2012:258) states that his photographs 'were produced from a genuine and human interest in the people they depict'. Because of his approach of photographing from a place of empathetic exchange he was given the name *Thandabantu* meaning 'loves people' by the *Matebele* tribe (Newbury 2012:258).

However, I contest Newburys's analysis of Duggan-Cronin`s photographs, where he states Duggan-Cronin`s photographs show an interest in the people he photographed. I believe that since he worked on the mines and had more contact with the migrant workers, he was in a better position to forge a relationship with them, allowing him to show his interest in the lives of the workers. However, he is unable to steer completely away from the ethnographic mode of the time.



Figure 1: 'Three Bhaca men running', undated compound study, in 1925 field album, photograph number 1322, McGregor Museum, Kimberley.

Figure 10: '*Three Bhaca* men running', compound study, in 1925 field album. McGregor Museum, Kimberley, (sa).
Photograph by Alfred Duggan-Cronin

In the image there are three men running towards the camera, dressed in their traditional attire holding their traditional weapons in the same direction. From their posture and pose, of their weapons it is evident that they were posed. These portraits show the full body of the men and an indication of their Bhaca culture from their clothes. However, the facial expression of the men on the right and left contradicts the ethnographic style because these men are smiling and have a more relaxed expression than that of the man in the center. This is where we see Duggan-Cronin's relationship with the men, I can assume that they are smiling and relaxed because they are comfortable being in Duggan-Cronin's presence: they are on familiar terms with him. Edwards (1992:3) comments on this dual interpretation of ethnographic photographs by stating that '[M]aterial can move in and out of the

anthropological sphere and photographs that were not created with anthropological intent or specifically informed by ethnographic understanding may never the less be appropriated to anthropological ends'.

As a photographer who makes use of self-reflexivity and has built relationships with the hostel dwellers similar to Cronin I am aware that as much as I may try to avoid capturing photographs that are anthropological I am unable to fully avoid this style because I am providing information on hostel life and its people to an outside audience. I have however employed techniques to avoid this by spending time with each person prior to photographing them. This has meant that the project has taken longer to complete. I have respected the restrictions given to me by the people I am photographing, for example, individuals have requested that their faces are not shown in the images, in those instances I have either cropped out their faces or created silhouettes.

Therefore, ethnographic photography and any form of photography can offer a different reading and understanding for the viewer to that of the photographer's intent. Here we also see hybrid photography because of the two different interpretations of one image.

Apartheid era:

The National Party came into power in 1948 and implemented the apartheid system. This system promoted segregation of white South Africans from Back South Africans. During the apartheid-era, people of colour in South Africa were introduced to photography and began photographing in their own communities. The story of black South Africans was no longer told from a western view only. This era of photography also sees the introduction of new genres and trends in photography (Bester and Enwezor 2013: 150).

These trends and genres were developed in print magazines. *Drum* magazine (1951), for example, was targeted at black readers and had black photographers and writers working at the magazine[12]. Furthermore, social documentary photography and struggle/resistance

[12]I see these developments as occurring in part because of new patterns of migration and urbanisation during this era. When the National Party had been elected, there were already black South Africans who had moved

photography were developed through the formation of photographic organisations such as Afrapix, who used photography to oppose the apartheid government (Bester and Enwezor 2013:372)

Below I discuss the shifts in photographic style: from *The African Drum* magazine, which was concerned with South African rural life for a European market, to that of *Drum* magazine that adopted its style from American *Life* magazine by including photographic essays, and pictures that portrayed the social life of black people living in urban areas. Later, a more political stance was adopted to contest apartheid. This resistance saw the introduction of struggle photography, where photographers used this style of imagery to fight the political system and expose the inhumane treatment of black citizens, to the western world.

The African Drum magazine (1951) was founded three years after the introduction of Apartheid, and would later be titled *DRUM*. The magazine was founded in Cape Town and later moved to Johannesburg (David 2001:38). Initially the magazine covered rural and tribal stories in different parts of South Africa and other African countries, and was aimed at a white audience (Newbury 2012:85). Okwui Enwezor (1996:182) defines *The African Drum* as 'an entertainment magazine that deals with aspects of "tribal" life, even though its target was an urban audience'. Here Enwezor (182) makes reference to the initial content that was found in the first issues of the magazine and the audience which revealed nostalgia for a type of 'Africanism' that preceded the new socio-political developments.

When the magazine changed its name to DRUM, it focused more on the social life of black people living in the urban areas, and its target audience was no longer the western reader but the African reader (Newbury 2012:85).[13]My focus is on the articles centred on the mines and

into the urban areas, meaning that the new laws would greatly affect them. With the increasing number of black people migrating to the urban areas, a new socio-political atmosphere came with the adaptation to a new urban environment (Thompson 2001:7-8). Black South Africans had literacy in their own languages, cultures and tribes when they moved into the urban areas. Since they had moved to the new area they had to learn a new kind of hybrid language systems, and literacy which drew from English, in order to communicate, read, and understand their new surroundings (Marjorie 1982:1).

[13]Anthony Sampson (1956:20), who was invited to join the Magazine by Bailey in 1951, describes the experience of the black reader at this time: 'Ag, why do you dish out that stuff, man? Said a man with golliwog hair in a floppy American suit, at the Bantu Men`s Social Centre. 'Tribal music! Tribal history! Chiefs! We don't care about chiefs! Give us jazz and film stars, man! We want Duke Ellington, Satchmo, and hot dames! Yes, brother,

compounds from both *African Drum and Drum.* The photographic style used in the magazine was both photographic 'essays' and social documentary photography. Photographic essays are defined as 'a group of photographs usually with supplementary text that conveys a unified story. (Online; 2017). Since a photographic essay is a story, it most often contains a beginning, middle and end, relying on imagery to convey the narrative.

I have selected two photo-essays that deal with the hostels as a subject (figure 11, 12 and 13), and one photograph from each essay that was published in the magazine. These photographs show the shift in the intention of photographing in the hostels from what I would call a public relations article, showing why working on the mines is beneficial, to photography that highlights the inhumane conditions labourers were subjected to.

Figure 11 is made up of seven black and white photographs which illustrate the working life of a miner, from the time the miners are recruited, to life on the mines, and finally, their return back home to their families. The images look 'posed', for example, the first image of the essay looks as if the photographer instructed the miners to stand on the cliff and look at the cityscape of Johannesburg with 'amazement'. I also think the intention of the photographs was to show that the mining industry holds great potential for black labourers. The image of the men gazing out into the city landscape suggests that they may have a part in possessing its riches, under the guidance of a white mine manager they can behold the wealth. This further indoctrinates the mind of the worker that they need to submit to the white man. This is why the photographs have to show a brotherhood of the mine workers.

anything American. You can cut out this junk about kraals and folk tales and Basutos in Blankets- Forget it! You`re just trying to keep us backwards, that's what! Tell us what`s happening right here, man on the reef [!]'.

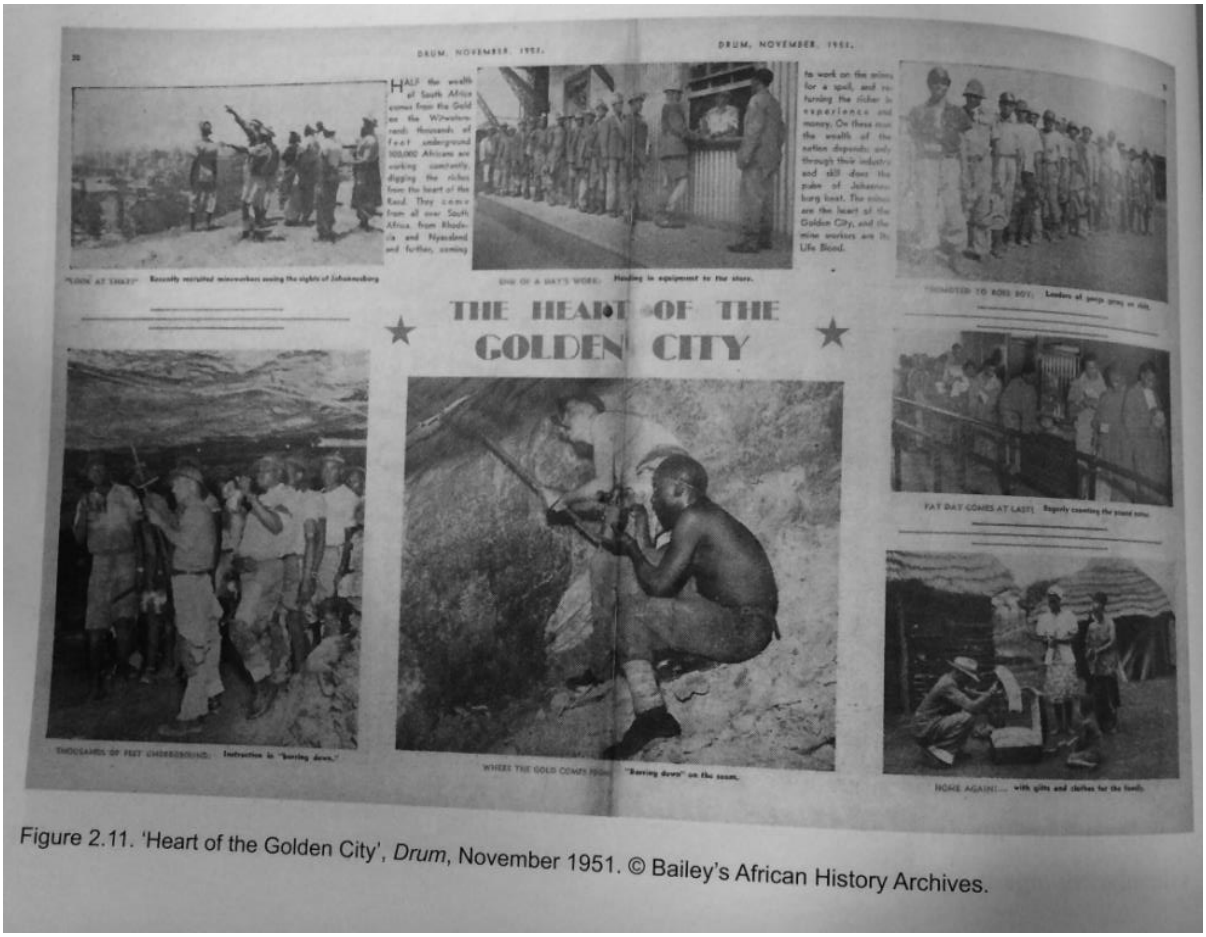

Figure 2.11. 'Heart of the Golden City', *Drum*, November 1951. © Bailey's African History Archives.

Figure 11: Bailey's African History Archives.
'Heart of the Golden City', The African Drum, Johannesburg, 1951.

As Newbury (2008:85) suggests, this photo-essay was used as a recruiting tool because it highlights the benefits of working in the mines without showing the harsh living conditions one would be subjected to[14] . The invisible walls of the hostels are a prison-like structure that invisibly contain the 'happy' activities being imaged. My own knowledge of the hostels renders the hostel confines present in the photographs, even though they are physically absent in the photo-essay. In Figure 11 I can identify the home where the miners come from and return to after they have acquired enough money from working on the mines to purchase goods to take home. This is evident in the final image.

[14] Newbury (2009:83,106) attributes these images to Richard Bailey's link to the mining industry because he was the son of Sir Abe Bailey who was a mining magnate. Bailey the co- founder of *The African Drum* Magazine and offered financing for it, he later took full control of magazine, when it changed to *Drum.*

The *African Drum*'s (1951) aspirational spin on the hostel environment is a sharp counterpoint to struggle photographer Ernest Cole's essay of the mines and their hostels. His photo-essay shows a cycle that comes to an end where new recruits are enlisted in a never-ending cycle of exploitation, never to return home. Ernest Cole was a photographer of *Drum* magazine in the 1960`s, but only worked there for a short period (Cole 1976:30). Cole worked on photographs that where published as a book titled *House of Bondage* in 1967. This book is a photographic documentation of apartheid South Africa. *House of Bondage* is separated into sections that have different titles, focusing on different aspects of the political situation in South Africa at the time. For this dissertation I will be making reference to *The Mines* section. In the book, he describes how he got to photograph the mines as a standby photographer, when the other media photographers were not available to go there. In comparison to the 1800`s, we start to see more black photographers capturing the living conditions of their own race. This marked a different purpose in the history of photographers documenting the hostels. A black photographer was exposing the social injustice in the hostel environment, a condition he shared in, thereby rendering his work personal in comparison to that of earlier commissioned photographers.

Unlike the above photographic essay, Cole looks at the individual lives of the migrant workers on the mines and hostels. He does this by capturing intimate photographs. His work looks less posed because it's evident that he took the images in real time: he did not have to construct or plan the images prior to taking them. The style he uses when writing the captions is one that is direct, giving a description of what is happening in the image without giving away all the information, allowing the viewer to analyse the photograph for themselves and come up with their own conclusion.

