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Music and change in black urban culture during the first half of the 1960s.

De Jager, Helen

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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

HISTORY WORKSHOP 1984

CLASS, COMMUNITY AND CONFLICT:

LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

31 JANUARY - 4 FEBRUARY, 1984

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In South Africa the social and political processes begun in the decade of the fifties had profound demographic significance on the lives of the majority of black people, and highlighted the issue of cultural change.

It is in the bleak decade of the sixties, particularly the early years, that the conjuncture of both the directions and the forces of the 1950's, assumed the forms that would recur in subsequent years. The sixties signalled a new period of physical and material control that produced new responses.

An essential point, however, is that South African urban blacks were moving from parochial to more international influences. In the sphere of political influence, African nationalism was demonstrating its successes in the granting of independence in much of Africa. Leaders and ideologues such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and Jomo Kenyatta were perceived (particularly by the young generation) as leaders of promise and stature. In their differing ways they proposed an African future of hope and communality. Their failures and the emptiness of much of their rhetoric had not yet become evident. (1).

For the generation growing up in the sixties, the media was the major transmitter of new cultural forces and ideas. The 'pop' music boom had just begun and radio's and gramophones had become common commodities. It was in the early sixties – the period with which this paper deals – that South Africa lost most of its indigenous talent and the foundations were laid for a new urban culture that bred the '76 generation.

1960 saw the official death of the ANC, and its 48 year existence as the major black political organisation. Likewise the PAC, which had been formed only two years previously, was banned. Since 1960 the continual spawning and demise of political, semi-political and cultural

groupings, has been due to physical and organisational isolation, a lack of funds, police surveillance, the constant removal of and imprisonment of leaders and the fear of harassment and spies. The fact that most of the of the '60's and '70's were not closely linked, in a day to day sense, with older and more established political organisations, also contributed to disunity.

Another significant change was in the quality of education of political leaders. Much of the 'Old Gaurd' had been educated at relatively liberal mission institutions, as yet untouched by the guiding principles of Bantu Education. The new generation of potential leaders was the first to experience the effects of Bantu education, and it is not at all fortuitous that two of the most important South African movements in the years between 1960 and 1976, namely SASO and BPC, emerged out of an academic context.

The lack of real leadership and resistance in the 1960's is nevertheless not that difficult to understand in retrospect. While one could suggest that an increase in wages and a growing internal economy implied less hardship and therefore a more passive population, the argument is weak and ahistorical. The roots of disunity and disorganisation lay not only in the previously mentioned factors, but also in the history of black political organisations in the years preceeding 1960, when the ANC failed repeatedly to consolidate political gains and support, "For social revolutionaries within the Congress alliance nothing succeeded like failure: the oppresive character of the State had to be revealed, time and time again. From this perspective, the heroes were the vanquished, not the victorious." (2) Some of this failure lay in the changing demographic composition during the '40's and '50's and the issues over which resistance could be organised.

The legal infrastructure which came into existence in the 1950's exerted a control over the black population, that despite resistance, the ANC was not capable of effectively countering. Yet another force which highlighted the ineffectiveness of the ANC was the Africanist element in Congress, which gained ground throughout the 1950's and "was led by young militants eager to see Congress embark upon a more adventurous course."(3)

The political vacuum created as a result of the clampdown following Sharpeville was not easily filled. The continuation, and indeed acceleration of the issues over which so much resistance was expressed in the 1950's, namely removals, Bantu education and passes, resulted in a period of sporadic resistance such as at Cato Manor, but little that was sustained or effectively organised. The failure of so many paths of resistance appears to have obliged a period of reflection and adaptation.

The change in the economy also offers some understanding as to the lack of political organisation and the changes that have occured since 1960. The '60's were a period of growth. Although South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1961, the currency remained linked to the sterling area and one of the advantages for non-resident investors was that of not being locked into the South African economy. The public sector also invested heavily in the economy, with the consequence that despite the dampening effect of Sharpeville, recovery was realtively rapid and strong. A clear indication of this can be seen in the GDP figures which between the years 1963 to 1970 rose at an annual average rate of 6.2%(4)

The area of the economy most favoured for development in the 1960's was that of labour intensive industry. In 1960 the Government's policy of Decentralisation came into action. This programme was intended to resolve the question of black political participation and to avert the cost of industrialisation, described by the Viljoen Commission as being that of "immorality and subversion." (5)

