In Search of Blackwomen's Voices – Engendering South African Liberation Movements

Karabo-Maya Rodwell

1689720

Research Question: What Space Have Blackwomen Occupied in the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa?

Faculty of Humanities of the University of Witwatersrand

Supervisor: Dr Kholeka Shange

Plagiarism Declaration

I, Karabo-Maya Rodwell, declare that this research report is my own and has not been submitted previously for any degree at any other University. It is submitted for the Master of Arts in Anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg 2023.

ANTH2022/04/05

Signed: 

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Acknowledgements

To those that contributed their stories to this research, I thank you. Without the generosity of Rowayda Halim, Mama Daphne Koza, Sibongile Mkhabela, Mmagauta Molefe, Dr Unjinee Poonan, and Jacqui Zimba it would not have been possible to capture this history. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me and allowing me to share your stories.

To the Canon Colins Trust and Mellon Mays communities, thank you for your generosity.

To my supervisor, Dr Kholeka Shange, thank you for your support, your patience and for sharing your wealth of knowledge with me.

To my mom, Bobby Rodwell, family and friends, your unwavering support has been invaluable and has built my confidence to contribute to the history of our country.

To the women of AZAPO, the Black Consciousness Movement, Azania, and South Africa's liberation movements as a whole, thank you for the work you have done and the work that you continue to do.

Abstract

The Black Consciousness Movement played a vital role in South Africa's fight for liberation against the apartheid government. A significant part of this movement were the Blackwomen that risked their lives for the country. Despite the work that they have all done and continue to do, Blackwomen in this movement have faced multiple challenges related to their gender. I am interested in sharing the experiences of these women to add to the growing literature on the role and impact of Blackwomen in South Africa's history.

To do this, I conducted interviews with six Blackwomen over six months, between July 2022 and January 2023, all of whom have been involved in the Black Consciousness Movement. The participants in this research represent a small glimpse into the experiences of Blackwomen in South African liberation movements. This research report follows the lived experiences of Blackwomen in South Africa's liberation movement, looking specifically at the Black Consciousness Movement. My research found that while each of these women were involved in the movement at different time periods, and in different areas of South Africa, many of their experiences overlap. I have broken these findings into three major themes.

The first ethnographic chapter follows their early consciousness building and when they believe they came into consciousness. This chapter explores the formative years of Blackwomen in the Black Consciousness Movement, namely who and or what influenced their political consciousness. The second ethnographic chapter examines Blackwomen's subjective interpretations of Black Consciousness and the impact this has on the self. While they were all part of the same movement they all seemed to have experienced the ideology differently. The third and final ethnographic chapter interrogates the marginalisation of Blackwomen in the BCM. Here I discuss how women joined this structure for the emancipation of Black people at large, as well as connections to the ideology, and yet many felt that as women they were not always allowed the space to fully participate.

Glossary of Terms[1]

ANC	The African National Congress was founded in 1912 by John Langalibalele Dube, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Josiah Tshangana Gumede, and Sol Plaatje. The ANC is the current ruling part of South Africa.
AZAPO	The Azanian People's Organisation is a Black Consciousness organisation founded by Stephen Bantu Biko, Abram Onkgopotse Tiro, Mapetla Mohapi, and Mthuli ka Shezi. AZAPO played a major role in the 16 June 1976 Soweto uprising.
BC	The ideology of Black Consciousness emphasises Black identity and self-determination.
BCM	The Black Consciousness Movement started in the 1960s during a time where other major liberation organisations such as the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress had been banned and their leaders imprisoned.
DOCC	Donaldson Orlando Community Centre was a centre in Orlando, Soweto where community members often met for activities including theatre productions, musical presentations and political meetings.
NP	National Party was founded by J. B. M. Hertzog in 1914. The NP enforced apartheid laws and policies in South Africa in 1948 and governed the country from 1948 to 1994.
PAC	The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania was founded in 1959 by Robert Sobukwe, Elias L Ntloedibe and other Africanists that moved away from the ANC.

[1] It is important to note the male-centric nature of national liberation narratives when discussing who founded the ANC, AZAPO, BCM, and PAC. The men who founded these movements worked alongside multiple women who are unacknowledged in "official" historiography of South Africa.

SASO	The South African Students Organisation was a Black students organisation that was officially inaugurated in December 1968. This was following multiple previous attempts to form a Black student organisation.
SASM	South African Student Movement was a Black Consciousness affiliated student led group in the 1960s that encouraged student action.
YWCA	The Soweto branch of the international Young Women's Christian Association was a space where young women met to develop their skills, engage in debate, and hold political meetings.

Introduction

The intersectionality of liberation struggles has long captivated my interest. This has motivated me to research the gendered experiences of the generation of Blackwomen involved in the formation and development of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). My interest is in how Blackwomen traversed these spaces, and whether or not their voices were shut out by the dominant and pressing question of national liberation, and equally by the gender dynamics of the time, given the male-centric society in which the liberation struggle was being organised. Alternatively, did they have elbow room in which to ensure that matters concerning women's liberation were put onto the agenda? I have tackled these questions in the following research report.

Understanding the Terms

Throughout this text I use 'Blackwomen' capitalised and as one word. This is for reasons such as Lewis's (1993, 535-536) argument that feminists who focus on the relativity of gender believe concepts of gender do not exist separately to that of race and class, for this reason "the gendered social subject" cannot only be "woman" but must always be "black woman". Gqola's (2001) article takes this argument further as she argues that using 'Blackwomen' as a single word draws attention to the intersectionality of race and gender as they are not mutually exclusive. I make use of this term to highlight this intersectionality.

A discussion on feminisms is essential when examining the role of Blackwomen in liberation movements in South Africa. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that there are various kinds of feminisms and multiple different understandings of what feminism is (hooks 2000, 114). In this research report I am discussing these various feminisms, or what Gqola (2001, 15) terms "different expressions of feminisms", in an attempt to develop an understanding of the type of feminism that the women in this research were pursuing, as Feminism as a concept does not mean the same thing to everyone. This is in part due to the multiple systems of domination that are constantly at play, that hooks (1997, 7) labels "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy". It is within this framework that the intersectionality of struggle must be addressed (Thorpe 2018, 7).

The term intersectionality was coined by Crenshaw (1989, 140) who argued that feminist theory often excludes the very nuanced and particular experiences of Blackwomen as it sees race and gender as separate from one another rather than taking into account that racial experiences are often interconnected with gendered experiences, and vice versa. Crenshaw (1989, 140) argues therefore that an intersectional approach must be used to show how experiences of race and gender run parallel, but that there is a need to discuss intersectionality beyond race and gender. It is the intersection of multiple different aspects of people that need to be acknowledged, such as age and sexuality (Crenshaw 1991, 1244). Crenshaw (1991, 1244) places her own work within the works of many feminists of colour, to broaden understandings of feminism to include these intersections. It is for these reasons that using intersectionality as a term and approach in this way, I am referring to the multiple foci that made up South Africa's liberation movements.