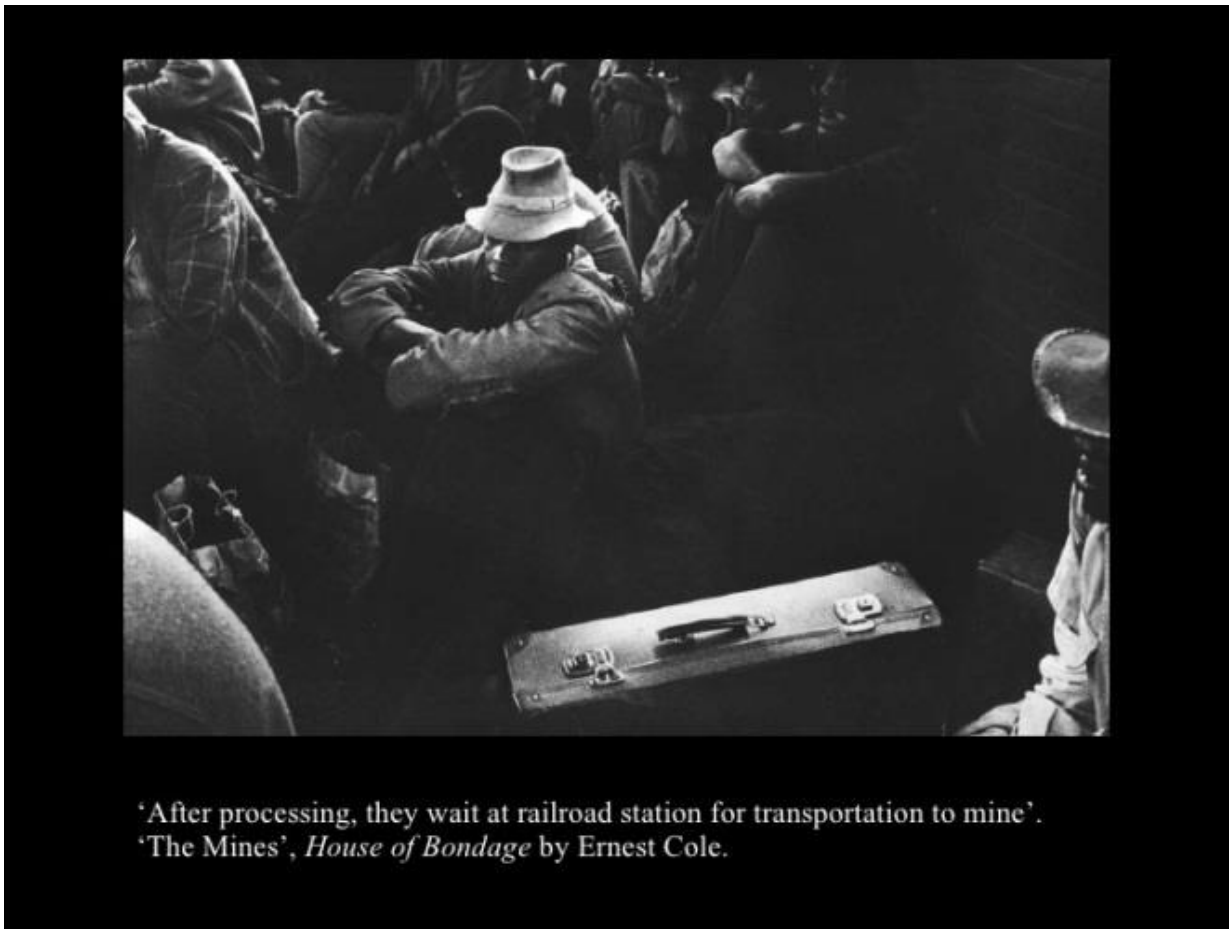

Figure 12: *After processing, they wait at railroad station for transport to mine, in 'The Mines', House of Bondage.* Johannesburg not dated.
Photographed by Ernest Cole

Figure 12 is titled: *After processing, they wait at railroad station for transport to mine.* The way in which the men are cramped into the congested space indicates that this process is one that may linger for a long-time, making it an uncomfortable wait. During this wait individuals have a moment to reflect on the family they have left at home, which could result in one feeling homesick, finding themselves in a new environment with people they don't know, making them feel lonely. This is represented by the body language of the man sitting on the ground with his knees up and arms hugging them, which is evident in most of the men. His hat covers some of his face, and we are unable to see his eyes; it looks as though he is perusing his surroundings and trying to find a familiar face. There is a large suitcase to his right that also indicates that his stay on the mines will be a long one.

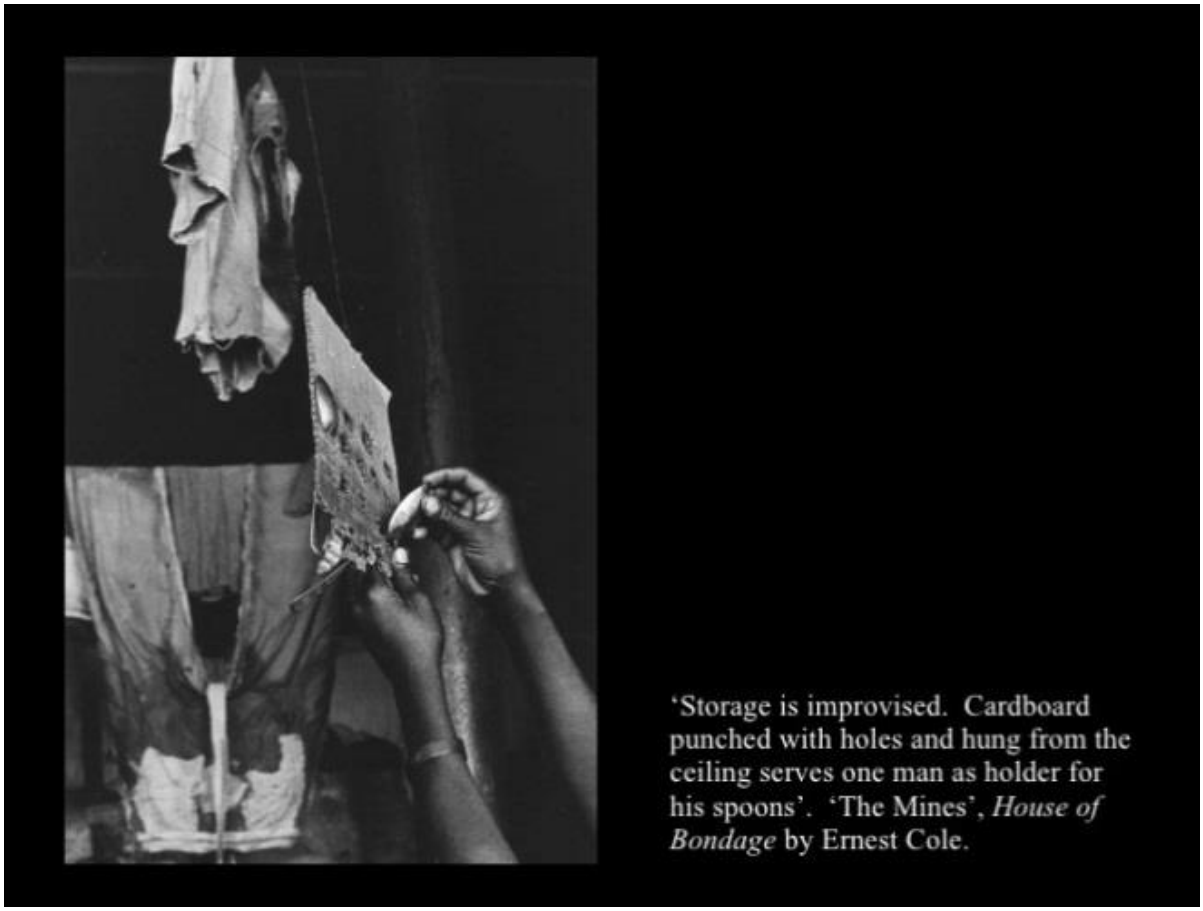

Figure 13: *Storage is improvised. Cardboard punched with holes and hung from the ceiling serves one man as holder for his spoons, in 'The Mines', House of Bondage.* Johannesburg, 2000.
Photograph by Ernest Cole

Figure 13 signifies harsh conditions, but further, depicts how the miners have learnt to improvise their living conditions. In this photograph, someone has created his own storage devices by cutting holes into a cardboard box to house his utensils. In the background there is a pair of pants hanging, possibly both a washing line where the men hang their clothes to dry, or for a make-shift 'cupboard' made out of string and that has a dual purpose: one to hang clothes, secondly as a curtain to create a private space inside the barracks. Some of the above-mentioned conditions are still present today. These signs of both oppressive conditions and the improvising necessary to survive these circumstances are present in contemporary hostels: where creating functional spaces has manifested the possibility of social cohesion. The evidence of this is in the multiple holes in the cardboard which may be housing the spoons of all the men living in that particular room, to create order in their space. This order is also echoed in the pants hanging in the background which may have been used to create privacy

in the room. Despite the harsh living conditions, the man lifting his hands may indicate strength and hope. The man has a bracelet on his arm, which reminds me of 'isiphandla'[15] : this indicates that the man's ancestors are with him protecting him on his journey of life.

Struggle Photography

The 1980`s saw the proliferation of struggle/ resistance photography. This term is used to describe the style and purpose of photography during this era. Particularly for the international community, photographers from this period used the medium to directly oppose the apartheid government and to shed light on the inhumane conditions and violence black South Africans were subjected to. Since their main objective was to expose the wrong-doings of the government, their photographs were not necessarily concerned with the aesthetics of the images, but the message that they wanted to send (Edwards 2015:39). One of the reasons for this could be that independent photographers had to sneak into prohibited areas and take photographs without being caught. One of these prohibited areas was the hostels.

Peter Magubane is one of the photographers who photographed the hostels in both pre-and post-apartheid eras. Figure 14 was captured during apartheid, in black and white film. It has a high-contrast, and it is a grainy image, which signifies the hardship faced by the residents. There are two men standing at the left side of the image. On the right side of the frame there is a man wearing a white coat, similar to that of a doctor's: this is an examination. He is standing facing a group of black men, who are standing naked with their full bodies exposed. They are standing on a white line forming a row, with their hands in the air. At the feet of each person there is a piece of paper, which I assume has all their details and results of the examination. On the right side of the frame there is a silhouette of a man standing with his hand in the air. From the position of this figure and the obscured vantage point it appears that Magubane took the photograph from behind, whilst hiding his camera. This further goes to show how struggle photographers had to sneak around to capture images that expose the apartheid regime.

[15] An African bracelet created from animal skin, it is usually given to member of the family after an animal has been slaughtered for 'umsebenzi'wamadlozi' (ancestral ceremony).



Figure 14: *The unspeakable humiliation of mine workers being regularly inspected by a medical doctor in the diamond mines of South Africa during the apartheid regime for the 'theft' of precious stones, Johannesburg, 1968.*
Photograph by Peter Magubane.

Towards the end of the 80's, the international community was focusing on the South African political situation and putting into place sanctions against the apartheid government to end the system. This pressure given to the government can also be attributed to the photographers of this era who managed to visually show the ill-treatment of black people in the country. Their images circulated in the media and can be counted as one of the reasons why apartheid came to an end in 1994 (Peffer 2009:252).

Transitional period: Photography from 1990 - 1994

In 1994 the ANC (African National Congress) was elected into power, with Nelson Mandela as the first black president of the country. The transition to the new democratic South Africa was not smooth. Instead, it was plagued with violence between two black political parties: the ANC - considered being a Xhosa party at the time, with most of its supporters living in the township - and IFP (Inkhata Freedom Party), a predominantly Zulu party which had most of

its support from hostel dwellers. Both these parties wanted to govern the country. Thus the violence was also considered to be a tribal conflict between the Xhosas and the Zulus. One of the central battle-fields for this violence was the hostels.

With the growing violence in and around the hostels, the mode in which they were photographed shifted to include newspaper journalistic and war photography. War photography is defined as a style of photography that captures war torn countries, and interrogates its effects on the citizens and land (Dean 2011:1). The photographers on the ground had to take photographs that would be published in the newspaper for either the morning or the evening editions**.** The photographs therefore often give a sense of the fast-working tempo and adrenalin-pumping situations they had to work under. Since they were unable to interact in depth with the dwellers they would reflect on their own experience in their captions. Their captions are advised by the physical description of events, which refers to the first tier of a just image that allows them to recollect their subjective view of the day's events, triggering the third tier which is the spiritual example: the emotions of trauma experienced.

The group of photographers whose photographs made it into the newspapers, and are famous for their images of the 'Hostel wars' is *The Bang-Bang Club*. *The Bang-Bang Club* was a group of four white males: Greg Marinovich, Ken Oosterbroek, Joao Silver and Kevin Carter, who decided to form the club because it was 'safer' to venture in to the war-zones as a group (Marinovich and Silver 2000:24-44). They all worked for the Star newspaper, and photographed the clashes between the hostel and township dwellers. Their images showed people being burnt alive, dead bodies, police and military shooting into the crowd.