The control of the black workforce and its forced removal from established urban centres was a major emphasis of the '60's. Employment on the mines decreased, while industry and commerce revealed a new growth in employment figures. The number of unskilled workers dropped and as one market survey put it, "with further restrictions in controlling migrant labour force this upward trend (i.e. towards greater numbers of skilled workers) will continue into the future" (6)

The so-called 'migrants' were often urban residents who had been moved out. The government set about creating 'villages' and towns for blacks at a distance from urban areas, such as Garankuwa 22 klm form Pretoria. Many of these 'villages" boasted no facilities normal to a large community, and without any exaggeration could be described as dormitory towns. Other townships were designed to cater for the new'border industries'.

The conscious reversal of the process of black migration to the cities, and its implications for those affected, are suggested by the sheer volume of people moved. "Over a million labour tenants and farm squatters and 400,000 city dwellers were resettled in Bantustans, the population of which increased by 70% in the 1960's. In addition 327,000 people were brought directly under the control of the Bantustan authorities as a result of townships being incorporated within the boundaries of the reserves neighbouring them"(7)

In the urban areas the changing demographic pattern was evidenced in an altered proportion of the sexes as well as of age groups. A comparative census chart (see appendix a) reveals this more clearly.

This change in the distribution of the sexes suggests that contrary to the governments intention of maintaining a migrant labour force, an urban workforce was being created and was reproducing itself. Family

structures changed as the exigencies of employment plus meeting the demands and requirements of the boards that decided on rights of residence, resulted in many changes in the 'traditional' family structure. Marriages of convenience, which earned people the right to live in the city and in the case of men, escape single hostels, occured. The breakdown in the extended family system plus the new standards of urban existence led to numerous instances of family break-up. One feature of the urban areas that reinforced this change was the greater number of urban bred people with no family history in any rural region. (see chart , appendix b.)

The pattern of the sixties was one in which the government pursued its blueprint for 'accomodating a plural society', the blueprint had a symetry divested, at one level, of human response, but such massive incursions into people's lives cannot and do not occur in a vacuum. While the reasons outlined previously, suggest some of the causes for the relative passivity of the black population, it does not signify acceptance of these changes. That the new patterns created a far stronger distinction between rural and urban is clear, and it is with the urban population that this study is mainly concerned, particularly with the effects of the environment on the generation that was growing up in the 1960's.

For the black population the 1960's were a time of upheaval with any economic benefits ebing offset by a lack of stability and direction. It was also a period of sharp contrasts within the African continent. The 'winds of change' were evident everywhere. Todd Matshikiza summing up the irony in the contrast in his column 'With the Lif Off' wrote of the new beerhalls near Dube location and Nancefield cemetery; "Talking of going away, I've got friends who spend every weekend

in "Ghana". They steal out there from Friday afternoon . . they say . . that the joint is ticking with self-government. They've even got a new creed:

I believe in the freedom of the people,

the victorious end of our struggle,
and the flourish of Ghana forever."(8)

The contrasts were evident not only at the level of politics above and below the Zambezi but also in a more direct way in the loss of community that came with the destruction of the communities that had existed in the 1950's, and the loss of which had caused so much resistance in that decade. As Casey Motsisi wrote, "Sophiatown must have been the busiest and brightest antheap ever when the Government spade turned it over, and now all the King and Queen ants have gone to other heaps."(9) In the destroyed township of Eersterus about 12 miles from Pretoria, a shebeen, aptly named 'Marshall Square' had replaced a previous one known as 'Meet Mekaar', a writer describing it wrote "Despite the drab crumbling surroundings, the dirt and squalor, there is a gaiety – they come to enjoy themselves, forget themselves, forget the world and its worries while sipping at a brimming skaal . . . yet despite the gaiety, the singing and dancing . . . many rot here."(10)

Other unsttling factors were the continuation of violence, poverty and high levels of unemployment. Although the gangs of the '50's came to be glamorised as part of the lost past, violence continued. The main difference was that with the destruction of such areas as Western Areas, the white metropolis which had "offered the gangsters the best terrain for survival and prosperity"(11) was no longer so readily accesible. Gangsters had always preyed on the people in the townships, but as the sixties progressed the romance of the old gangs such as the Americans lay in the fact that they had been more like

township Robin Hoods, whereas the new gangs, by contrast merely underlined the ghetto nature of the new townships. In the '50's the gangs had terrorised the dance halls and clubs of Johannesburg. Peter Reynolds Makhube, who had been a doorman at virtually every major club and dance hall recalled how in one night alone he had collected 21 revolvers from Isotsi's at the Bantu Men's Social Centre. He considered that standing at the door in the early sixties was by contrast an "easy business"(12) The 1950's saw the demise of the big organised gangs, but violence persisted into the next decade in the form of smaller groups and pairs of thugs.