By analysing the multiple feminisms that have been adopted by the Blackwomen within this study, one develops an analytical framework that focuses specifically on Blackwomen and the Blackgirl child. The word "Blackgirl" is also used by Gqola in Lewis and Baderoon (2021, 51) arguing that as with Blackwomen, race and gender intersect for the Blackgirl child. Because of the kind of feminism that the women I am writing about espouse, it is critical to take the lived experiences of Blackwomen and Blackgirls seriously. As is explained by hooks (1984, 24) the slogan "the personal is political" stresses that women's everyday experiences are impacted by politics, making their daily experiences political.

In the instance of the liberation movements of the 1970s and 1980s in South Africa, the intersectionality of being Black and a woman, were part and parcel of Blackwomen's experiences, and were not separate terrains of struggle. The apartheid-structured exploitation that succeeded hundreds of years of colonialism and slavery was intentionally designed on the foundations of race, class, and gender. Gqola (2010, 2) echoes Goniwe's idea of "colonial apartheid", which stresses the interconnection of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. As Gqola (2010, 2) states "[p]ut simple, we are both free and *not entirely* free of apartheid" and as Biko (2017 [1978], 56) states "[t]he future will always be shaped by the sequence of present-day events".

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) explains this concept through "the six mountains" on African women's backs. According to Ogundipe-Leslie's Six Mountain theory (1994, 28):

> One might say that the African woman has six mountains on her back: one is oppression from outside (colonialism and neo-colonialism?), second is from traditional structures, feudal, slave-based, communal etc., third is her backwardness (neo-colonialism?); the fourth is man; the fifth is her colour, her race; and the sixth is herself.

For Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) this metaphor explains the multiple oppressions carried on the backs of Blackwomen on the African continent. The analogy of the six mountains refers to the interconnection of the multiple oppressions experienced by Blackwomen. However, as these mountains are on Blackwomen's backs, it means they are not completely held down by the weight of it and are still able to move (Gqola 2001, 12). Despite the weight of these oppressions, Blackwomen are still able to move (Ogundipe-Leslie 1987 cited in Gqola 2001). This is seen by the Blackwomen in this research, who despite the multiple oppressions they have faced and still face in their everyday life, continue to move.

As I go on my search for these voices, my research highlights how Blackwomen in the Black Consciousness Movement have survived and challenged these mountains. Because not only were Blackwomen of this era confronted with issues related to gender and class, they were also grappling with the overwhelming and discriminatory systems of colonialism and apartheid.

The women I spoke to are not only the tellers but also the carriers of their history, they are archives of our history. As a scholar who explores the role of women in the armed struggle, Magadla's (2020) text on the perspectives of women and girls in national liberation movements is relevant in this discussion. Magadla (2020) offers theory on the essentiality of writing about the critical role of African women and girls in armed combat and war across the African continent. Each of my participants played significant roles in the struggle for national liberation against the apartheid regime in South Africa. The multiple roles they played and the thinking they had around their involvement in the struggle is essential to retell. As a young scholar I feel a commitment to capture and preserve their stories within the academy as they are essential to the writing of the history of the country. In addition, the women I spoke with indicated that talking about their past is a way of dealing with past trauma. This is a process that Gobodo-Madikizela (2008, 174) says often comes later in life, and that the extent of or meaning behind the trauma is often only recognised subsequently. Jacqui reflects this, stating:

> I just felt that I had to tell my story in a way that it would also heal me because I kept on getting flashbacks, and everything else. Having been involved in a struggle at that very tender age I was exposed to a whole lot of things where I witnessed a whole lot of

things, the killings, the rapes, the building of houses, the fights. All of this at a very tender age.

Motsemme (2004, 909) reminds us though, that the violence of the apartheid regime infiltrated people's everyday lives, and the remnants of this violence is in many ways still felt today.

According to Magadla (2020, 3) many feminist and international relations scholars argue that the experiences of women are often presented as similar or the same experiences to those of men. However, this is often untrue, for this reason feminist perspectives investigate how history has been written, how knowledge has been shared and who has done this. If the primary sharers of knowledge are men, they argue this gently makes the lens with which history is shared unequal. Despite this, the work of male theorists is not without value. The writings of both men and women provide critical information for the archive and writing such as my own. The historical and ideological positions presented in these writings form the context for more women-centred theory (Magadla 2020). The Blackwomen I have spoken to, are also in themselves archives of their history, and the history of South Africa. Gunner (2002, 216) argues that women of different generations often pour into the wealth of knowledge that is constantly being passed down intergenerationally, which Gunner (2002, 216) terms "a dense and rich cultural archive".

As Gqola (2001, 11) states "[f]ewer essays appear in feminist and interdisciplinary forums which pay attention to the differences within the variety of ways we, as Blackwomen, participate in and influence feminist spaces and discourse". This is then the basis on which the article is written, as she goes on to centre Blackwomen in conversations around feminisms and postcoloniality (Gqola 2001, 11). My work aims to consider the discourse presented by Gqola (2001) in relation specifically to how this has impacted the ideology within the BCM.

In the early 1960s both the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC) announced anti-pass campaigns. These protests were against the apartheid instilled law that "non-white" people in South Africa had to carry pass books that served as identity documents and prohibited them from moving freely in the country. The Sharpeville Massacre was an anti-pass march led by the Pan African Congress on the 21st of March 1960. This was intended to be a non-violent march however, as the crowd of protesters, which was in the thousands, approached the Sharpeville police station, they were met with gun fire. The police shot into the crowds, killing 69 people and injuring hundreds of people. This action was to

result in the imprisonment of several people including Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, the leader of the PAC[2].

The banning and imprisonment of ANC and PAC leaders led to a loss of political action in the country. A period followed where it would seem that the apartheid government had won its intended aim of putting an end to political uprising. During this time, the Black Consciousness Movement gained momentum Steve Biko at its head. Stephen Bantu Biko was born on the 18th of December 1946. In 1966 he began as a medical student at the University of Natal's 'Non-European' campus in Durban. As a student activist, he and Barney Pityana[3] joined the Natal Union of South African Students (NUSAS) but walked out to form the South African Student Union (SASO) in 1968 as NUSAS was dominated by white students (Biko 2017 [1978], 1). In contrast to this, SASO was formed on Black Consciousness ideology (Ally 2005, 77-78). This activism continued as SASO, the Black Peoples Convention and the Black Community Programme went on to form the Black Consciousness Movement (Ally 2005, 77-78).

Due to the fact that the ANC became the largest anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the narrative of political struggle often had a strong ANC bias, and this is carried through the narrative of South African history. When there is discussion on the struggle against apartheid it is often from the ANC point of view and more often than not fails to mention the BCM and PAC.

This is one of the many reasons that in this paper I focus my study on Blackwomen involved in the Black Consciousness Movement. While even in ANC-centred discourse, women are still on the margins, the marginalisation of the Black Consciousness Movement, meant that the women of BCM were that much more marginalised. Thus, I have deliberately chosen not to centre my telling of the stories of women in the apartheid struggle on the ANC history as it is not the only important story to tell.