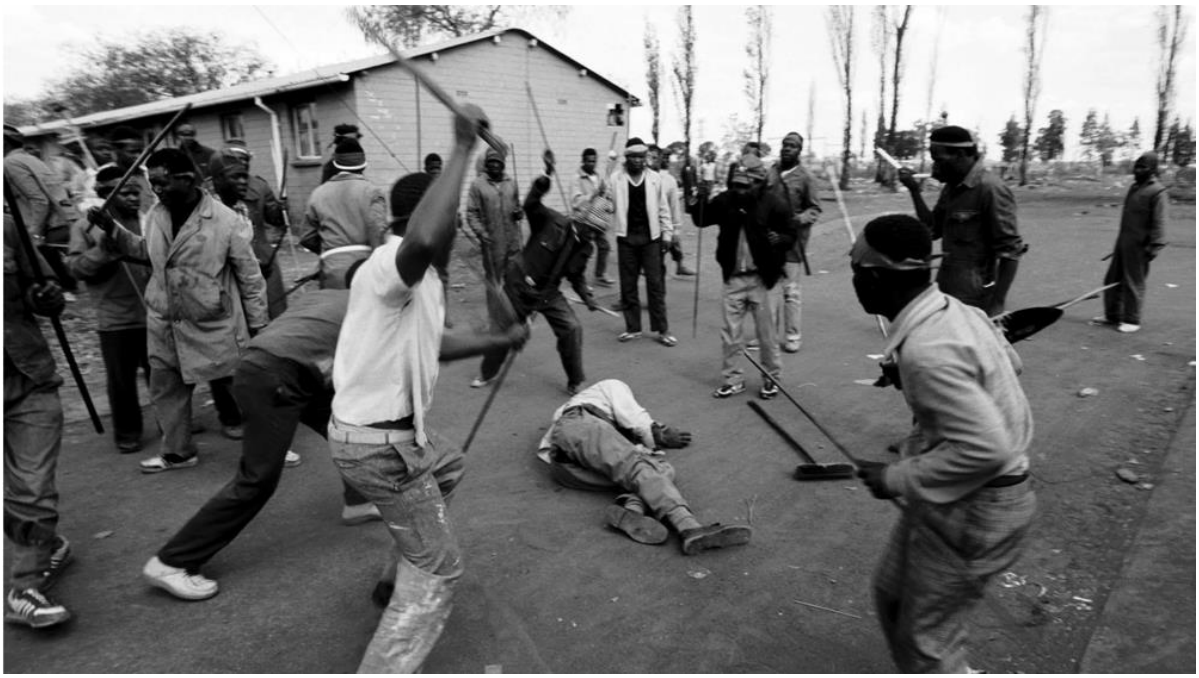

Figure 15: *In August 1990, I captured the killing of a suspected ANC supporter by Zulu supporters of the Inkhatha Freedom Party in Nancefiled hostel in Soweto, following a street conflict with ANC supporters*[16], Johannesburg, 1990.
Photograph by Greg Marinovich.

Taken within the hostel walls, Figure 15 draws attention to the violence that was taking place in them. Marinovich has taken the photograph from a close-range, drawing the viewer into what is happening in the image. Marinovich, was standing just behind the men doing the attack, his position shows his vulnerability. Marinovich's caption allows the viewer to locate the place and the action taking place. The caption is personal were he uses the terms `I` instead of ` the killing of a suspected ANC supporter by Zulu supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party in Nancefield hostel in Soweto following a street conflict with ANC supporters`, this allows him to position himself on the scene and makes the viewer question what the photographer was experiencing at the time when he captured the photograph.

Towards the late 1990`s, the violence was subsiding. The IFP, ANC and all political parties began discussions to end the war and to come up with policies of how and who would govern the country. The hostels had to start a journey of rehabilitation. This journey was also visually documented to show that there was peace in the space. To some photographers, it now

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seemed important to show the humane side of the hostels and the transformation it had gone through. One transformation the hostel had gone through was the introduction of women and children into some of the previously men-only hostels. A photographer who captured this transformation was Roger Meintjies. His photographs have traces of the inhumane conditions, but this was not his focus: he instead focused on how families make use of these structures and how the introduction of woman and children softened the hardness of the hostels. Figure 16 documents this transformation, and draws attention to both the lack of privacy in the hostels and the ability to navigate life within a confined space.

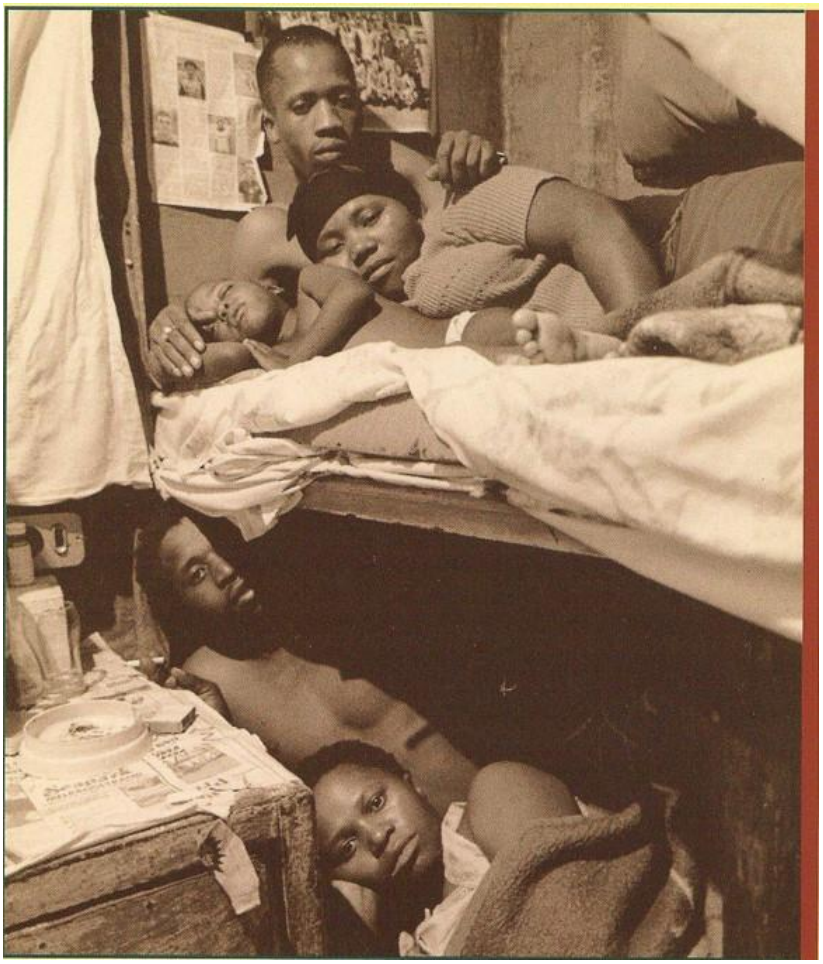

Figure 16: *Bunks, often referred to as rooms by inmates*, Cape Town, (sa).
Photograph by Roger Meintjes

Figure 16 is photographed vertically and is tightly cropped with a sepia tone. There is a bunk bed in the photograph. On the top bunk there is a man, woman, and a child and a couple beneath. From my experience a bunk bed is associated with children, therefore the fact that

grown men are made to sleep in them degrades their dignity. Furthermore, these beds are used as a form of institutionalisation, as in the army, to condition the minds of the people subjected to the institution to follow strict rules within the confines of the base, resulting in a stifling of individuality or character. This is similar to the hostel structure as there were rules that needed to be adhered to. The newspaper clippings on the upper bunk fracture the notion of institutionalisation as the people occupying that upper bunk have personalised their space, despite the prison like walls which are a reminder of the oppressive controls. The clippings may be seen as graffiti that defaces and protects against the hostel institution. As noted, Meintjies photographs a family living in the top bunk. This is the same case in the bottom bunk, where this is evident in the woman nestling intimately into a male's bare chest. The man's face and body is in shadow resulting in a partial obscuring of his face, while the other half is in the light. This use of light is a comment on the juxtaposition of the social issue men face living in the hostel. It is possible that for his partner to visit he had to get permission from the *nduna* and authorities, meaning he is excited to be seeing her, but that to do so he had to expose his intimate life to others to get permission; he must also know that her visit will be temporary, as she will only be allowed to visit for a short time.

That being said, the image also shows the spiritual and sacred qualities of family, and indicates how individuals maintain these connections living apart, or under harsh conditions. Mentjies does this by photographing vertically: in so doing, he forms a tight cropped image which can be read as indicative of close familial bonds, and comments on the spiritual aspects of a 'just image' such as love, respect for each other, and support. The vertical frame also enhances the small space individuals are assigned, the scale of the room is enhanced by the elements in the frame. The small space may be linked to small thinking meaning the small rooms were built to squash the idea of the inhabitants dreaming big, squashing any hope of them expanding their lives in the city or outside the hostel. This smallness is in contrast to my experience of speaking to the people living in the hostel. The majority of them reside in those spaces temporarily. Back home in their villages they own hectares of land, have livestock and live in big houses.

From the above analysis on techniques used by Mentjies, we begin to see the hybrid and complex nature of the hostels and how a 'just image' can communicate the physical and invoke the metaphysical, where juxtaposed social issues are commented on.

Post-Apartheid Photography: from 1995-current

The first democratic elections in South Africa saw a major political shift, were the first black president was elected. This shift also affected the photography landscape and the intentions of photographers. With the saturation of images of violence and brutality that took place during apartheid, documentary photography became 'synonymous with the portrayal of the apartheid state and society' (Bester & Pierre 1999:14). But post-apartheid, the subject was no longer only focused on exposing the evils of the colonialist and apartheid government. With the negative publicity that the country had received from the world, it was important to save the country's image. Looking at the positive side, as well as self-reflexive photography, was important in beginning this transformation. The use of colour photography changes the effect of the image, which may indicate a more intimate and everyday look at the experiences of people in the hostels, rather than documenting them as 'news' or traumatic. The introduction of digital photography also means there is a greater production of images at a faster pace, and that images are easily manipulated using computers and software. Josephy (2014:20) attributes this to 'the greater accessibility of colour materials and the emergence of the digital camera'. As noted in Chapter 1, this creates the possibility of more creative approaches and more individual perspectives, where the photographer positions him/herself within the construction of imagery. The introduction of image manipulation, easy access to colour material and making conscious use of the photographer's subjectivity sees the introduction of photographic hybridity.

A photographer who has photographed townships and hostels in post-apartheid is Zwelethu Mthethwa. He shifted away from the regular black and white photographs taken of the hostels, and photographs them in colour (Bester & Pierre 1999: 18). His series *Empty beds 2002,* depicts the beds of the hostel dwellers in their surroundings. Many of his photographs show no people but there are traces of human life, such as clothes hanging on the walls and picture frames with photographs in them.



Figure 17: *Untitled, Empty beds*, 1995-2005.
Photograph by Zwelethu Mthethwa.

The use of colour allows for the introduction of other themes such as femininity, which is in contrast to how hostels have been previously portrayed, Mthethwa (in Enwezor 2010, 94) acknowledges the introduction of the new themes by saying that 'without meeting the owner, you would think that the bed was owned by a woman, since the men use feminine colours that contradict gender stereotypes'. The space seems more feminine because of the tidiness and decoration that the dweller has used, such as the bedspread, which has been made neatly, the frames on the walls, and the clothes neatly hanging on the wall.

As much as colour photography has introduced new themes into the hostels, I argue that it is not the only method that shows the new themes. Sabelo Mlangeni is one photographer who has kept to photographing the hostels in black and white but has been able to introduce the themes of sexuality, femininity and homosexuality into how hostels are represented. Instead of using colour, Mlangeni has used certain devices which indicate a strong sense of intimacy. In the image below, we can see a man sitting on bed, where he is framed by the door frames. Because of this framing, the viewer is made to feel as if she is peeping into the intimate space.

His pose, sitting naked on the bed, presents a person who has let down their guard. There is a man who is standing to the left of the image with his hand on the shoulder of the man sitting on the bed. This interaction between the two further breaks the stereotype of heterosexual masculinity within the hostel, by showing two men interacting intimately in a private space.