The transmutation of life in the 50's became the subject for theatre. A play that captured the braggart, swashbuckling township hero was 'King Kong'. This play more than any other in the history of black theatre in South Africa portrayed and delineated an epoch. When 'King Kong' left to tour abroad its departure ushered in a new period in local black cultural life. The play itself recorded the life of Ezekiel Dhlamini, a boxer of considerable pugnacity, who was brutalised by his environment and who eventually committed suicide at Leeuwkop Prison. The play itself did not make any strong political statement, but it did bring before a multi-racial audience some of the hardships, violence and frustration of African township life."(13) The producers attempts to make its appeal more internationl before it went on tour abroad in 1961 resulted in a bowdlerised version that "looked and sounded more like a London Cockney variety show, than an African jazz opera based on the life of stormy Pimville's wildest man".(14) Nevertheless, despite its failure

many of the stars who went on tour with it used it as a one way ticket to the greater promise of England and America. Hazel Futa, Patience Gwcabe, Gwigwi Mrewbi, Peggy Phango, Mumsie Mthombeni and the Manhattan Brothers were all performers, who like their urban counterparts, were reaching beyond the parochial limitations of South Africa and its extensive restrictions on their lives.

The changing composition and demands of urban cultural life were to a more sophisticated international and urban status. The glamorous gangsters of the '50's had been admired for their relatively succesful imitation of American gangsters as portrayed in film, as well as, for want of a better term, their 'street sense'. As the distinction between rural and urban became more pronounced, so too did the drive for urban sophistication and 'street sense' express itself.

The young urban people demanded a lifestyle and entertainment that went'upwards' form the level 'King Kong' had attained. Their influences were black American and their style was modelled on the images transmitted via the media. The jazz generation who danced the 'phatha phatha'(touch touch) and the twist, were the descendants of Martha of Marabi Dance. A play which bore witness to this new [illegible]ion and described both its love of jazz and dancing was 'Manana the Jazz Prophet'. This play written and directed by Gibson Kente in 1962, was extremely popular in Soweto. The cast included Letta Mbuli, Bridget 'Snowy Gwabini, Stanley Dibetso, plus the male quartet the Saints, who had been part of the

cast of King Kong. The play, which was relatively light-hearted, dealt with the the young urban generation and the misunderstanding between them and their parents. The theme in itself was neither new nor parochial. Only its relation to a specific place and time made it so. In essence it dealt with an issue that in the early '60's was international. From the Tokio Joes in Ghana to the Teds and Rockers in England, the sharing of the new popular music was a common strand. As Stedman-Jones described it, "this intense, multi-dimensional cultural explosion means that each new generation travels through a different mental universe en route to adulthood; and the gap between its cultural shell and that of its predecessors is constantly widening."(15)

In the early sixties the current of change in the townships was a curious mixture of instability, less parochial thinking and to a degree, hedonism. New standards were evolving. The townships were much bigger that the old ones. Living conditions had altered and there was a greater distance from white urban centres. With so much instability a resort to both conspicuous consumption and entertainment was not , and is not incomprehensible.

Establishing a new urban identity and being more removed form traditional cultural transmitters, new ones emerged. The children of the '50.s who had gathered around corner bicycle shops and nobly imitated their favourite bands on their home made instruments, were now accustomed to music offered on radio and the gramophone, and were also in a position to buy them. A live band or musician was not so necessary at a party or stokvel as a record or the radio would suffice. (16)

As communities were broken down and new townships established, traditional places of entertainment dissapeared. Halls were erected to replace the lost ones (although there were not enough). Communities, however take time to evolve and the new centres took some

time to become popular. Activities for example at the Orlando Y M C A consisted of teaching people how to dance, how to eat with a knife and fork and on which side to walk next to a lady (17) – hardly activities that generate great interest!

Despite the fact that anything rural was too close for comfort and viewed in a disparaging light (country bumpkins were known as 'Moegoes'(18). The sophistication that was sought was of the kind demonstrated by the American blacks and conveyed in American films and music.The identification with American blacks was of great importance at that period and influential in matters of style.