My interest in the Black Consciousness Movement is because, as is explained by Gqola (2001, 131), Steve Biko argued that too often Black people were spoken about and for rather than

[2] "Sharpeville Massacre, 21 March 1960" South African History Online. Accessed: 18 March 2022. https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/sharpeville-massacre-21-march-1960.
[3] Professor Nyameko Barney Pityana, studied at the University of Fort Hare, and was an early member of the Black Consciousness Movement.

speaking from their own point of view. Black Consciousness as an ideology aimed to change this. This ideological position essentially determined my research approach. My research report focuses on the voices and stories told by a group of Blackwomen who were involved in the early development of the Black Consciousness Movement. In line with the emphasis on Blackwomen telling their own stories, and not having anyone tell their stories on their behalf, I have used an ethnographic approach in my research.

Black Consciousness as an ideology according to Biko (2017 [1978], 110):

> I think basically Black Consciousness refers itself to the black man and to his situation, and I think the black man is subjected to two forces in this country. He is first of all oppressed by an external world through institutionalised machinery, through laws that restrict him from doing certain things, through heavy work conditions, through poor pay, through very difficult living conditions, through poor education, these are all external to him, and secondly, and this we regard as the most important, the black man in himself has developed a certain state of alienation, he rejects himself, precisely because he attaches the meaning white to all that is good, in other words he associates good and he equates good with white. This arises out of his living and it arises out of his development from childhood.

It can be seen in Biko's (2017 [1978], 110) own definition of Black Consciousness it is centred around the Black man. Smith (1989, 60) argues that in many ways the focus and celebration of the Black man further marginalises Blackwomen as blackness becomes attached to masculinities.

This male dominated view reflects the time in which the Black Consciousness Movement emerged, as the role of women in society was often based on traditional gender roles. The fact that the BCM focused primarily on men was not unusual. For Mamphela Ramphele this ideology was partly taken from English culture which did not deem women as full citizens. Race was central to Black Consciousness as the overarching oppressive force (Yates, Gqola & Ramphele 1998, 90). One such experience for Ramphele (1999, 55), whose political journey also started as a young woman during her studies in Medical School at the University of the North. She credits her time at university, for exposing her to political debates and exchanges with people such as Steve Biko, where she was able to learn a plethora of new concepts and information, such as history about her country that she did not previously have access to. However, she affirms what many other women involved in political debate at the time have

also said, that “no women were included in these narratives at the time”. Gqola (2001, 134) states that this position is curious as it assumes there is a hierarchy of oppressions, and that one oppression does not bleed into another.

Gqola (2001, 135) goes on to state that this was one of the biggest weaknesses for the Black Consciousness Movement, there was a tendency to not acknowledge discussions around difference in Black society as “[t]he quest for Black solidarity took precedence over the need to criticize other Black people and organizations opposed to apartheid” (Gqola 2001, 135). Instead for Ramphele (1991, 215) women were involved in the Black Consciousness Movement specifically because they were Black, not because they discussed issues of gender. Gqola (2001, 137-138) states that according to Thenjiwe Mtintso, an activist and member of BCM, Blackwomen were welcomed into these spaces, and encouraged to be political, however there was still an expectation that women would be subservient. As Meer (1997, 6) argues women in South Africa’s liberation movements were often seen as playing a supporting and sometimes less significant role, caring for the home and children. Yet, their position in these movements was two sided, they were expected to fulfil traditional gender roles such as cooking and cleaning while also being expected to assume military roles similar to those of men in the movement. I intend to consider these complex identities and objectives in my study as many of the participants discussed this dichotomy.

There are multiple definitions of ‘Blackness’, the Black Consciousness understanding of Black was “all South Africans on the receiving end of historical discrimination grounded in race” (Gqola 2001, 132). Steve Biko asserted that blackness was constituted by consciousness, one’s choosing to be Black as opposed to choosing to be “non-white” which was political (Lewis and Baderoon 2021, 5). As Biko (2017 [1978], 52) asserts:

1. Being black is not a matter of pigmentation - being black is a reflection of a mental attitude.
2. Merely by describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being.

He goes on to emphasise that being “non-white” does not automatically make one Black. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, I have used the Black Consciousness definition of Black as all of the women in this research report have been informed by this consciousness.

One of the challenges of the women who were the founders of the women's movement within the Black Consciousness Movement was to engage with Black Consciousness ideology and challenge the space of rights of women within the ideological framework.

This has led to the key research questions that I address in this paper, which are what have been the experiences of Blackwomen in the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa? Secondly, how have Blackwomen used the space they had in a male dominated movement? Finally, I have considered what Blackwomen's voices have said in liberation movements in South Africa, particularly with regard to Black Consciousness Movement.

Brief Participant Introductions

Rowayda Halim

Rowayda Halim has been involved in the BCM since her teenage years living in Lenasia where she was introduced to politics. Her learning look place in spaces such as the Peoples Experimental Theatre (PET), which was a BC aligned theatre group formed in Lenasia in the early 1970s.

Jacqui Zimba

Having grown up in a family almost exclusively of Black Consciousness activists in Alexandra, Jacqui Zimba has been involved in the movement for her whole life. Jacqui refers to herself as a child of the universe who is still an active member of BCM.

Sibongile Mkhabela

Sibongile Mkhabela says she grew up in the Black Consciousness Movement, following her older brother around as he went to discussions and protests, and then moving some of these discussions to their family home. Her school environment also played a large role in her political consciousness, as she grew up in Soweto, surrounded by political action.

Unjinee Poonan

Dr Unjinee Poonan[4] was born in Lenasia, and similarly to Rowayda, this is where she began to engage with Black Conscious ideology. Having been raised in a conscious household, she had

[4] Dr Unjinee requested that I refer to her by her first name after this initial introduction.

parents that encouraged her and her three brothers to question what was happening around them. This was one of the major factors that led her to the Black Consciousness Movement.

Mmagauta Molefe

Mmagauta Molefe was born in Alexandra and raised in Soweto. She began her political journey in her youth, joining meetings at the Young Women's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Donaldson Orlando Community Centre (DOCC) with friends. It was at these meetings that she began to engage in conversations regarding both American and South African politics.

Daphne Koza

Mama Daphne Koza[5] was born in Witbank, Mpumalanga and when she was four years old her family moved to Sharpeville when her father's job relocated him. Born into a religious family and going to church she was introduced to politics in these spaces. She was then sent to school in Swaziland in an attempt to escape Bantu Education[6] in South Africa.

In this research report I investigate whether the BCM, as a liberation movement, had any clear agenda for the emancipation of Blackwomen, and to what degree the gains made for women's rights through the struggle, as witnessed in the changes made by the ANC led government and a new constitution adopted in 1996, were incidental or intentional to the broad liberation of South Africans.