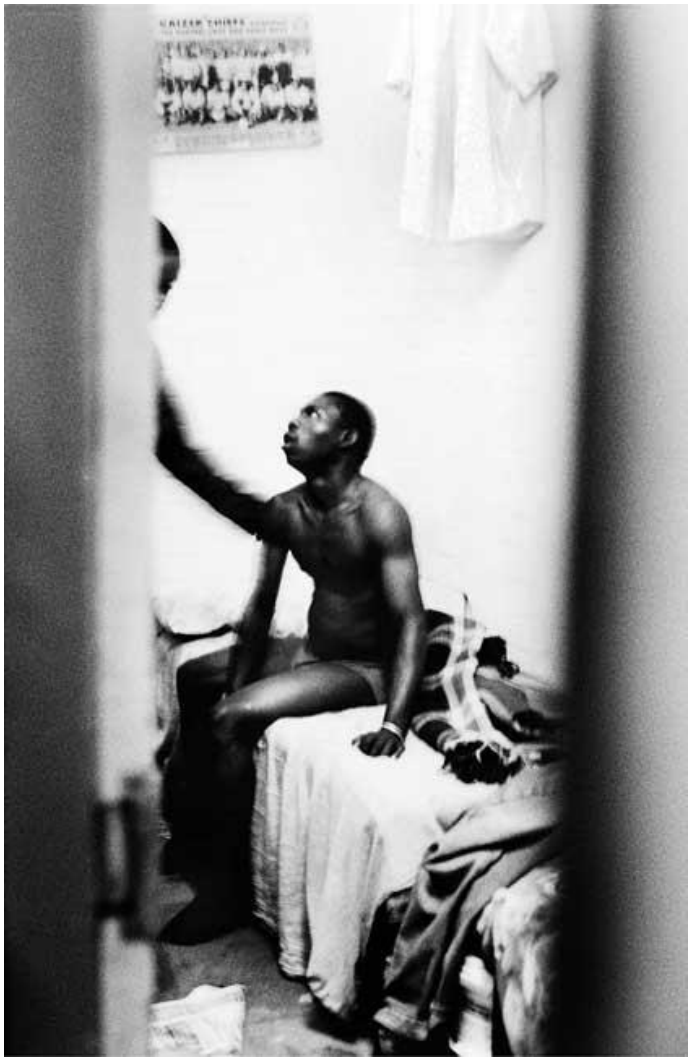

Figure 18 *Usbali visits the hostel, Men only series*, Johannesburg, 2008.
Photograph by Sabelo Mlangeni

Post-1994, more women photographers began emerging. As a result, women are entering the hostels and photographing them. Angela Buckland is one female photographer who has gone into the hostels. I am critical of her first project *Block A, Jacobs men`s hostel* because I feel her method of 'dedicating less than a minute and one film frame to each bed' (Buckland (sa):1) does not represent the hostels, as she never spent time engaging with the dwellers. I also sense that she might have been frightened by that environment, and would have wanted to

get out as soon as she could; revealing her position as an outsider. Intentionally or not, this approach also mimics how the hostel dwellers are not given time or recognition.



Figure 19: Angela Buckland, *BED #231 and BED 445; BLOCK A JACOB's MEN'S HOSTEL*, Johannesburg, 2002.
Photograph by Angela Buckland



Figure 20: *Mbatha Alice from Mtshezi, Pensioner Resident 34 years and Mrs Norah Hlambisa from Verulam, temporary domestic worker Resident 15 years*, Johannesburg, 2011.
Photograph by Angela Buckland

Buckland's latest project titled *Life inside the woman hostel* (2011) has a different sensibility. In Figure 20, you can see that she had spent more time with the occupants of each hostel room, allowing her to create a more 'just image' of the space. This is evident in her technical decisions, where she offers more detail views of the spaces: for example, the calendar hanging on the wall, the way the curtains are tied in a knot, the hand that sits under the chin of the lady sitting on the bed etc. Through these intimate details, the viewer is provided with more elements to engage with that may trigger memories, and spark more subjective reflexivity: for example, the kettle on the stove reminds me of my grandmother's house where we have to boil water on the stove for bathing. This is a tedious task, which my son is still experiencing when visiting his paternal grandparents in rural North West province. This makes me reflect on the lack of transformation in rural areas. The tied-up curtain symbolizes the restriction of movement created by the conditions of the hostels: prohibiting them from touching the ground and getting dirty: this may be a metaphor for the inability of people to

go home as often as they would like to, because of financial constraints. The wall also forms separation between the outside and the bed, which creates a division from the stove. In the effect of these images we see the evidence of photographic hybridity, where the separations show different scenes which represent different areas of the room, for example, bedroom and kitchen, which are all situated in one room, but do not overlap into each other. Buckland's photographs (Figure 19 and Figure 20) are captured vertically in portrait format leading to a scene that appears compressed. This approach is utilised in both her hostel projects. In so doing, the viewer is made aware of the small living spaces people occupy in the hostel. But unlike her initial project, Buckland has physically taken a step back when photographing the woman's hostel, and increased her depth of field, which allows her to include more detail in one photograph revealing details such as cloths hanging on the wall, next to which there is a locker; on the left side of the wall we are able to see a windowsill form where the light is coming from, this light is the same light that has lit the lady sitting on the bed; on the bed there is a newspaper and a pot. The act of widening her field of view to compose more detail in the frame is one of the indications that suggests that Buckland spent some time with the occupants leading to a desire to present a more 'just image' of the occupants/subjects of the photographs. Another indication of this familiarity with the subjects is that the photographer has presented the images in sharp focus (an effect of increased depth of field), and a more 'just' reflection of how the eye sees and experiences vision. A further sign of regard for her subjects is the use of brighter lighting and exposure than in her earlier project at men's hostels; in my mind it is as if the dark veil of the hostels has been lifted for this photographic artist.

Photographs of the hostels have evolved over the years, which has been directly influenced by the political landscape of South Africa. We are now in an era of re-imaging the hostels where photographers like myself are using these spaces to interrogate our own existence, not only historically but also personally.

In this chapter I investigated how hostels have been photographically represented over three periods of South African history. By doing this I have been able to identify how by providing a physical description of objects in the frame and that of the hostel may trigger the spiritual, which I explore in greater details in chapter 4. In the following chapter, I am foregrounding

the elements which make reference to the spiritual qualities of a ‘just image’ beginning with the theme of hybridity in Yto Barrada’s photographic work, where I draw on the concept of one’s subjectivity in the photograph, then Santu Mofokeng’s use of memory, and how it has the ability to trigger the viewer into relating with the image. Finally, I will reflect on my personal work.

Chapter 4 Personal Work

iHostela Ngeliny'iKhaya: Regarding Photography as a Just Image (2012-2017)

In this chapter I look at the process I have undertaken in completing my practical work for this dissertation, which has been presented as an exhibition comprised of multiple images that are in my view a 'just image' of South African migrant hostels. This journey includes my understanding of Barthes's (1980:70) notion of a 'just image', new knowledge attained during my investigations into photography theory; my position as a photographer; and a reflection on the stories I have encountered in the hostels. I will also be looking at Yto Barrada's theme of hybridity by making reference to her photographic project, *A Life Full of Holes: the Strait Project (*1998 - 2004) and Santu Mofokeng's project *Chasing Shadows* (2011), where I focus on the series of photographs taken at the *Mantsopa* caves.

In Barrada's work, I investigate how she utilises a theme of hybridity and how it relates to her personal experience. Understanding how hybridity and photography relate to each other is important: I believe that post-1994 documentary photography in South Africa can be considered as being practiced in certain 'hybrid' ways because it is no longer limited to recording macro-significant events, but reveals something of the intimate relationship between the photographer and the chosen subject. The form of 'truth'-telling afforded by this hybrid mode of practice is in my view one of the building blocks to understanding the 'just image' in relation to photographic works relating to the hostels.

I further link the theoretical function of memory to the concept of a 'just image' in photography by investigating how a 'just image' can evoke memory: referring to memory as an unseen but felt or 'rediscovered' dimension of a photograph (Barthes 1980:69); not physically present in the space that is photographed, rather a spiritual or subconscious aspect pervading the material photograph itself.

Yto Barrada and the Poetics of Hybridity

The aim of this section is to explore the theme of hybridity by making reference to Yto Barrada's photographic project: *A life full of holes: the strait project (*1998 - 2004), a body of work emerging from the photographers personal subjectivity in relation to North African migrants. The study of a case such as Barrada's is relevant to comprehending the field of hybrid post-1994 documentary photography in South Africa, where hybridity can be discerned in a move away from recording only macro-significant events, rather placing emphasis on the relationship between the photographer and the subject of the image.

Yto Barrada is such a hybrid 'truth'-telling photographer. Born in Paris and educated in Tangiers, Morocco, she later went to study photography at the International Centre of Photography, New York. Anderson (2015:15) comments that 'Barrada brings a western perspective to her art, though it is a perspective that is not western at all'. He further describes how 'having seen Western culture and eastern culture, Barrada is in a niche that allows her to look at both cultures from a critical first-hand view' (Anderson 2015:15-16).

Barrada uses her multicultural experience to engage 'the complex realities around her' (Demos 2006:60). In her project: *A Llife Full of Holes: the Strait Project* 1998-2004, she interrogates the history of Tangiers and its liberation after 1991 by documenting the lives of migrant workers in a manner that is personal, and as I will analyse, is a reflection of her thoughts and emotions on the issues of migrancy and hybridity. The project is also viewed as a reflection on migration globally and how this affects people's lives (Demos 2006:72).

Barrada (130:2011) refers to her photographs as exposing the 'metonymic character of the Strait'. Metonymy as a term is descriptive of hybridity: metonymy is defined as 'a figure of speech that consists of the use of the name of one object or concept for that of another to which it is related, or of which it is a part'(Online dictionary, 2017). In both hybridity and metonymy, fluidity and mutability are stressed. Yto Barrada uses the running waters of the Strait as a metaphor of urban migration and the new dichotomies that migration brings to the river, which has shaped urban Morocco along the river banks. A river can be a metaphor of

migration, where individuals are in movement between two countries.[17] One example of this is *Ceuta Crossing* (1999) (Figure 21).



Figure 21: *Ceuta border Bab Sebta, from the series: A Life Full of Holes: the Strait Project,* Tangier, 1998-2004
Photograph by Yto Barrada

This photograph has been created using a square format (characteristic of a camera such as a Hasselblad), and is shot in colour. The title 'Ceuta crossing' implies the location of a river crossing, and that these are river banks. A river can be seen as means of transport that brings or takes things away, it has the ability of connecting and separating the two pieces of land that are on either side of it, and is a fluid form, making it unstable and providing minimum security. On the left side of the frame, which forms part of the foreground, is a young man leaning against a dilapidated wall, facing the right side of the frame and looking down. He is in sharp focus, while the rest of the image is slightly out of focus, thus making him the focal point. His posture is relaxed, and he is not paying attention to what seems like frenetic movement happening beyond him. He is smoking, and is wearing camouflage clothing, suggesting that he may be a young soldier.

[17] In most cases people migrate to new countries for better economic or political opportunities. This may be considered as a positive move, but it has a negative impact as families are separated, and the migrants are often exposed to instability in the new country.

In the centre of the image, there are men running up a hill. It is unclear whether they are running away from something, or towards something. Out of focus in the very rear of the image there is a pair of men standing looking on at the scene. All major elements in the frame lead the viewer to crisscross the frame moving towards the outside of the frame: these elements include the everyday casual pose of the soldier, and the directionality of figures looking downhill, and those running towards the edge of the picture frame. This migratory composition encourages the viewers to locate themselves in the photograph: encouraging the viewer to vicariously 'occupy' the space, and imagine themselves in the role of a migrant refugee. The colours of the image are desaturated with soft contrast. The image has whitish/pale lighting and soft focus which offers a dream-like quality to the scene, which is in contrast to everyday reality. Barrada uses this technique in most of her images.



Figure 22: *Le Détroit, Boulevard Playa*, Tangier, 1998-2004.
Photograph by Yto Barrada

Le Détroit, Boulevard Playa, *Tangier* (2000) (Figure 22) is also a square photograph. Photographed from a high vantage point, it gives an overview of the scene which composes the theme of a river. The background has a group of people that are grouped in twos, walking towards the right side of the frame. Because of the high angle, we are denied the details of their personal identity. On the bottom right of the frame, there is someone facing outwards from the left side of the frame. The individual is holding a boat in their hand. Because of the angle, the boat is covering the identity of the individual.

The tar road in the middle ground forms the majority of the frame, a linear structure reminiscent of a river or strait – an impression aided by the model ship) – that separates the foreground and background. The two planes can be read as two separate worlds that are pulling at opposite ends, one is a world that is in constant movement and the other still. In the 'river of tar', is where the two worlds interact with each other, and it is in this simplified optical space that the viewer has the opportunity to reflect. An invisible line separating two scenes in one photograph is common in Barrada's images.