The jazz audiences of the early '60's were clearly distinguishable in dress and style. Bearing a close resemblance to the 'Ivies', the 'Clevers' as they were known, were the trendsetters. 'Clevers' style expressed itself in dress – Dobbs hats, Ayers and Smith caps as well as Stetsons, turn-up trousers worn with viyella shirts – those with a checked pattern were known as Mcgregors. Cardigans were Pringles and Ballantines, while shoes had to be Florsheims, sometimes called 'black American Cadillacs'. The style was an expensive one. Some of the 'Clevers' also had the big American cars, but they were few in number. Occupationally 'clevers' were an interesting group. Many survived on their wits alone. They were identified with the American hustlers and city slickers– 'clever' chaps who had learnt the art of survival in the city. Many 'clevers' were in fact small time gangsters, bootleggers, diamond smugglers and dagga dealers. The style of the 'clevers' was however not confined to the city slickers. In the early '60's it was adopted by skilled

workers, journalists and people beginning to work their way into middle-management. Unlike the 'clevers' of the '50's those of the '60's tended to have at least a Junior Certificate. The style spread itself across the 17-35 year age group, and is still evident today amongst that generation.

The 'clevers' admired actors like Sydney Poitier, while the film 'Street with no Name' with Richard Widmark in it, was enormously influential for it epitomised the city slicker. Other actors who offered role patterns were Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jnr. in Oceans 11.

Hugh Masakela, in a recent interview, summed up the significance of style as expressed in clothes in the late '50's early '60's, or the 'good bad old days' as he calls them, "In those days, a man was known and recognised by the kind of label that was attached to his clothes. We used to spend hours cleaning our shoes, and then go to cinemas very early, just to show off."(19)

It should be emphasised that although it is argued that the urban people of the '60's had virtually no rural base, it is not suggested that there was no previous urban culture, quite the contrary. The difference lay in the fact that previous generations had lived under different governments, with a degree of moderate hope that some solution to their political future could be achieved through negotiation. For those in the '60's those possibilities were rapidly dissapearing. Even the tenuous freehold of places like Sophiatown was gone. Like the life of 'Softown' it was destined to become another part of the romance of what was lost. The early '60's was a time when the full impact of that change had not been fully absorbed. As its message became more clear, the cultural life of the townships was increasingly depleted of its own talent and the way was clear for imported

products.

Prior to the 'brain drain', the growth in stylistic and cultural change in music was both rapid and longlasting. Jazz music characterised the early '60's, but by jazz is meant all the new and different contemporary styles. Artists such as Dave Brubeck, John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, Johnny Hodges and Oscar Peterson were the biggest influence and the most popular foreign musicians. Their importance was however also mixed with the imports of the first rock 'n roll boom, that had begun in the U.S.A. in 1956 with the rise to fame of Elvis Presley. Unlike their British counterparts, South African blacks were content to and did describe rhythm and blues music under the catchall title of jazz. The seperation and distinction of jazz form other forms of music did not occur in popular parlance until the generation that grew up on jazz were old enough to be displaced by new musical styles.

The importance of jazz in South Africa is suggested in the parallel one can draw with the emergence of jazz in the U.S.A. Tony Palmer suggests that the revolution in music in America which heralded the emergence of ragtime, jazz, blues etc. was not to be found in the early days of slavery. He argues rather that 'popular music . ., began soon after and probably as a result of the day of Jubilee.(19) He argues that as segregation increased in America and black people were increasingly isolated from "white entertainment, worship, transport and life, the black community turned itself, forcing it to rely on its own resources. As Richard Wright described it, "Our blues, jazz, swing and boogie woogie are our spirituals of the city pavements, our longing for freedom and opportunity, an expression of our bewilderment and despair in a world whose meaning eludes us."(20)

The parallel while broad and tendentious, does exist. Early expressions of new black musical forms in South Africa's urban centres such as Marabi, could be seen in a similar context to the above. Early styles continued as a source of influence in the '60's, but they were heavily overlaid by American jazz influences. The appeal of this music lay not only in its accesibility, but in its familiarity and innovation. While the acceptance of new styles from abroad is seen by some as a destruction of indigenous culture, it is suggested here that that acceptance rather testifies to the fact that black society has 'never reached a state of disintegration rather the black man has fashioned himself new institutions, worked out new norms of existence, in short built up his own social organisation, quite seperate from that of whites."(21)

However what was being adapted and created differed considerably form previous forms of expression. As previously mentioned, the increasing urbanisation and the attendant changes, which were in the nature of and organic as opposed to conjunctural change(22), meant a less localised and different set of responses to existing conditions. The rise and growth of the media had its results during this period and the growth in foreign influence (albeit black American) in cultural expressions became more evident.