My research explores the existing literature on Blackwomen in South African liberation movements, in order to assess the gaps in literature on how they experienced their participation as well as to inform my own theoretical perspective and to offer an overview of the place of Blackwomen in the BCM. Therefore, literature used includes texts on blackness, feminisms, and national liberation. I have chosen to explore these areas as they are fundamental to this research report. Each of these themes plays an integral role in understanding Blackwomen's experiences.

[5] Throughout this paper I am using the prefix Mama for Mama Daphne as this is her preference. The rest of the participants in this research have asked me to refer to them by first name.
[6] The Bantu Education Act came into effect in 1954 under the apartheid government and controlled the education system accessible to Black South Africans. "Bantu Education and Racist Compartmentalizing education." South African History Online. Accessed at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/bantu-education-and-racist-compartmentalizing-education

There is a growing movement to collect and archive the experiences of Blackwomen in South African liberation movements. One such example is Vahed (2015, 129) who states that "[t]he historiography of the national liberation struggle in South Africa is dominated by the feats of heroic male activists, in which women's activism and the impact of the antiapartheid struggle on women and families are largely occluded. The past decade has witnessed the growth of a more inclusive 'struggle' historiography due to the mushrooming of women's biographies and autobiographies". It is necessary to contextualise gender within the historical epoch in which this movement was formed, as the topics of gender and national liberation become intertwined requiring more in-depth discussions on women and their experiences.

Methodology

In writing this research report I have drawn on the idea of historical anthropology which Vaughan (2004, 321) defines as "historical ethnography: an attempt to elicit structure and culture from the documents created prior to an event in order to understand how people in another time and place made sense of things". To engage this approach, and in an attempt to connect past and present, I am using documents, interviews, life histories and narrative to understand how Blackwomen have traversed these spaces. These are all archives in their own capacities.

While conducting my research I became aware of the gaps that are encountered when using an ethnographic approach. The process is limited in terms of factors such as recall, time available for engagement, selection by the person telling the story, and memory making the archive subjective.

Storytelling is an important methodology particularly when researching a group of people whose voices have been marginalised, such as Blackwomen, whose stories are seldom represented in history books. While any research method has strengths and weaknesses, this too is the case with storytelling. Tosh (2002, 2) states that memory is not fixed. This means that memory is a fragile and transitory aspect of storytelling. Memory can be shaped in a way that the teller of the story wants the listener of the story to hear it. Again, much of the story may be forgotten. As people get older their recall of events begins to fade. Sadly, this is how history fades from the owners of it.

While there may be challenges with using an ethnographic approach, this is still important history, and it is for the interviewer to be conscious of the challenges and find ways to navigate this. This is why I embarked on this study as I feel it is a small contribution to archiving the bravery and vision of the group of women who I interviewed, and their role in shaping Black Consciousness and the road they carved for young women.

As is stated by Hamilton et al (2002, 10) "[t]he very idea of a discernible 'gap' was problematised, with the archive being stressed as [a] sliver rather than as incomplete whole". The archive should not claim to be complete, or to be whole. In some ways there will always be missing pieces this is because archives are made, therefore they are subjective and cannot claim to be complete. In order to have more representative archives, they must be refigured. Peterson (2002, 30) however, states that attempts at refiguring the archive must be intentional. This is important because as Peterson (2002, 30) mentions, many of the existing "official" archives are remnants of the intentional exclusion of certain peoples and histories. This can be seen not only in the content carried in the archive, but how inaccessible these spaces are as remnants of apartheid. It is for this reason that I have used both the existing literary archive on this subject, and I have spoken directly to Blackwomen to write on what has been left out of these literary archives.

Semi-structured interviews as well as in-depth and oral life history narratives have been used. Life history narratives weave together information from interviews, and theoretical and historical archival information. Life history narratives told through oral history allows us to look into the personal lives of people and contextualise them in broader historical narratives. This also allows for the passing down of histories from generation to generation (Thompson 1998, 21-22). These life history conversations were conducted with the participants' knowledge and consent, as the intention of these interviews was to have a guided conversation (Bernard 2006, 211; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006, 315). A benefit of using the semi-structured interview approach is that the participants answered a set of questions, following a clear guideline. However, it also allowed the space for them to express themselves and assisted me in collecting important information regarding Blackwomen's experiences, as well as knowledge on the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa (Bernard 2006, 3). I then conducted follow up interviews with the participants in order to to fill in any unclear areas and to ensure I collected as much rich detail as possible.

In order to provide some necessary contextual and theoretical background for these interviews primary and secondary sources have been used. This includes textual analysis of literature on the experiences of Blackwomen, feminisms, and texts on the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. These sources have been analysed to understand the place and experiences of Blackwomen in the BCM, as well as to understand the gaps in the literature that my research aims to discuss.

The ethical considerations are of paramount importance in research of this nature. When using ethnography it is essential that the interviewees are aware of how the research will be used and what it will be used for. All participants in this process were well informed about the research and research objectives before engaging in any form of interviews or conversations. After explaining the process, I asked them to sign a consent form to ensure that they approved of the use of their stories. There were two independent interviews carried out with each participant, thus also ensuring that should they change their minds, this also gave the opportunity to reconsider whether they wanted to continue with the process. Throughout our conversations, we took breaks where necessary to regroup. It was made clear at the beginning of the interview that this was how we would conduct the interview. It has always been my commitment to conduct this research in a respectful and ethical manner.

This intergenerational transference of knowledge is a beautiful concept. Mhlungu (2018, 74-75) reflects a similar idea by painting the image of the glass ceilings that have been cracked by generations of women before us. If not for Blackwomen such as the women in this paper, we would not be breaking our ceilings. The chapters that follow tell the stories of the efforts of women before me, who broke boundaries and left doors ajar for generations of women after them to enter, which should not go unrecognised.

Chapter 1: Conscientisation of Young People in South Africa

Introduction

In reflecting back on my own early political awareness, I realise how important early childhood memories are in shaping later consciousness and political action. I recall a striking incident that happened in Yeoville, a suburb close to the central business district of the City of Johannesburg when I was about 6 years old in the early 2000s. Police were roughly rounding up African foreign nationals into the back of police trucks. I stood there shocked and confused about why people were being treated this way. This was as my mother was telling a young police officer that what they were doing was wrong. He said, "I agree but I am just doing my job". This incident on the streets of Yeoville, which I did not understand at the time, but only remember my mother taking on the police in an attempt to change the situation she saw as unjust, this together with the fact that I heard all the 'ists' and 'isms' at the dinner table, such as "colonial-ism", "racism", "Pan Africanism" later shaped my own Pan African thinking and an awareness of the importance of early political conscientisation. This prompted me to explore, in this chapter, participants' early memories of political awareness – from Rowayda's experiences of the 1950s potato boycotts to Jacqui's experiences of growing up around Black Consciousness.