Figure 23: *Factory 1*, shrimp peeling in a facility in the Free Trade Zone, Tangier 1998-2004. Photograph by Yto Barrada

The dominant object in *Factory 1* (2004) (Figure 23) is a white padded ventilation duct that runs from the centre foreground through to the background-centre. This line is the dominant feature because it is strangely pillow-like, or soft like a river, forcing the viewer to focus on it first. The focus on the line is important because it splits the room into two and draws attention to the segregation and differentiation of cultures, a significant social factor in Tangier. On the left side of the line there is a supervisor walking up the isle with their hands behind their back. This figure is a representation of the authorities governing the country. In my view, it also represents the way segregation continues to be policed in the world today. In this representation of an authoritarian figure, I recognise numerous critics that have a problem with my hybrid status and that are continuously policing how I speak isiZulu or English. [18]

Barrada's images foreground the ambiguity of identity in Morocco. The way in which the structure of the photographs resonates with hybrid subjectivities, such as my own, reveals that she has included a personal perspective in the photograph. She is able to do this by not being literally in her photographs. Instead, she photographs in a manner that poses rhetorical questions that the viewer has to answer for themselves. I have always felt the need to express my dual status when talking about my work, and the purpose of my photographing in the hostel. However this purpose has proved problematic to embed in my images. Barrada's compositional mechanism of questioning has assisted me in rectifying this. The approach she uses that has been most useful for me is the dividing river metaphor or metonymy, which is either represented as an open space, or linear architectural elements that divide the photographic compositions; a device that prompts the viewer to interrogate the congruity of the image and the social systems they represent. The fluid nature of a river represents more than a dividing metaphor or metonymy. It reminds me of the fluid culture of the hostel, where

[18]From my experience and being exposed to both black and white people, I have found myself labelled as a person who is either too white for the isiZulu speaking individuals because of my accent, pronouncing of words and living in the suburbs, or too black for the English speaking people as I do not associate with their customs or culture. This has not been limited to my personal life but also in University, where one mentor during a critique session mentioned it's not possible for me to relate to the hostel dwellers because I am 'educated', and I speak 'well', meaning I speak English with a good accent. He could not imagine me mingling with the residents at an intimate level. To this I responded that the only reason I have chosen to give my presentation in English and in an academic tone was to accommodate my audience. Outside the university walls and structures, I speak four vernacular languages and I am connected with the culture of black South Africans. The ability to mingle in both social terrains is indicative of my hybridity.

people are constantly moving in and out of the space, because the space is utilised as temporary.

Because of the communal and temporary nature of the hostel, the residents are exposed to diverse individuals from all walks of life: chiefs, sangomas, taxi drivers, students, mothers, nurses etc. In short a cross-pollination of cultures. The hostel is also a space that unites 'men' who have come to work in the cities, or the mines; yet in this fluid union, it also separated them from their families, who stand on the far banks of the migratory river, a lost home.



Figure 24: *Baba'ngobese's nursery*, Merafe hostel Johannesburg, 2012-2017.
Photograph by Nocebo Bucibo.

I photographed Figure 24 in the late afternoon as the sun was setting, which was a first for me as I am usually not in the hostel beyond 17:00pm.[19] As I was walking around the hostel I met u*Baba`Ngobese*, who has a plant nursery within *Merafe* hostel. This encounter led to this photograph. In the foreground of the image there are flowers, which make up the majority of

[19] The reasons why I would leave before 17:00 is because I, firstly did not feel safe being there in the evenings, secondly being a mother, I had to make my way to pick up my son from day care, cook supper and spend time with him. Thirdly by this time most of the men, I was spending time with were dispersing and going back to their rooms.

the scene. In the middle ground of the image there is a pole that runs up and stops just before the top of the frame. At the top of the pole, there is a head-like structure that has electrical lines attached to it, which run to the different ends of the frame. In the background there are housing structures that run horizontally across the frame. In the top layer of the image the sky is represented with four electrical lights that shine and resonate across the background.

The numerous lines found on the upper level of the frame are going off into different directions. The manner in which these lines part represents, in my mind, that the people living in theses spaces come from different parts of the country, yet they are all centred in one place, represented by the central pole.

There is a separation between the hostel structures in the background and flowers in the foreground, creating three different scenes within the scene. The first being the hostel structures. The viewer is likely able to vicariously locate themselves within the hostel buildings in the distance that form a cage like square, closing in the life and activities. The second scene is that of the flower-scape. This represents, in my mind, the gentler side of life in the hostel, such as the comradeship amongst the men, and the laughs of little children playing. The third scene is the twinkling lights in the distance, which reference in my mind–like the biblical scene of the three wise men following the guiding star to the birth of Christ–a sense of promise: that all individuals, even myself, all outsiders may find peace and solace in the hybrid 'constellation' of the hostel.

I must digress away from the analysis of Figure 24 momentarily to explain an important aspect of my physical practice. While I set up my tripod to take the photograph, a technique I use to slow down my pace, allowing me to engage with the subjects and surroundings, I am also afforded the time to mentally switch between my African and western influences dependent on the conversations and atmospheres I find myself in, a characteristic of my hybrid practice and subjectivity. During this time, my interaction will include informal interviews and discussions. From my personal experience, group discussions work especially well when dealing with people who already reside in the hostels, because they are comfortable when there are other residents participating in the discussions.

Taking this time to get to know my subject, and my own stance within the given context is important because it facilitates a 'just' knowledge, where my subjects glimpse me as a person within their sphere, not an 'objective' photographer. They see a young black woman, and therefore I follow traditional African protocol. An example of this will be to first greet them, state who I am and who my parents are, and where I come from:

Sauwbona, mina ngi'nguMa'Nyati, uNocebo Bucibo. Ngizalwangu Themba, noNonhlanhla Bucibo, uMa'shenge' [Hello, I am maNyati (Clan name), my name is Nocebo Bucibo, I am the daughter of Themba and Nonhlanhla Bucibo, whose maiden clan name is Shenge (Buthelezi)].

Because this greeting is done outside the person's home, this process is called *uGuzibiga*, which means to introduce oneself. In some cases I needed a male mediator to talk on my behalf to the male residents, since some of the men are not open to talking to me directly.

When I photograph I face issues of gender, race, age and the difference between my adopted Western culture and the traditional Zulu culture, all of which I have to tackle differently depending on the individual, or situation I am faced with at the time. The practice of *uGuzibiga*, during the period of my set-up, and a mind-set of respecting the space, and the individuals therein have allowed me to overcome many of the issues raised above.

My conversation with baba'Ngobese was centred on his reasons for having a nursery in the hostel. My knowledge of Zulu/ black men is that they are difficult and 'hard-headed', so I never expected to see an elderly man nurturing a delicate object such as a flower in such a masculine environment. He explained that he decided to grow flowers because he grew up loving flowers, and to make money. He sells his flowers at the flower market, which helps him provide for his family back home. He further commented that 'he loves flowers because they are a symbol of love, and that he loves gifting his wife with flowers'. These two scenes (flowers and hostel dwellings) sit as juxtaposed objects that oppose each other. The flowers are a representation of something soft, delicate, living, and associated with femininity and love (as expressed by baba'Ngobese), whereas the hostel structures have been stereotyped as

masculine, and violent in the media (Lotter 1997:98). Meanwhile the truth in this image, which I believe to be a 'just image' in its process and output is the representation of a reality that is between these two perceptions, a new hybrid reading of the hostel space. In my mind, this photograph represents the *heart* of the hostel that beats within the body, which is represented by the walls. I credit this as the first 'just image' of the hostels that I have created, a fruition of all that I have been working towards thus far.

A large part of achieving my goal to produce 'just images' of the hostels, involves the acknowledgment of my position as a photographer, an outsider, a voyeur. One of the first experiments I attempted in my process, and which I later reconsidered in light of my exploration of a 'just image', was to stop shooting on a tripod. The reason for this was that I wanted to shoot from impulse, and respond spontaneously to the situations around me. To an extent, this meant that I did not have time to plan my shots in too posed or pre-planned a way. I was also hoping that by doing this, I would change the tempo in my work to a slightly faster pace that could engage with moments that were especially striking to me. Figure 25 is an example of a photograph taken using the process of shooting from impulse, where I responded to the environment and the situation. When shooting in spontaneous hand-held mode, the environment 'speaks' to me, my heart beats faster because I have one chance to capture the image, and in that moment I do not have the time to over-think composition, exposure etc. The images that result from these sessions are different because I am not shooting from my understanding or beliefs at that moment, I am simply reacting to my environment. The 'truths' that emerge from these encounters are more immediate and situated in the moments. However, it lacks some of the spiritual 'justice' I hope to gain from decisive moments experienced at the hostel. I explain this difference below.



Figure 25: *Boy Running with Scoobydoo teddy bear*, Merafe Hostel, Johannesburg, 2000. Photograph by Nocebo Bucibo.

When I took the above photograph (Figure 25), I was standing in the tuck-shop waiting in the queue to purchase a cold drink when I saw this boy running towards my direction. I anticipated his response and brought my camera to my eye and waited for him to run past me, as he did I pressed the shutter and he carried on running into the distance. Shooting in this mode was exhilarating, because I had only one opportunity to frame the image, get the correct exposure and to get his face to turn towards the camera. Yet, as much as it was exhilarating, I was also frustrated by the fact that I had not connected with the boy: I did not know his name, where he got the *Scoobydoo* teddy bear, where he was from, or where he was going. As a result of this frustration I decided to steer away from purely spontaneous modes of photography in the hostel, because it did not give me the opportunity to engage at the level where I can understand and represent a truth or 'justness' that is present in the hostel.

Santu Mofokeng and Memory

In this sub-section I link the theoretical function of memory to the concept of a 'just image' in photography: referring to memory as an unseen but felt or 'rediscovered' dimension of a photograph (Barthes 1980:69). This dimension is not physically present in the space that is photographed, but is rather a spiritual or subconscious aspect pervading the material photograph itself, through the intervention of the mind of the viewer in relation to the trace. I examine this spiritual 'justice' by making reference to Santu Mofokeng's project *Chasing Shadows* (2011), where I focus on the series of photographs taken at the *Mantsopa* caves.

I choose memory as one of my themes because my initial interest in the hostels was sparked by the memory of growing up in Thokoza in the 1990`s. One of the memories I have was when my parents made us all sleep on the floor of our house, to avoid being shot by stray bullets in the middle of the night. I can only remember snippets of these memories, which play back in my mind in the way that a still photograph reveals a snippet of time. After reading *Camera Lucida* (1980), I realised that Barthes's search for a 'just image' of his mother was also initiated by the memory that he had of her. His subjective memory of her is what guided him to finding a 'just image' of her **(**1980:63-72).[20]

My perspective on the hostels has taken a shift since I began my Master's research: from a negative attitude, towards a more positive one. This shift may be attributed to my age and exposure to information, as well as the conscious integration of hybridity I discussed in Chapter 4. My early experience at six or seven years of age made me impressionable: for example I was instructed to avoid playing around the hostels because it was perceived as dangerous. Today I am older, and I can venture into the hostel to form my own understanding

[20]Barthes refers to the Winter Garden photograph as 'a just image' of his mother, when he reflects on this image he says 'for once photography gave me a sentiment as certain as remembrance, just as Proust experienced it one day when, leaning over to take off his boots, there suddenly came to him his grandmother's true face, 'whose living reality I was experiencing for the first time, in an involuntary and complete memory.' (70)

of the space, and create photographs that express a 'just image' of the hostels in my own understanding.

I understand that a 'just image' is a photograph that allows one to remember something in a special or singular way. Before Barthes found the 'winter garden photograph' (1980:63-69) he looked through a set of images and comments that 'none seemed to me really "right": Neither as a photographic performance nor as a living resurrection of the beloved face' (1980:64). Having been raised in the Roman Catholic Church, the first thing that comes to mind is the biblical story of the resurrection of Jesus, where, after his crucifixion, he resurrected from the dead: meaning he came back to life. In a similar way, a 'just image' is a photograph that brings back to life something that is past, or now dead, and allows one to relive a memory of a particular event or time in history, even if you have not yourself been there before, as I will explain below.

My research is looking specifically at memory as the viewer's ability to participate in the experience of different events in hostel life, through photographic triggers of memory. At the same time, Susan Sontag (2002:81) suggests that 'memory is individual, irreproducible - it dies with each person', meaning that memory is different with each individual and two people will not remember or 'resurrect' an event in the same manner. Once a person dies his/her interpretation of the event dies along with them. For example, gogo`Thembi, who lived in *Mshaya'zafe* hostel, Thokoza, passed away in 2015. Her memories of living in the hostel have died with her. However, before she died I managed to take photographs of her and her space: by doing so, I managed to retain some trace of her experience, if not her memories. Figure 26 is an example of an image that attempts to do 'justice' to the memory of an individual.



Figure 26: *Veza'ulimi*, *Mshaya'zafe hostel, Thokoza,* 2012-2017.
Photograph by Nocebo Bucibo.

Figure 26 was taken at *Mshaya'zafe* hostel in Thokoza where gogo'Thembi lived with her daughters and grandchildren. The open door on the left side of the frame is the entrance to her unit. On this particular day she was performing a virginity testing ritual at her house. The majority of the girls being tested do not reside in the hostel as they come from the rest of the township and other Johannesburg areas. This image preserves an aspect of the memory of her presence and functions, and her memories or experiences giving protection to many girls. This is evident in the high camera angle where it seems as though she is watching over the girls, and the activist role she played in preserving traditional customs in the city and empowering the girl child. Her absence in the image further echoes her guardian angel role (*idlozi)*. Whilst the testing is taking place, men come from both the township and hostel to witness the event, but they are not allowed to touch or speak to the girls because gogo'Thembi does not allow it and there are serious consequences for such. Therefore the girls walk freely with no fear of being sexually assaulted whilst in gogo'Thembi`s territory. Pierre Norra`s (1998:5) theory that 'any place, object, action, or condition is a potential realm of memory', enriches the view that the value attributed by hostel dwellers to certain aspects

of the hostels is significant for how my focus on these aspects can be asserted in a way which triggers similar values for the viewer. I have chosen to show some ambiguity in my photographs, where it is not always clearly established that the photographs are taken in the hostel. Therefore, the hostel itself does not dominate the images, rather the lives that occupy them are my focus. I have done this so that the viewer is able to relate to the subjects and spaces in their own way, unimpeded by perceptions of place, with the hope that the images can evoke memory from the specific trajectory of the viewer.