Coplan notes how "as musical specialisation increased, musicians and their audiences tied their social status to their distance from indigenous popular music in favour of the exact reproduction of imported styles."(23) He continues his argument suggesting that 'the submergence of marabi under newer, more Afro-American oriented styles apparently resulted more from the continuing modernisation or internationalisation of the urban African self-image, than from the clearing of Doornfontein, Prospect township or Malay Camp."

This observation leads to one of the most subtle inversions and ironies in the history of black music in its long and complex journey from Africa to the New World and back. The musical form that permits such a focus is that of bebop and its contemporary form of jazz, known as 'free jazz'. As M. Miller describes it "the development of jazz from the turn of the century up to around 1940 can be described as a process in which Afro-American modes of musical expression were increasingly aligned with the standards of entertainment music derived from European middle-class light music. With swing, jazz and entertainment music had become virtually identical. From then on this trend was reversed – jazz was once again, in an increasing measure 'blackened' – mainly by taking over elements of the blues."(24) Bebop although initially confined to a small audience, both in the U.S.A. as well as in South Africa, became highly influential in the 1960's. The irony lay in the fact that as South African blacks were increasingly seeking direction in black American music, the latter music driven on by the growing consciousness of its own African roots and intensified by the struggle for civil rights in America, was returning to a more african sound.

At the same time there is the process described by Charles Kriel which concerns the appropriation and commercialisation by white musicians of black music which "has stimulated the Negro community and its musical spokesmen to generate a new music it can call its own."(25)

In South Africa where there was an extremely limited outlet for local music, the lessons of bebop and free jazz made sense as people were obliged to retract into their own references and directions. Their experience

paralleled the need descibed by Leroi Jones of young negroes to 'erect a meta-culture as isolated as their grand-parents, but issuing from the evolved sensibility of a modern urban black American who had by now achieved a fluency with the socio-cultural symbols of Western thinking."(26)

The lessons of bebop and free jazz were best expressed by Chris Megregor's band the 'Blue Notes' who often performed in the 'free jazz' style and were also one of the most popular bands of the time. It is worthwhile examining the fortunes of the Blue Notes for their history demonstrates that of the early '60's quite aptly. The group which won both the 1962 and 1963 Cold Castle Jazz Festivals, was composed of Mongezi Feza on trumpets, Johnny Dyani on bass, Louis Moholo on drums and Dudu Pukwane on saxophone. The group had started its career playing as the resident band at a Cape Town club called the Vortex. In the words of Dudu Pukwane, the group used to be able to play as a mixed group in the Cape "because the Cape was the last place these guys (i'e. the Nationalist Party) were hitting. Back around 1960 they didn't have much influence. So Chris was white, the rest of us were black, and it didn't matter. But when we got on the road it was different. Things got heavy . . One time Chris had to put make up on his face to make him dark. After that Chris said 'this is it for me here".

The effect of the Government's increasingly racially seperate legislation created the equivalent of the brain drain, both in the field of music and writing.(28). In music even though a lack of venues has been quoted as a reason for the departure of many musicians ,there were in fact quite a few venues that survived into the early years of the decade. The variety they offered serves as

an even stronger contrast to the dearth of them in the later '60's. The emphasis was on jazz clubs, such as the Club Everest in Fordsburg. The United States Information Service held jazz sessions every wednesday, while at Dorkay house there were fortnightly jam sessions. Jazz Appreciation Societies also existed while local black newspapers featured record clubs offering a wide variety of music. The early sixties also witnessed music festivals sponsored by commerce. The Cold Castle festivals which flourished briefly in the early '60's were a form of musical entertainment that preceeded the epoch making festivals of a similar kind abroad. They were, however not revived locally until the 1970's.