The women I interviewed all had different experiences of being conscientised. Freire (1974, 24-25) states that "conscientisation implies going beyond the spontaneous phase of apprehension of reality to a critical phase, where reality becomes a knowable object, where man takes an epistemological stance and tries to know". What does conscientisation then mean for women? This is a process that many of my participants spoke of in different ways, a coming into consciousness as Blackwomen in South Africa. hooks (2000, 7) discusses the relationship between this consciousness raising and feminism. She argues that feminists are made, they are not born knowing; this entails actively learning about the systems in place and the institutionalisation of patriarchy. The early childhood experiences of Blackwomen in the BCM impacted this learning.

Magadla (2020, 5) and Honwana (2006, 1) then make the point that children have always been at the forefront of battle around the world. This even as they are conscious or unconscious of their learnings and potential. This chapter therefore speaks to the importance of early childhood and adolescent experiences of women, and how this later shaped their own consciousness, and in turn, Black Conscious thinking.

Coming Into Consciousness

Jacqui

My participants spoke of the way they came to this consciousness. Jacqui and Sibongile explained how they were born into environments shaped by Black Consciousness. Jacqui said realising she was Black happened simultaneously with realising what Black Consciousness was; thus, it was a completely "natural" progression. Musila (2019, 69) explains the two ways of 'becoming Black' by making reference to scholars such as Sartre, Fanon and Kruks:

> the two ways of becoming black: in the sense of being raced through the white gaze, and in the sense of awakening to an immanent black consciousness and grappling with what it means to embrace and live out this consciousness, in a world that prefers to make one black à la the white gaze.

Much like many of the participant's personal experience, Musila's (2019, 69) experiences of the South African academy involved navigating both of these as a Blackwoman.

Having grown up in a family of Black Consciousness activists, Jacqui said, "I do not think anyone influenced me. I didn't know anything better but to follow Black Consciousness". This is because almost everyone in Jacqui's family was involved in the movement, including her parents whose names she has chosen not to share. As hooks (2015 [1990], 46) states many Black homes were "a homeplace that affirmed our beings, our blackness, our love for one another was necessary resistance". This is true for Jacqui whose home was a site of political activity, of resistance to the apartheid regime. Thus, from a young age Jacqui was immersed in politics, from her family home to BC youth groups.

When I asked about how her family came to be involved, she quickly said:

> You become Black Consciousness the minute you realise your blackness. The minute you are born, and you realise that you are being treated more different than other people. Then you are Black Conscious. You are conscious of your surroundings and your creation.

Only a few members of her extended family were not BC, instead they joined the African National Congress (ANC). One major difference being the pace that the leadership of the ANC adopted, as well as the ANC's relationship with non-Black organisations which was reflected in the 'Peoples Charter' of 1955 (Biko 2017 [1978], 72-73). However, despite these differences in political views, there were no rifts based on political affiliation in the family, or in fact, in

the community-at-large, until in Jacqui's opinion the apartheid government instigated what became termed as "black on black violence" where "brothers started seeing enemies in each other". The concepts "black on black violence" and "swart gevaar" (black danger) were tools used by the apartheid government to justify the separate living conditions of Black peoples to contribute to Black peril.

This kind of language was used to frame Black South Africans as innately violent. This was a tactic used by the National Party to assure white people that violence was an innate characteristic of Black people[7]. In the same vein, it is commonly understood in South African academia that the term "black on black violence" was a myth used to justify white violence. When looking at the Native Land Act of 1913, which demarcated South African land to different racial groups, one is able to see the ways in which the apartheid government separated ethnic groups as well as rural and urban Black people. This entrenched a system of separation created by apartheid and by early colonial authorities in the country. This created divisions based on ethnic lines and solidified their ideas physically. These laws also limited the movement of black South Africans to urban spaces and played into ideas of Black peril (Beinart & Delius 2014, 667-668).

The impact of the divisiveness of the Native Land Act of 1913 was felt throughout the country for years, and the effect of this apartheid legislation was deeply entrenched in the lives of people. However, despite this divisiveness people continued to push boundaries and interact with each other beyond these lines. This can be seen through the story told by Jacqui about leaving a designated Black area and going into a designated Coloured for BC aligned political gatherings. This shows the importance of the Black Consciousness Movement in positioning itself against the divisive nature of apartheid in separating people into categories such as Coloured, Black, and Indian.

Jacqui describes her trips to the Bosmont Hotel, in the south of Johannesburg were a key experience of her childhood and adolescence. Children and teenagers would gather in Alexandra and were then transported to the Bosmont Hotel in droves for political education.

[7] Kunene, Elisha. "Swart Gevaar Redux: The Anatomy of Fear and Violence." Daily Maverick, February 24, 2016. https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-02-25-swart-gevaar-redux-the-anatomy-of-fear-and-violence/.

Bosmont was historically designated a Coloured area in the west of Johannesburg[8]. According to Jacqui, the owner was classified Coloured, presumably by the apartheid government, and was a supporter of the Black Consciousness Movement and would therefore have been seen as "politically Black" despite the apartheid government's adamant attempts to segregate people (Biko 2017 [1978], 56). He gave the space and support to the political education meetings at his hotel, even though it was a dangerous position to take due to laws against political meetings and the possibility of raids. For Jacqui thinking back, this relationship between Alexandra and Bosmont was an important one as it was an engagement between Black and Coloured activists, within and under the umbrella of the Black Consciousness Movement, a symbolic image of people coming together across the lines drawn by apartheid ideology.

At these meetings, according to Jacqui, older activists would meet with the children and encourage them to interact and learn about what was happening in the country at the time. These meetings became a space for many young activists to develop their own political outlooks as they weaved in teachings of politics both locally and internationally. It was in these meetings that Jacqui learnt about people such as Harriet Tubman, Angela Davis and Malcolm X as well as Steve Biko, to show some of the similarities between the anti-racist movements in the United States of America and South Africa.

These meetings offered space for political conscientisation but also a time for socialising and learning. Jacqui did not see these meetings as political when she was younger; she saw them as a space to have fun.

While laughing, Jacqui also spoke about the food that they all enjoyed, specifically the biltong. She also enjoyed the recordings they would watch after meetings of people such as Malcolm X and Marcus Garvey addressing large crowds of people in the 1950s and 1960s. In these speeches they condemned racial segregation and police violence, which resonated with the young South African students.

When reflecting on the sense of community experienced within such a difficult time in apartheid South African history, Jacqui spoke with a sense of pride. These were safe spaces for youth, as Jacqui so lovingly put it:

[8] "Johannesburg the segregated City" South African History Online. (29 March 2011). Accessed at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/johannesburg-segregated-city.

> This is just how close the BC family was. It didn't matter whose child you are, or who you are, where you come from. All they were interested in was building you politically, psychologically and in all respects … It was just beautiful; life was just easy. Even though we were oppressed [and] the living conditions were unbearable. But because we were a close-knit family, things were good. The Biko family. The Winnie Kgware family.