I was able to create personal and intimate images of gogo`Thembi and other hostel dwellers, and the spaces that preserve their memories, and may evoke those of others because of my decision to build relationships with them. The relationships I built with hostel-dwellers have been a great source of knowledge about life and changes in the hostels. Two important connections I have made in these spaces are as indicated above with gogo'Thembi, and a man named Sihle Mvelase. Both these individuals are respected *ndunas*[21] in two separate hostels. My relationship with them, as indicated in the introduction to this dissertation, started in 2010 and has continued beyond this Master's research.

Having both gogo'Thembi and Sihle Mvelase by my side has opened doors that have allowed me access to different individuals living in the hostels, and the different practices that take place in the space. They have both played crucial parts in this project. For example, I have had to educate u*Sihle* more about photography and explain in great detail what my thesis is about, so that he can explain my presence in the space and be an interpreter between myself and the hostel dwellers: especially in situations where I have not been allowed to engage with the men, because I am a woman. Respecting the hostel customs and trusting the process of involving uSihle to the degree that I have, is important because it allowed me to insight into the hostels that go beyond the obvious dimension of the hostel. The following images are taken from the *Ikaya,lam 2010* series.

[21] An *nduna* is a headman of a village, he is similar to a president. In the villages they are in charge of resolving conflict, assigning land to the people, officiating marriages and any other issues that need their council. This system has been adopted in the hostels, where the *nduna* is the 'go to' person regarding issues pertaining the hostel, example allocating units, collecting rent resolving conflict and providing council to the people.



Figure 27: *Inja and Tokoloshi*, Merafe hostel Johannesburg, 2010.
Photograph by Nocebo Bucibo.

My main frustration with this project was that, the more time I spent in the hostel, the more I came to realise that there is so much more that goes beyond the brick walls and the beds of these spaces. I was getting exposed to the sounds, smells, atmosphere and 'aura' of the hostel. This was not physical but rather what I describe as spiritual attributes, which may trigger one's memory in a particular direction. Meanwhile, I was being introduced to the concept of presence and absence in photography, which I struggled to articulate until I read *Camera Lucida* in 2012.

As a result of the relationships I have forged in the hostels, I have been granted access into areas where most individuals are not allowed. I have also used the theoretical knowledge I have gained to articulate my new experience of the physical structure and spiritual attributes of the hostels both in my writing and practice. I took advantage of this to capture images that don't only focus on the hostel structure, and activities, but attempt to integrate more of the spiritual aspects of the space, such as the comradery amongst dwellers.

In my decision not to foreground the hostel architecture in my images, one might argue that the disadvantage of using memory is that remembering goes hand in hand with forgetting: certain information can either be left out or exaggerated, which creates and informs false memories. As Edward S .Casey (2000:8) writes: 'Forgetting is the primary other of memory'.

Here I quote Okakura Kakuzo (1863 - 1913) (cited in Benfey 2003:85) as I feel that this specific quote embodies and explains my choice of using memory as a theme in my art making, who states that 'art is a product of past history combined with present conditions; it develops from this fusion of past and present'. In order to evoke memory, the photograph has to address the following themes: resurrection, time, presence and absence. It is within these tensions that I see a kernel of 'truth' that is made accessible in and through photography. Indeed, Barthes (1980:70-71) attributes a very singular form of truth to the image captured by the photographic process.

He explains that a photograph 'does not call up the past.... The effect it produces upon me is not to restore what has been abolished (by time, by distance) but to attest that what I see has indeed existed' (Barthes 1980:82). Therefore, a 'just image' affirms that the object in the frame, or event photographed, took place and existed, thus speaking about the reality and truth that was. Barthes (1980:76-77) confirms this by saying 'Photography can never deny that the thing has been there. There is a superimposition here: of reality on the past. And since this constraint exists only for photography we must consider it by reduction, as the very essence, the noeme of photography'. Barthes (1980:77) refers to photography's noeme as 'that–has-been' which he defines as '[W]hat I see has been here, in this place which extends between infinity and the subject (*operator* or *spectator*); it has been here, and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely irrefutably present, and yet already deferred'.

One photographer who utilises the theme of memory in ways which speak to a special or even sacred form of truth is Santu Mofokeng. Mofokeng is a South African photographer who was born in Soweto, Johannesburg in 1956. Mofokeng worked as a street photographer until he finished his high schooling, and got a job at a pharmaceutical laboratory. During his time at the laboratory, he joined the Afrapix collective in 1985. Afrapix was a photographic collective

that was started in the 1980`s in South Africa, as a resistance movement (McConaghy (sa):7). Whilst he was a member of Afrapix, he was hired as a staff photographer for *New Nation* (Mofokeng 2000:39).

Mofokeng's style of working can be described as that which has a slow tempo: by this I mean he spends time within the spaces he worked, unlike the Bang Bang club's method of 'get in get out' as discussed in Chapter 3. This was different to many of his colleagues, who were photographing struggle photographs which were violent and showed conflict. Mofokeng states that 'Bullets flying, I don't function in those situations' (Mofokeng 2011:40). Rather, Mofokeng turned his camera to everyday quotidian moments. In an interview with Hayes, Badsha and Xakaza, Mofokeng (2011: 41) states that:

> [I]n terms of the idiosyncrasies of life in the eighties whereby we want to show that apartheid is bad, I`m making pictures of ordinary life. Football, shebeen, daily life….When the world becomes tired of seeing… sjamboks or whatever, they come to you and start to ask, what is daily life like?

'What is not in the photograph is in the memory, mind, there is no violence, it is what you know that is violent' (Mofokeng cited in Diserens 2011: 94). This was Mofokeng's comment to a question about how he defines 'heavy' and 'light' memories. He made this comment with reference to the 1960 Sharpeville shooting, Vlakplaas, the CCB and the human brutality that took place in these institutions and places, where in most cases the victims were tortured and killed, and their bodies or graves remain unknown. When he visited some of these places he found that they were serene and tranquil. He describes them as being peaceful, and showed no signs of violent action (Mofokeng cited in Diserens 2011:94).

His statement regarding the mental awareness of that which is *not* in the photograph is important to my research. As Mofokeng notes (cited in Diseren 2011:94), when people see his landscape photographs they refer to them as being beautiful. His response is that the word 'beautiful' has to be interrogated to find its meaning because the landscapes might have a negative interpretation: 'If I know someone who drowned in this space, for me it is not beautiful' (Mofokeng cited in Diserens, 2011:94). Therefore, the presence or absence of characteristics in the photograph receives different responses from various people depending

on their past experience and memories, or the knowledge they have. Both presence and absence have the ability to revive memory in photography.

One of the photographs from Mofokeng's cave series, which I consider as a 'just image' in the action of presence and absence, is *Eyes-Wide-Shut* (1996*)* which is a portrait of his late brother Ishmael. This title alone gives an indication of both absence and presence, without having analysed the photograph. It does this by referring to eyes that are simultaneously open and closed, present and absent: in between these two modes of sight, a 'just image' is formed.



Figure 28: *Eyes-Wide Shut,* Motouleng, 2004.
Photograph by Santu Mofokeng.

In *Eyes-Wide-Shut* (2004), Ishmael is sitting in the foreground of the image, captured in extreme focus, while the background is blurry. His body is sitting facing the left side of the frame with his face turned towards the camera. The camera is positioned at eye level with the subject, and the expression on his face shows signs of tiredness and of being worn out. This sense of him is exacerbated by a strongly visible scar on his face. This is a starkly intense black and white photograph, a treatment that is common with Mofokeng's work. His choice of not using colour does not lead the viewer to a specific focal point; Mofokeng (cited in

Diserens 2011: 46) comments on his use of black and white by saying 'it allows ... it doesn't tell you what. You have to put in yourself; you can even meditate on the image'. Despite him not using colour to draw attention to a specific focal point, he does use other techniques, such the use of sharp and soft focus or shallow depth of field, which assists in creating ambiguous objects in the frame. His use of the ambiguous title regarding eyes draws the viewers' attention to the figure's eyes, which are also ambiguous, neither open or closed at one glance, an aberration that makes him look inhuman, evoking something of the spiritual.

The ambiguity in the image is not only found in the title, and the eyes, but also in the blurry figures in the background. We are unable to tell the identity of the figures, or whether they are human or ghosts: they are both present and absent. The subjects are moving towards the exit on the right side of the frame. These figures are positioned on either side of the sitter's head forming a frame around him. Because of the halo-like frame created by the two figures, the viewers' attention is again pointed to the face, and the ghostly effect of the eyes that are simultaneously open and closed.

The second attribute that evokes memory is resurrection which is explained as the 'bringing to life' of something that has died. By looking at the photograph of his brother, his memory is brought back to life. I believe that this portrait is of Mofokeng's *Dlozi*, which is an ancestor who might not be physically on earth but their spirit lives amongst the people. Therefore this photograph may function as symbolic of Santu Mofokeng's spiritual guide. In the African culture it is believed that the ancestor's spirit is able to live within an existing individual.



Figure 29: *iDlozi'lam,Mshaya'zafe* hostel Thokoza, 2013.
Photograph by Nocebo Bucibo.

In my own photograph (Figure 29), the scene of a virginity testing is framed by the peeling walls of the hostel. The walls both represent the security of participating in this practice, and the strict cultural rules and customs that may be seen as 'backward'.

This is a photograph I chose to take in colour because of the earthy tones against the glowing white of her veil that may be read as angelic and the deep red of the skirt that represents the feminine. There is a window above the subjects that is letting through a light that has created a spiritual scene: this is because of the glow of light created. I was sitting down when taking this photograph. I chose to do so because I wanted to be on the same level and not show superiority over the subject: This was also a way of honouring Mama'Thembi's instruction of not photographing from the front, and a sign of respecting the practice. There are blankets on the ground, with four people sitting on them. The girl to the right is sitting with her back to me. She is wearing a chiffon shawl that is covering her upper body. The light from the window has made the chiffon seem as though the woman is almost angelic: *iDlozi*[22]. In front

[22] Ancestor

of her, there is a woman sitting with her head leaning against the wall with eyes closed, the light is hitting her forehead, but because of the glare we are unable to see her clearly. It is as if she is in a trance, and is mesmerized by the 'angel' in front of her. To the right there is a girl lying on her back. She is bare breasted, with her face looking at the angel to her left. She is wearing a red traditional skirt which is the only high contrasted colour in the image. The colour red reminds me of the images I witnessed from the window of my father's car, when driving past the hostel of men wearing red scarves on their foreheads and weapons marked with the same material. This was used to identify the IFP supporters and was believed to be a means of protection. The same red skirt is metaphoric for the female menstrual cycle.

In front of her, there is a woman sitting facing the lady on the left: her left hand is facing up and is open, as if she is talking with her hands. The glare has lit her face so that we are unable to see her facial expression.

The scene is definitively enclosed by the peeling walls of the hostel. The walls both represent the security of participating in this practice and the opposing of strict cultural rules and customs that may be seen as 'backward': for example, before witnessing the testing and speaking to the girls, I strongly believed that this practice was an infringement on the rights of the girls. I also believed that the testers violated the girls by inserting their fingers to verify the girl's status. Because of these beliefs I strongly advocated for the practice to be stopped and that it had no place in society and in the 21st century.

After spending time with the girls I learnt that they are proud to partake in this practice as it provides them with security. For example, one girl mentioned that she chose to partake in this practice despite it not being part of her family's customs because she wanted to avoid peer pressure of having sex at the age of 13: all of her friends were already sexually active. Another incident was when a girl, 6 years of age had been raped by her uncle who threatened to kill her if she told anyone. She was tested and found to have lost her virginity, at this point she told them what happened and a case was opened against him. The ladies performing the testing stand as physicians that educate the girls about sexual health, they

also have an open-door policy where girls can come talk to them about issues they can't disclose to their parents.

Conclusion

This thesis explores the fieldwork processes and theoretical information that I have used to realise Barthes's (1980:70) notion of a 'just image' in relation to South African migrant hostels. Earlier, I categorised Barthes's (1980:70) discourse into three tiers, which are the physical description present in the image; the representational function of photography in these spaces; and the psychological, or even spiritual, effect of the spaces. From the unpacking of the tiers it became evident that a 'just image' is one that is both objective and subjective. The objective is concerned with the description of the different elements in the image: for example, their position in the frame in relation to each other, camera angles, colour, tones, body language, etc. Meanwhile, the subjective aspect is triggered by the photographer's, and viewer's reading of these elements, and interpretation of them in a manner that is personal– a spiritual understanding that encompasses aspects of reception such as memory.