Sponsorship such as the Cold Castle Festival was the exception. White organisations sponsored classical music at the expense of township jazz.. The latter was not necessarily hostile to classical music and the tradition of Western music. The critical difference here lies in those who saw classical music as something that could be melded with what existed, and those who aspired towards the acceptance of Western culture and all its trappings at the expense of their own. There were many people who, like the early missionary converts, saw the vital aspects of urban life as sinful and degrading and township jazz was part of that moral turpitude.

The classical music favoured tended to be of a religious rather than secular nature, as the annual performances of the African Musical Society (sponsored by the MOTH organisation) revealed. This society regularly gave renditions of Handels Messiah, as did massed African choirs under the direction of the African Music and Drama Association. The SABC also sponsored classical music in the townships and in August 1963 gave its first symphony concert at Mofola Hall.

Another widespread activity and emphasis was the formation of choirs of schoolchildren who regularly performed in a complex network of competitions. The latter choirs were however not confined to renditions of Western choral music, instead they often performed songs that were of a syncretic nature as well as traditional.

With the rising number of young children in the townships, communities tried to organise forms of recreation that would cater for them and prevent them from becoming 'tsotsi's.' In Dobsonville the residents tried to raise money to build a cinema, while in the tradition of Father Huddleston's Band, an enterprising Orlando shopkeeper, Dan Pooe, organised first a football club – which was not very succesful – and then a type of boy-scouts band which became so popular that he had to organise a similar one for girls.

The young children of the townships, perhaps more than any other group, symbolised the urban character that was emerging. They were also the first generation to experience Bantu education. Many of them were growing up with little parental supervision which offered wide possibilities for truancy. They were offered the 'tradition' of the town, not the country. Survival and peer group recognition functioned differently in the city and ethnic considerations in such a medley of ethnic groups, had only a passing significance.

The children were growing up playing in the streets of the vast new townships. They were the nucleus of a new society that did not have Sophiatown or such a community as its matrix.

Their games and gangs were based on neighbourhood and street divisions. Games universal to children were common ; hide and seek with girls was known as 'black Ma-Mpatile, spinning tops, catapults– skiet-rekker's, and the hula hoop were popular. More ingenious were their home made cars and swords made out of wire. The latter were necessary for the mock battles inspired by their movie heroes. The children were enormously influenced by the films of the day such as the Ten Gladiators ('full of strong people'). Zorro, The Man Alone and Tarzan.

Behaviour, invented games, language and movement were based on these films. Even clothing was influenced by them, although it was rather hard to always imitate American clothing. One instance was the Navarone cap, which was seen in the film The Guns of Navarone. This cap however was not worn by the very young, but rather by the 15-18 year old group.

The children however had a very distinct and desired style of dressing. No self respecting parent though would indulge their children's taste, so money had to be aquired through their own efforts. A favourite method was to act as a golf caddy. The main suppliers of the important items of clothing, which consisted of Fueng Kong sneakers, Green line pants (which were khaki shorts with green lines on the sides) Makhombi-Nhlela (soft-ball hats) and P F sneakers, were Sdogwa and Mrs and Madame in Diagonal street.

Such status symbols were a far cry from rural pre-occupations. Even more so were night time activites which consisted of burning tyres and cardboard boxes on street corners, while benzine sniffing was considered and excellent pastime.

The children admired the toughness and action in the films they saw and the hip fast flash lifestyle symbolised by big American cars with six lights at the back, known as 'Six-Mabone'. Their educational ambitions were higher standard six as a minimum, while music was a mixture of local and imported jazz and soul. Unlike the children of the fifties they did not have corner bicycle shops, nor for that matter did large groups exist. Children in the '50's emulated their favourite local bands, children in the sixties witnessed the birth of the four man pop group on radio.

Their parents sought to imbue them with respectable standards and Sunday school was an important ritual. Guitars were the devils instrument in many homes, which increased their desirability. The ANC and PAC were also banned topics. The memories of the '50's and Sharpeville were too strong and parents were not unnaturally fearful in the new dispensation of incurring displeasure in any context. For the children of the sixties their reference points were the city and peer group sharing. They were consciously and unconsciously absorbing the influence of the modern media and were aspiring to standards that were urban and non-parochial.

Unlike the 1980's when open support for the ANC and PAC has become de riguer, the children of the sixties were witness to their parents political self censorship and fear. They were also witness to the problems and difficulties of urban living. It is possible that some of the distance summed up today in the parents acknowledgement of their inability to control the 'kids', as the '76 generation is often described, lies in the children's naive disdain and incomprehension of their parents attitudes in the sixties.