Winnie Motlalepule Kgware was mentioned by almost everyone I spoke to in the process of conducting my research. Kgware was elected in 1972 as the first president of the Black People's Convention (BPC), a BCM-affiliated community-based organisation, and she stood as a key figure for women involved in the BCM[9]. Having a woman in leadership was important to the many women involved in this movement as the people presented as being at the forefront of this movement was often men.

Jacqui highlights a sentiment often felt by people and spoken about when reflecting on life during apartheid – that while there were horrendous atrocities taking place during the apartheid regime, there were still spaces in which love, and connection was taking place. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) speaks about African women's ability to move with agency even through harsh conditions. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) discusses the six mountains on a Blackwoman's back which represent the interlocking oppressions faced. While these burdens are ever-present, and weigh heavily on the shoulders of Blackwomen, it does not stop Blackwomen from moving (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994 cited in Gqola 2001, 12). In fact, Kuzwayo (2018 [1985], 276) asserts that although they did not always succeed in their resistance, Blackwomen never surrendered to these burdens. Instead, they "have always put up a commendable struggle" which can be seen throughout the stories of all of the women written about here.

Rowayda

Across Johannesburg, in the west of the city, in a township called Lenasia classified as an Indian area under apartheid, Rowayda had been engaging in Black Consciousness thinking and activism in the 1970s, a decade earlier than Jacqui.

[9] "Winnie Motlalepule Kgware." South African History Online. (10 November 2020). Accessed at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/winnie-motlalepule-kgware.

While Jacqui grew up in a family steeped in Black Consciousness, Rowayda's consciousness came through slowly. Rowayda's idea of slowness is reminiscent of Peterson's[10] idea of 'slow scholarship'. This concept necessitates understanding that knowledge is based on accumulative experiences, emphasising that knowledge is a journey and that life experiences build on one another to form this knowledge.[11]

She was raised in a family and community that were low key about protests against apartheid. This phenomenon exists in struggles all over the world. There is a connection between Rowayda's idea of slowness within her life, and Chigumadzi's (2021) argument that it is in such silences that rich information can be found. Rowayda's political consciousness developed very much in her own mind as she watched what was happening around her, from land confiscation to politically inclined theatre. It was only later in life when she actively went into any political spaces by joining meetings in Lenasia.

As we sat in the sun at a café, drinking our coffees, Rowayda and I began our interview speaking about her life. She grew up on a farm in Grasmere which was later confiscated by the government during apartheid, Rowayda did not provide any further information on why, but confiscation of land was not an uncommon practice in apartheid South Africa. Histories of land dispossession remain painful in South Africa; perhaps Rowayda's reticence on this spoke to this collective trauma felt by many in the country.

Land confiscation and dispossession in South Africa dates back to the 1650s when land was seized from the Khoikhoi and the San for colonial expansion. In post-apartheid South Africa, the newly elected 1994 government, the African National Congress initiated processes allowing for people who lost their land after 1913 to put in applications for restitution. In 2013, the ANC opened this to include claims from before 1913. Kuzwayo (2018 [1985], 64) details the story of her own family's land being confiscated in 1974. This land was owned and cultivated by her maternal family for almost 100 years before it, and other farms in the area, were taken away from them and placed under law deeming it illegal for Black people to own land in the area. Years later, this has remained an issue in South Africa as many people have

[10] "The last professor has gone." Boundless Freedoms…Hugokacanham. (17 June 2021). Accessed at: https://hugokacanham.wordpress.com/2021/06/17/the-last-professor-has-gone/.
[11] I will unpack the idea of journeying in the following chapter.

been unable to reclaim confiscated land.[12] As Du Plessis (2011, 45) states "by the time of the advent of the new South Africa, about 17 000 statutory measures had been issued to segregate and control land division, with 14 different land control systems in South Africa. Before the change an estimated 3,5 million people had been displaced by apartheid land law, and 80 percent of the people in South Africa lived on 18 percent of the land". This means of suppression of rights and most importantly land rights, affected the lives of millions of people, including Rowayda's family.

However, Rowayda does remember the first political event in her home that started to raise her consciousness. When Rowayda was five years in 1959, the potato boycott took place in South Africa. Her father said the family would participate in this, saying "no potatoes in this house". She recalls that the family ate sweet potatoes. The boycott was launched by the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in support of farm workers in the Eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga) prompted by poor working conditions, including long working hours and minimal pay[13]. This was seen as one of the most successful early boycotts led by the African National Congress (ANC).

Rowayda explained that during apartheid people who challenged the government were often too afraid to speak out, therefore most people spoke about politics in hushed tones. Chigumadzi (2021) discusses understanding the nuances of these silences, that silence is often because the world has forced certain people into silence[14]. In the South African context, communities were often deeply affected by this, however it was through the silence that they organised and manoeuvred. For Rowayda's family and community this included participating in protests such as the potato boycott, while not speaking outwardly. She recalled:

> I think, to put it in a nutshell, on the outside communities were perceived to be conservative. Meanwhile, there were issues that they were addressing under the radar, so to say. Not necessarily outwardly. But they were talking about it. But there was lots of fear. There was a lot of fear. Because people just went missing in those days, you

[12] "Land: dispossession, resistance and restitution" South African History Online. 25 May 2022. Accessed at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/land-dispossession-resistance-and-restitution.
[13] "SACTU launches national potato boycott." South African History Online. Accessed: 15 August 2022. Accessed at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/sactu-launches-national-potato-boycott.
[14] Chigumadzi (2021) highlights that for many women, silence can also be an act of resistance. Silence is not always forced by others, sometimes it is a deliberate act by a person as a way to assert their agency, as a way to show that they too can choose when to and when not to share information.

didn't know where they were. People just got picked up and put into prison. So, there was a lot of fear at the time.

Motsemme (2004, 910) echoes this stating, "[r]einterpreting silence as another language through which women speak volumes, allows us to then explore other, perhaps hidden meanings regarding the struggle to live under apartheid". Motsemme (2004, 910) maintains that these silences allow us to see stories of apartheid where traumas have been experienced, showing that the violence's and atrocities of apartheid infiltrated families and homes, torturing people at every level both physically, and mentally, both individually and communally.

Biko (2017 [1978], 83) argues that the apartheid state intentionally instilled this fear in Black people in South Africa. Undermining people in this way made it that much harder for them to outwardly resist. Rowayda linked the experience of fear to her own family, saying they like many others were not outwardly political but there was a sense of consciousness. Her mother, Julie Halim, reflected on this too when speaking to the young Rowayda, saying things such as "look at that white man sitting there, and I'm supposed to call him baas". This shows that children were brought up being told and knowing that something was not right, but not knowing exactly what it was. 'Baas' meaning 'boss' in Afrikaans, was the word Black people in the country were forced to use to refer to white men. There was of course very dehumanising reality of an older Black person having to refer to someone younger than them as Baas. This was also reflected in the infantilisation of Black people, Black men were often referred to as 'boy' and Blackwomen as 'girl' regardless of their age.