I would like to further conclude this dissertation with reference to my exhibition practice. On the 3rd of March 2018 I opened my exhibition at *The Workers Museum*, in partnership with the City of Johannesburg. I was looking for a space which would link to the hostels. My initial plan was to have the exhibition in *Merafe* hostel, but I decided to do this at a later stage in favour of my plans to integrate artistic production and hostel experience in ever more specific ways, which I discuss in more detail towards the end of this chapter

For this exhibition, I approached numerous spaces, including the Chamber of Mines, where I was directed to *The Workers Museum* in Newtown Johannesburg. The museum is:

> [O]ne of the last surviving examples of municipal compounds for black male workers. The City Council built the compound in 1913 to house migrant workers who worked first for the Sanitary Department and then at the nearby power station. The men who lived in this compound were some of the many thousands of migrant workers who were recruited through informal and formal channels from throughout Southern Africa to work on the mines and in towns and factories (Newtown Heritage Trail 2010).

The museum is an ideal space to hang the contemporary photographic exhibition of the hostels, as it sits juxtaposed with the historical site, allowing viewers to travel back in history

to relive and experience hostel life, my body of work offers reflection and provokes commentary on the hostels today.

The exhibition is placed in the main hall of the museum which is shaped as a rectangle with two windows along the long side of the room, offering a break at the wall and two doors at the opposite wall. Because of the breaks in the wall I was able to segment the wall space into ten sections, allowing to hang the work in a way that gives each photograph its own room for close looking.

The exhibition opening was attended by peers, lecturers, municipality staff, family, friends and hostel dwellers. I organised transport to bring my guests from *Merafe* hostel so they could be a part of my exhibition opening and see the final product of the work I have been doing over the past years. I would have loved to organise transport for the other hostels but due to financial constraints I was unable to. I plan on organising more exhibitions of these photographs where I will invite the other hostels.

When speaking to the guests, many reflected on emotions that the exhibition gave them, further commenting about the physical reaction they got from the exhibition: Goosebumps, tears, and smiles. This response to the images makes reference to the third dimension of the photograph which is the 'spiritual' and is triggered by the different elements in the photograph.

The photographs were also curated in particular groupings to convey certain experiences of being in the hostel. In the earlier stages of my project (see Figure 25), I had been shooting vertically, which caused me some frustration because it limited the breadth of structure and detail I was able to depict. The orientation did not allow me to capture sufficient triggers to activate the subjective or spiritual 'justice' in a reading. As a result I went in search of ways to

extend my frame to include the different elements that were taking place all around me, and not just in front of the camera.



Figure 31: *something + nothing*, 2013.
Photograph by Stephen Shore

During my search for different methods of extending the frame, I came across Stephen Shore's exhibition titled *something + nothing* (2013). The exhibition is a combination of his old and new projects, for example, *American surfaces* (1972 - 1973) *Abu Dhabi* (2009), *Israel* (2010) and *Ukraine* (2012). What stood out for me about this exhibition is how he places multiple single images from the different series, in juxtaposed positions according to size and category, rather than chronologically, resulting in them being read as a new image. Figure 31 above is an example of Shore's exhibition layout.

I chose to adopt Shore's style to extend the reach of my photographs beyond the physical 'justice' portrayed. The result of this is the grouping of images below (Figure 32).



Figure 32: *Amawele*, Johannesburg, 2000.
Photograph by the author

My intention in this correlation of images was to show the twins, Simphiwe and Nathi Mshengu, looking out of their shared unit and viewing what is happening in the hostel and the city's skyline. I printed the images as single photographs that hang next to each other in a triptych format to achieve the effect of extending my frame. The frame extends as the men look into the concrete jungle that is both dilapidated, and indicates endless possibilities. The repetition of bricks symbolise the many people moving into the hostels. The engraving of the word 'mom' suggests something of homesickness. Whilst they are in the city they have to focus on the work at hand so they may provide for their families back home. The photograph thus speaks of the current conditions, and also the future that awaits them as black South African men, with new policies of land being implemented, where the sky rise building indicate a glimpse of hope, where they might own more land in the city and no longer have to share a small space.

One combination I experimented with (and has been temporarily set aside for a future exhibition), Figure 33, I printed two images that show both the inside and outside of the nursery school, which is inside Diepkloof hostel. Unlike Figure 32, this is printed as one image. In order to create a single image, I manipulated the image by making use of photographic

software, a technical example of a ‘hybrid’ photographic process further to shooting practices; in service of the creation of a ‘just image’ . Making use of the inside and outside combination, makes reference to my status of both outside and insider to the hostels. My insider status stems from growing up close to the hostels in Thokoza in the early 1990`s and the close relationships built with the people living in the hostels in my adult life. However I am still considered an outsider as I have never lived in the hostel and after each visit I return home.



Figure 33*: um’zwinki*, Diepkloof hostel, Johannesburg, 2012-2018.
Photograph by Nocebo Bucibo

I had planned on utilising the triptych approach – the one in Figure 32, for the rest of the project until the Tierney fellowship critique sessions, where my methods were challenged; and following reading up on Yto Barrada’s use of separation to create hybrid photographic triggers for viewer interpretation (spiritual justice). During the fellowship session I was challenged to shoot horizontally as a method to extend my photographic frame without the literal combination of different images in order to enhance my vigilance regarding what is happening around me, and pay attention to what is in my viewfinder. The reason given for this was that it will allow me to include two scenes within one image. I took on this challenge

and began photographing horizontally and researching ways of incorporating two scenes in on image.



Figure 34: *Bazilile* , Diepkloof hostel, Johannesburg, 2012-2018.
Photograph by Nocebo Bucibo

Once I read up on Yto Barrada and her hybrid status of being raised in two countries with different cultures and its influence on her work (the examples I cited in Chapter Four described the use of objects that run across the frame to create segregation or the use of invisible lines between two juxtaposed plain, to create images that make commentary on migrancy), I began to experiment with the same technique. Figure 34 was taken at gogo'Thembi`s unit the week she passed away. Photographing in her home was difficult for me as I had to deal with mixed emotions of loss and gratefulness, because I got to learn a lot from her. I wanted to express these emotions and capture the different activities that where taking place, that day. To achieve this, I captured three scenes in one image. Similar to Barrada, my scenes are separated by architectural or physical structures and lines. The first delineation is the view of the exterior through the door, where the viewer is shown the rest of the hostel; the second delineation of the image is of the child sleeping on the couch with the family chicken; and the third delineation is of the figure on the left side of the frame who

is represented as a silhouette, where one cannot tell the identity of the figure–an ambiguous object, similar to Santu Mofokeng's approach of photographing objects that are unclear. The figure in the image is sweeping stuff to the centre of the room, this action for me symbolises the end of my visual narrative of gogo`Thembi. I have recollected all the memories and time spent with her over the past years, and reflected on this in my thesis and exhibition, so represented by the pile of stuff on the floor centre. The child sleeping on the couch is a symbol of rest, peace and comfortability, which speaks to how the people living in the hostel have made this space their home away from home, despite the historical backround and inhumane conditions of the space. The hostel provides them with shelter in the city, where they are able to retreat to at the end of the day, instead of sleeping on the streets.

I feel that the final images selected for the culmination of this research report present a 'just image' of the South African migrant hostel. They are not only concerned with the physical structure of the hostels but also include the spiritual. This is achieved by making use of my subjectivity, observational objectivity and image manipulation. This project was strongly dependent on my hybrid identity of being exposed to both Western and African culture and teachings as it allowed me to form strong relationships with the people living in the hostel. This has resulted in me gaining access to intimate information and areas not open to all. My status has also enabled me to share my information in seminars, workshops, and group exhibitions. I have grappled with this status growing up, and this thesis has allowed me to confront it and use it to my advantage to assist in the completion of this thesis.

However, in the future I believe that further exhibitions will enhance the project, by offering spaces for more comment on the 'just image' as a medium of intimacy and spiritual connection; a document of love in the relationships that the historical city walls bring about. I intend on showing work within the hostel walls, made available to the viewing public. I will also host workshops with the hostel residents and scholars, where I present my images and written research to them to get their views on the project. In this way, I hope to integrate multiple experiences, and allow residents both inside and outside of the hostels to communicate, or even find common understanding.

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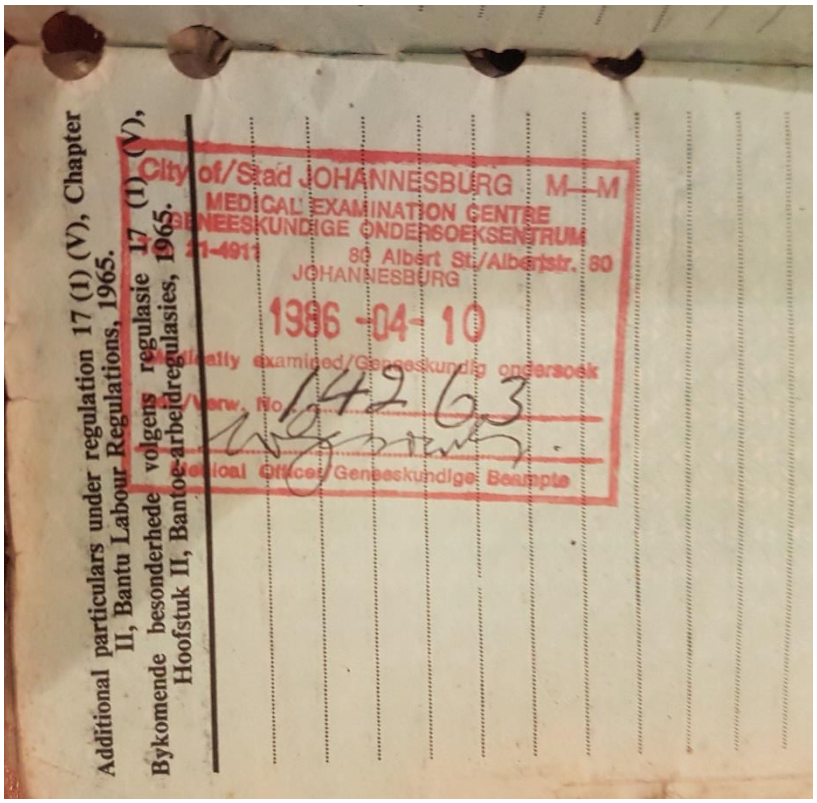
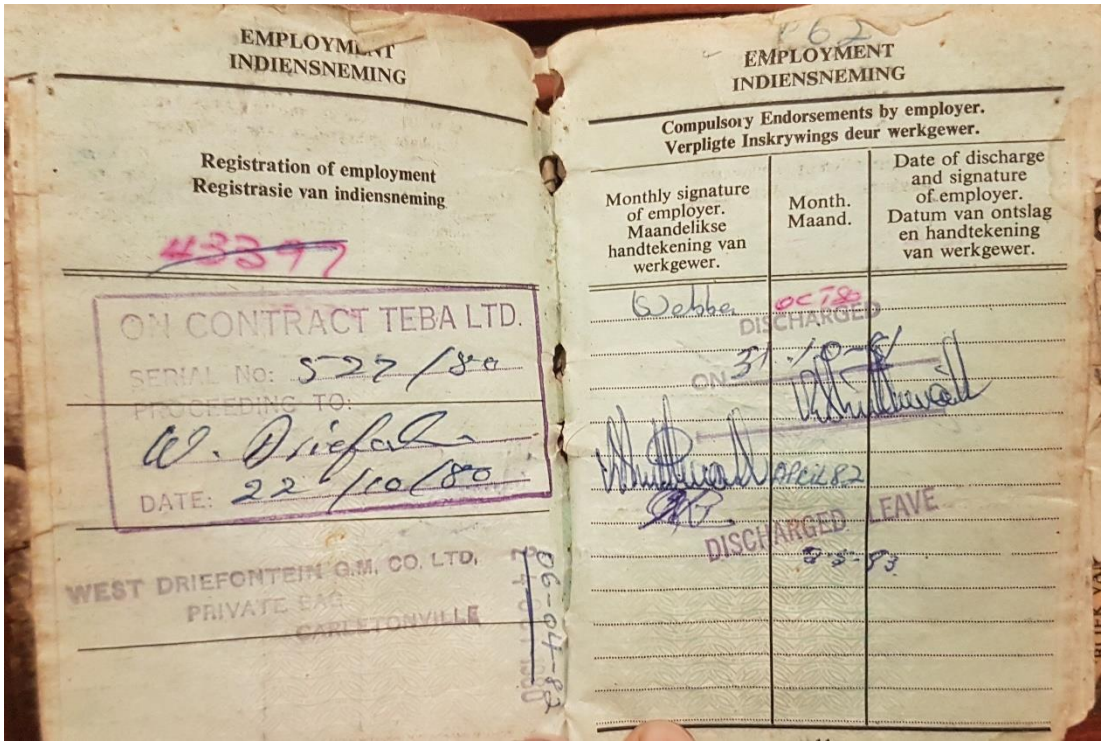
Appendix

Below is an example of pages taken from my father's pass book. In these examples we can see the restriction of movement, where his pass book had to be stamped when he went on leave and his employment contract on the Carletonville mines. There is also evidence that he was subjected to a medical examination.