Rowayda's family then moved to Albertville. This area was declared a 'whites only area' in the 1960s which forced the family out, again. They moved from Albertville, to Bosmont and then settled in Lenasia, where their house was bought under an Indian family member's name. This was done because under apartheid law, racial groups were divided into different parts of the country meaning legally Rowayda's immediate family, who were classified as 'Malay' could not buy the house themselves.

Recalling the past, Rowayda then went on to explain that her plunge into politics came from her time at Coronationville High School where there was a student named Benjamin Lowe who was a member of the South African Student Movement (SASM). SASM was organised to encourage relations between students nationally; this allowed them a unified voice to speak out

about their grievances. Later they played a large role in organising the June 16, 1976, Soweto Uprising[15]. Lowe encouraged the other students including Rowayda to protest. This included sit ins in the staff offices and wearing black T-shirts on Republic Day. While Rowayda did not mention why they chose to wear black on this day people involved in BC often wore Black when protesting. It is interesting that the colour black has been worn for decades all over the world as the colour of protest[16].

This specific protest was directed at the 31st of May 1961, the day that the Republic of South Africa was declared under the Nationalist government. The act of declaring South Africa as a Republic meant that South Africa left the Commonwealth. Some argue that this separation from the British Commonwealth gave the apartheid government space to instil even more policies related to separate development than previously[17].

Rowayda recalls this as "her period of awakening" before she fully understood politics. While living in Lenasia her brother introduced her to Peoples Experimental Theatre, a Black Consciousness group that ran political programmes in the form of theatre productions as a conscientisation process. Going to watch their plays is where Rowayda began to fully understand what was happening around in apartheid South Africa. Biko's (2017 [1978]) emphasis on the importance of the arts in politicisation is clear here again, as with Jacqui.

There were many other political organisations in Lenasia including the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) who held regular meetings that Rowayda attended and were in some ways foundational to her political consciousness. The Natal Indian Congress[18] was established in 1894, and the Transvaal Indian Congress[19] was established in 1903. Both the NIC and TIC were formed to fight against the years of oppression faced by Indian people in South Africa. While the NIC and TIC were fighting alongside movements

[15] "South African Students Movement." South African History Online. Accessed: 24 June 2022. https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/south-african-students-movement-sasm
[16] "Protesters prefer black: How black became the color of choice for self-styled subversives." Mic.com. (19 January 2017). https://www.mic.com/articles/165545/protesters-prefer-black-how-black-became-the-color-of-choice-for-self-styled-subversives.
[17] The Republic of South Africa is Established." South African History Online. Accessed: 22 August 2019. https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/republic-south-africa-established.
[18] "Natal Indian Congress (NIC)." South African History Online. Accessed: 26 November 2021. https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/natal-indian-congress-nic.
[19] "Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC)". South African History Online. Accessed: 5 August 2021. https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/transvaal-indian-congress-tic.

such as BC, with a similar goal, many felt there were still collisions between the groups. The NIC and TIC were political groups formed solely by and for Indian people in South Africa. This exclusivity of the NIC and TIC did not appeal to Rowayda, but the inclusionary nature of Black Consciousness did, as it aligned with her personal beliefs. In her own words, this was a spiritual connection for her, the deep sense of belonging for all.

Unjinee

Unjinee's father was born in Mayfair, Johannesburg and her mother was born in Mpumalanga. They both moved to Lenasia, which is in the south of Johannesburg, and this is where Unjinee and her brothers grew up. While her mother was traditional in some ways, wearing sari's daily, she was also quite progressive in other ways. Everyone was welcome in their home, as her mother cooked for them all.

> The thread of the political was more ingrained in our consciousness and to be able to confront it when it did occur. Uh, sort of the ideal idealism of the home. Idealistically, the orientation. That's how I would describe it.

Having grown up in a progressive household with a multitude of people coming in and out of their house, Unjinee felt that the environment she grew up in was very different to that of many people around her as her progressive parents encouraged them to read widely and question what was happening around them, as she has put it "the thread of the political was ingrained in our consciousness".

As with Rowayda, Unjinee's political activity was formed in Lenasia. While her parents were progressive, she feels they were not necessarily political. This is an interesting convergence of ideas as it brings into question what 'being political' meant at the time. Many of the positions that they took would be seen as political in post-apartheid South Africa, as they were a direct rejection of apartheid ideology. One way in which her mother contributed to the movement was through feeding people. Unjinee has fond memories of people constantly coming in and out of her family home, sometimes for political meetings with her brother, and sometimes simply to rest. Her mother spread tablecloths, that Unjinee still keeps, and cooked large meals for people. This reflects the way in which many women aided the revolution. Rowayda mentions having been protected by aunties and mothers, some of whom she did not know, but who looked after her in the same way that Unjinee's mother looked after people in their home. These actions by women are often viewed as purely domestic and go unseen

when in fact they are often the core of organising and nurturing. Tamale (2020, 179) says a women's role is often seen as the carer and nurturer in private, while men are seen as the protectors in public. However, the work that many women did during these years, sustained people that protested in public. This was the work that numerous women did in attempts to protect their families (Motsemme 2004, 910).

This relationship to the political then grew as she became involved in the Black Consciousness Movement in Lenasia. She was introduced to BCM by her older brother who, like her, read widely and absorbed aspects of different ideologies, and finally settled on Black Consciousness. However, in Lenasia at the time, the BC movement was predominantly made up of men, with much fewer women present.

The PAC and ANC were banned following the Sharpeville Massacre, and as stated by Unjinee that "Black Consciousness was the force on the ground". Unjinee then went to the Transvaal College of Education, a teacher's college, in 1977 where she was once again immersed in a BC environment. Although there were no specific BCM meetings, student groups met and spoke often outside in communal student areas and social environments having conversations that often led to discussing Black Conscious ideology. While at college she joined the Student Representative Council (SRC) and later became its president. She feels this time in her life was full of movement saying: "as young people I always think of it as moving at the speed of light. That's what happened. It was a whirlwind". This was also true as her first year at the Teachers College, 1977, was only one year after the 16 June 1976 Uprising which sent shockwaves around the country and proved just how powerful student movements could be.

Student movement leaders were often rounded up by police at the hands of the apartheid regime as they were seen to represent what the regime was trying so hard to bury, revolution. As Unjinee recalls:

> The repression and violence and the extreme reaction and, and so it was a very very difficult time. And when I look at it now, I actually think it's that fervour, and it was that anger, and it was that fearlessness of us as youth. You're just doing it, you know. What I did know is that at any one point I could have been shot and killed. And you just do what you need to do regardless.

Mmagauta

Moving from Alexandra and Lenasia, Mmagauta spoke about her experiences growing up in Soweto. Mmagauta's upbringing fell somewhere in-between the experiences of Jacqui and Rowayda. Having been brought up in Soweto, she was in the middle of intense political action as Soweto was the township with the highest population during apartheid and was situated near the major city of Johannesburg. Before and following the 1976 Uprising, Soweto was one of the many areas in the country where students took action against the apartheid government[20].