EMPLOYMENT
INDIENSNEMING

Registration of employment
Registrasie van indiensneming

~~43397~~

ON CONTRACT TEBA LTD.
SERIAL No: 522/80
PROCEEDING TO:
W. Driefontein
DATE: 22/10/80

WEST DRIEFONTEIN G.M. CO. LTD.
PRIVATE BAG
CARLETONVILLE

06-04-82

EMPLOYMENT
INDIENSNEMING

Compulsory Endorsements by employer.
Verpligte Inskrywings deur werkgewer.

Monthly signature of employer. Maandelikse handtekening van werkgewer.	Month. Maand.	Date of discharge and signature of employer. Datum van ontslag en handtekening van werkgewer.
Webber	OCT 80	
	DISCHARGED ON 31-10-81	
	APRIL 82	
	DISCHARGED LEAVE 3-5-83	



ADMIN... APR 82 6030
ADMI... RASIE.

GEMAGTIGD OM VIR ... MAANDE
AUTHORISED FOR ... MONTHS
(IN WOORDE ...)
TE WEES IN DIE VOORGESKREVENE ... PRESCRIBE GEBIED
TO BE IN THE PRESCRIBED ...
VAN
OF
... WERK VAN
... WORK ...

CARLETONVILLE

WEST DRIEFONTEIN 285

05 APR 1983

KOMMISSARIS
CARLETONVILLE
1982
PRIVAATSAK/PRIVATE BAG
OBERHOLZER
COMMISSIONER

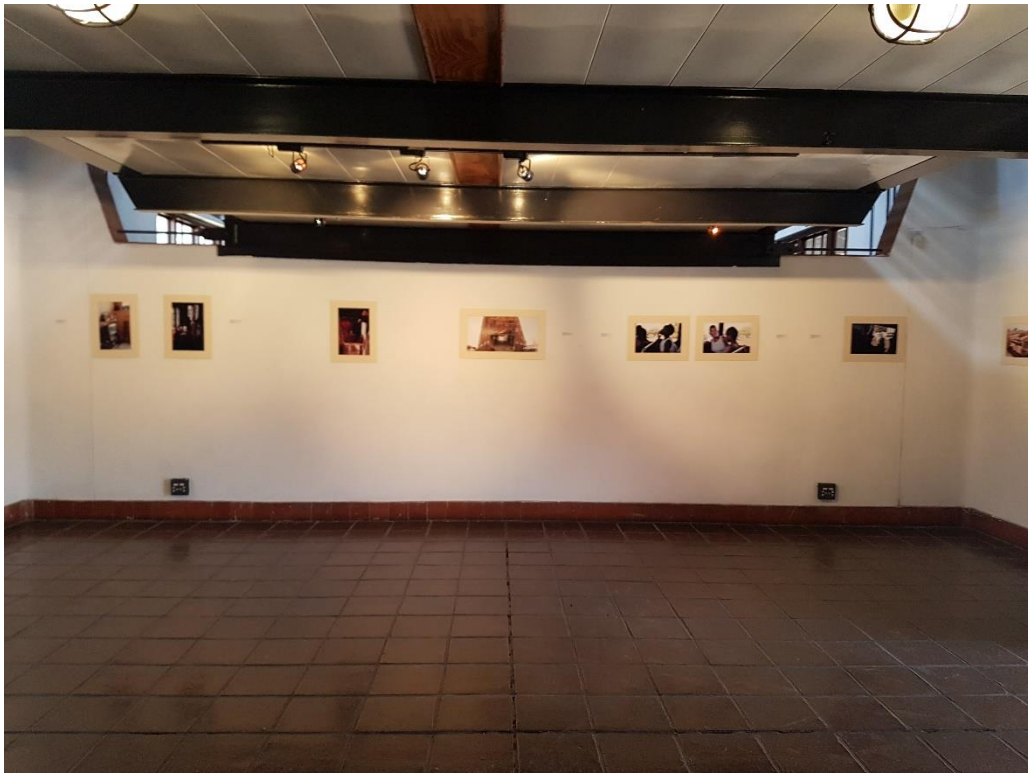
DEMAGTIGDE BEAMTE ...
AMPELIKE DATUM ... DATE STAMP

PLEK/PLACE

*Straatadres van werkgewer ...

5

Below are photographs taken at the exhibition space, during the opening and walkabouts.



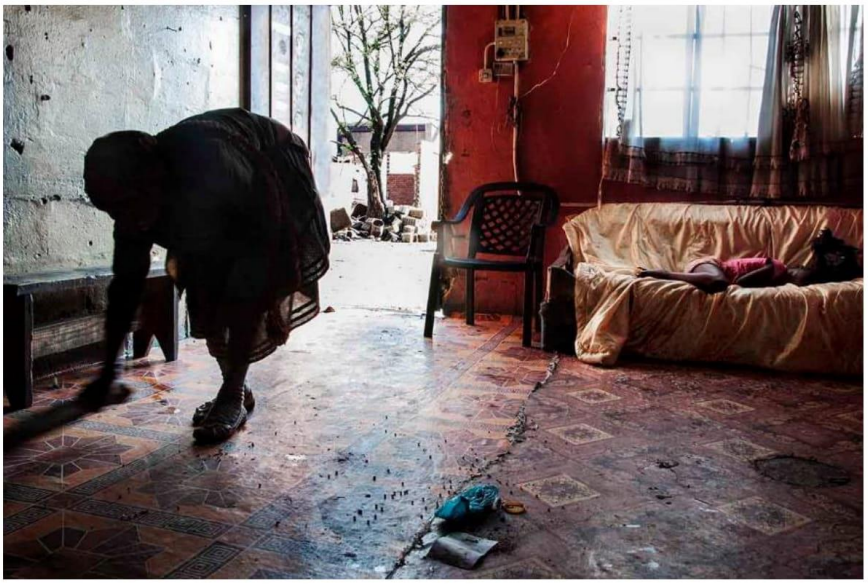












Bazilile kwa'gogo'Thembi 2, Mshaya'zafe hostel, Thokoza, 2012-2017.
Photograph by Nocebo Bucibo

iHostela Ngeliny'iKhaya

Regarding Photography as a Just Image

By Nocebo Bucibo

A photographic exhibition towards the completion of a Master's degree in Fine Arts

Venue:
Workers Museum
52 Jeppe Street
Newtown Johannesburg

Exhibition reception
03 March 2018

Time:
13:00

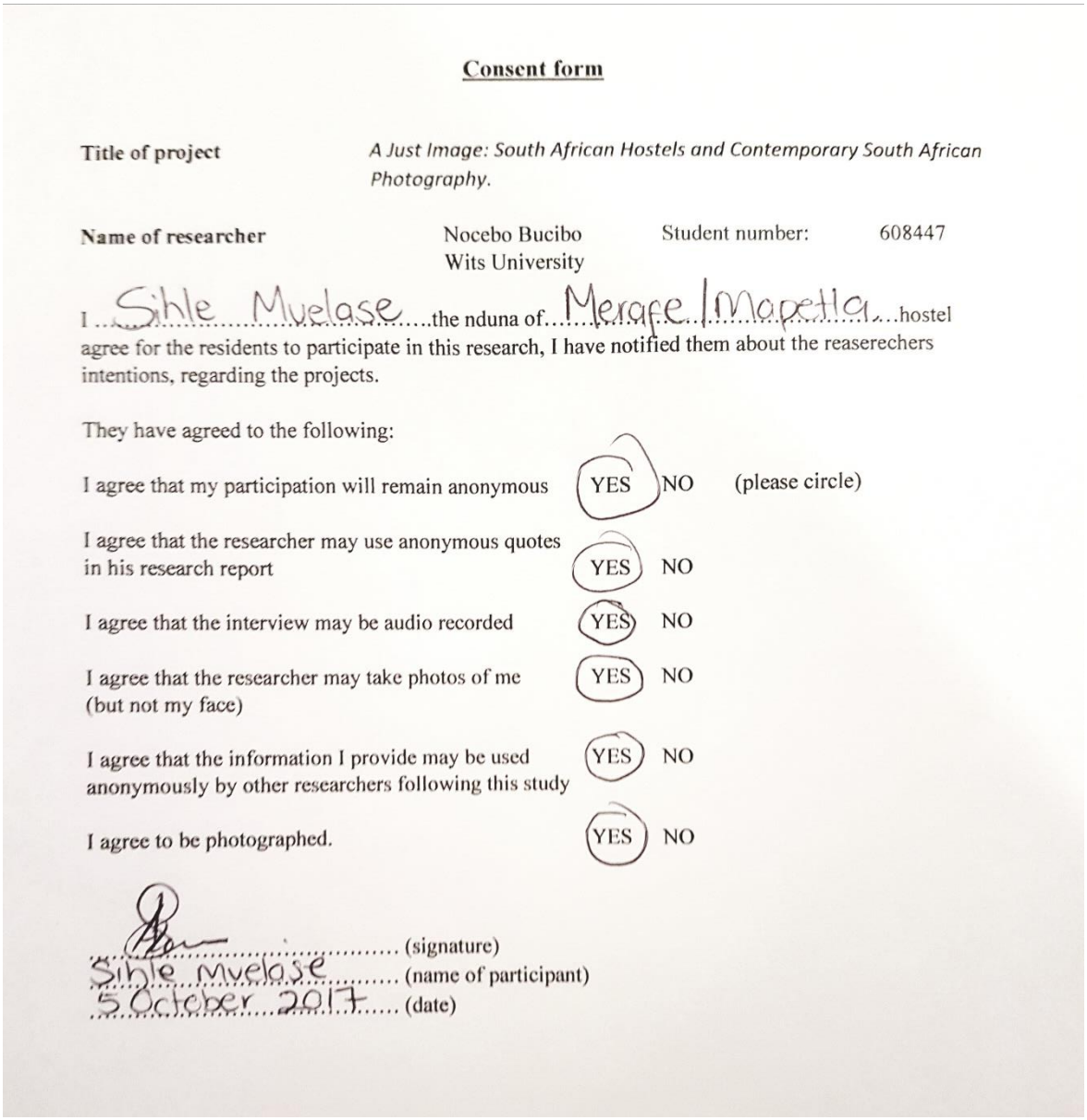
Duration
03-12 March 2018

Museum operating hours:
Tuesday- Sunday 9am-5pm

Contacts:
nocebobucibo@gmail.com

Joburg WORKERS MUSEUM The Tierney Fellowship CITY Wits City Institute THE WITS SCHOOL OF ARTS

Below are signed consent forms from the different participants:



Consent form

Title of project *A Just Image: South African Hostels and Contemporary South African Photography.*

Name of researcher Nocebo Bucibo Student number: 608447
Wits University

I Sihle Mvelase ..... the nduna of Merafe Mapetla ..... hostel agree for the residents to participate in this research, I have notified them about the reaserechers intentions, regarding the projects.

They have agreed to the following:

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	(YES)	NO	(please circle)
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his research report	(YES)	NO	
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	(YES)	NO	
I agree that the researcher may take photos of me (but not my face)	(YES)	NO	
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously by other researchers following this study	(YES)	NO	
I agree to be photographed.	(YES)	NO	

..... (signature)
Sihle Mvelase ..... (name of participant)
5 October 2017 ..... (date)

Consent form

Title of project *A Just Image: South African Hostels and Contemporary South African Photography.*

Name of researcher Nocebo Bucibo Student number: 608447
Wits University

I Esmond Ntombela Admin officer the nduna of Madala Hostel hostel agree for the residents to participate in this research, I have notified them about the reaserechers intentions, regarding the projects.

They have agreed to the following:

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	(YES)	NO	(please circle)
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his research report	(YES)	NO	
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	(YES)	NO	
I agree that the researcher may take photos of me (but not my face)	(YES)	NO	
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously by other researchers following this study	(YES)	NO	
I agree to be photographed.	(YES)	NO	

..... (signature)
Esmond Ntombela (name of participant)
..... (date)

Consent form

Title of project *A Just Image: South African Hostels and Contemporary South African Photography.*

Name of researcher Nocebo Bucibo Student number: 608447
Wits University

I Simphiwe & Nathi Mshengu agree to participate in this research project and allow the researcher to photograph me/my family/my personal space The researcher (Nocebo Bucibo) has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	(YES)	NO	(please circle)
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his research report	(YES)	NO	
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	(YES)	NO	
I agree that the researcher may take photos of me (but not my face)	(YES)	NO	
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously by other researchers following this study	(YES)	NO	
I agree to be photographed.	(YES)	NO	

S. Mshengu ..... (signature)
Simphiwe & Nathi Mshengu ..... (name of participant)
2017-05-03 ..... (date)

Consent form

Title of project *A Just Image: South African Hostels and Contemporary South African Photography.*

Name of researcher Nocebo Bucibo Student number: 608447
Wits University

I Thembi Sibisi - N. Sibisi Cultural organization,
the head of ***Imbabazane*** ..... agree for myself, and the organisation participate in this research, I have notified them about the reaserechers intentions, regarding the projects.

EN SIBISI (signature) [Daughter of Thembisile Sibisi
Thembi Sibisi . N Sibisi (name of participant)
2013 - 12 - 09 (date)