Mmagauta's father "was very hostile towards the apartheid system but felt it was an adult war". Because of this belief, he never spoke to his children about his own political activity or position. However, when the police raided homes and were physically violent towards Black people in the area, her father resisted against this ill-treatment. He demonstrated his disdain in an act of defiance against their behaviour by demanding the police did not attempt this behaviour by speaking out to the police when he observed. This assertive opposition towards the apartheid system encouraged an interest in politics amongst the children of the household. As Magadla (2020, 1) asserts "African experiences of war have made visible the blurring of homefront, battlefront, combatants, and noncombatants" seen clearly in Mmagauta's family home.

Reflecting on her father's anger towards the reality of Black life under apartheid, Mmagauta remembers one particular day when a group of men, that her father was with, told the children to be careful and not to be on the street that day. She remembers a helicopter flying so close to them that her and a friend stood on the dustbin trying to throw stones at it. Mmagauta recalls the end of the day:

> I saw my father coming back. When my father went out he used to dress up very well. He would put on his jacket and his hat… and when he came back he didn't have his hat and some buttons from his jacket were not there. And then [my parents] sat in the bedroom. They were talking, they closed their door. They used to do that; their bedroom was like their headquarters. I don't know what they were talking about but for two days or so there was this fear in the township.

It was only later in life that she was able to piece together that this was the 21st of March 1960, the day of the Sharpeville Massacre. The Sharpeville Massacre was a Pan Africanist Congress

[20] https://www.sahistory.org.za/place/soweto-johannesburg. South African History Online. 26 October 2022.

(PAC) led anti-pass march. This was a nationwide campaign against the apartheid regime enforced 'dompas', an identity document that restricted the movement of all "non-white" people in the country (Pogrund 2006, 184-186). This march became a turning point in the liberation struggle against apartheid led by the Pan African Congress (PAC). The police opened fire, leading to the death of more than 60 people, and wounding hundreds of others (Pogrund 2006, 184-186).

While political action was taking place around the young Mmagauta, and as the struggle against apartheid accelerated in the early 1960s, her father would always say, "politics is for people who have finished school" and that the fight for equal rights and the dismantling of the apartheid system, was a war that needed to be fought by the elders. Children needed to go to school, and learn, not worry about what was happening around them. However, while her father tried to shield them from politics, in high school Mmagauta and her friends found themselves at student meetings in venues such as the Donaldson Orlando Community Centre (DOCC) and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) where they saw men who Mmagauta jokingly said, "didn't comb their hair, using some language that we didn't know but clearly it was politics".

This is such an interesting child's view of a changing world. The young men would have probably had afros, a strong symbol of the black consciousness era, no doubt combed but seemingly unkempt a seen through her young eyes in comparison to her father's PAC-style of dress. Her description of them speaking a language she did not understand points to political language used by young radical black consciousness university students.

Many of the "men who didn't comb their hair" that spoke at these meetings came from the University of Fort Hare, a historically Black university. Fort Hare was originally the South African Native College was founded in 1916 in Alice, Eastern Cape. Having been founded before the apartheid regime was instilled, Fort Hare has operated through years of racial segregation in the country. Yet it was one of the few institutions in the country where Black, Indian and Coloured students studied together. However, this changed when the National Party took over the university and announced it would be an institution for isiXhosa speaking students only[21].

[21] "University of Fort Hare History." University of Fort Hare: https://www.ufh.ac.za/About/Pages/History.aspx.

Fort Hare was a well-known Black institution in the 1960s, the period that Mmagauta is speaking to. Many African politicians across the continent studied at the university as it was a space of political debate. Therefore, the young men she is referring to no doubt had afros or similar hairstyles in keeping with the Black Consciousness style across the continent and the United States of America. In many ways this was also due to the growing 'Black is beautiful' movement, as Biko (2017 [1978], 115) stated:

> I think that slogan has been meant to serve and I think is serving a very important aspect of our attempt to get at humanity. You are challenging the very deep roots of the Black man's belief about himself. When you say "black is beautiful" what in fact you are saying to him is: man, you are okay as you are, begin to look upon yourself as a human being; now in African life especially it also has certain connotations; it is the connotations on the way women prepare themselves for viewing by society, in other words the way they dream, the way they make up and so on, which tends to be a negation of their true state and in a sense a running away from their colour; they use lightening creams, they use straightening devices for their hair and so on. They sort of believe I think that their natural state which is a black state is not synonymous with beauty and beauty … So in a sense the term "black is beautiful" challenges exactly that belief which makes someone negate himself.

Mmagauta explained that these students came "to share their knowledge, experiences and reading material with younger students". She says she often did not understand what the books, magazines and manifestos were saying because as with the young men who spoke to them at the YMCA and DOCC, these resources used political jargon in English, and they were often written for adults, and she was reading them as a child, but she continued to read them with the assistance of her brother. As with Jacqui's trips to the Bosmont Hotel, Mmagauta's trips to the DOCC and YMCA were both social and political gatherings. It was in these books, magazines, manifestos, and gatherings that Mmagauta learnt about people such as Harry Belafonte**,** an American singer and was involved in the civil rights movement in America[22] and the Black Panthers.

[22] "Harry Belafonte." Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Harry-Belafonte

The Black Panther Party for Self Defence, commonly referred to as the Black Panthers, was an American organisation that focused on Black nationalism, socialism, and armed self-deference. The Black Panthers were founded in 1966 in Oakland, California[23]. In sharing films, documentaries, and speeches of such movements, it was values such as these that the BCM were sharing and attempting to instil in the young people like Jacqui at the Bosmont hotel and Mmagauta at the DOCC and YWCA.

While Mmagauta cannot pinpoint an exact moment or memory that pulled her into politics, it was at these student meetings that Mmagauta realised politics was not only for people who have finished school, and that movements such as the South African Student Organisation (SASO) and the South African Student Movement (SASM) existed. SASO was formed in 1968 and inaugurated in 1969 and Steve Biko was elected its president. This was born out of a need for a Black student's organisation (Biko 2017 [1978], 10). SASM was the South African Student Movement and as explained by Sibongile:

> The South African Student Movement was formed by SASO because SASO realised that it needed to already build levels of consciousness amongst younger people. And so when they came down, and they were at schools, they still carried the mission of conscientising. So, it was intentional, it was deliberate. And many of us joined.

Sibongile

For Sibongile her older brother's presence in SASM and BC was one of the forces that drew her in. Her brother helped her with the readings and debating. While chuckling Sibongile said:

> So, I must say, my brother was a huge influence on me. And I loved hanging out with him. I'm not sure he liked hanging out with me as much as I liked hanging out with him. I'm sure he just like 'I can't get rid of this kid; she follows me everywhere'. I shadowed him everywhere.

It was through this shadowing that Sibongile interacted with her brother and his friends which began to influence how she viewed the world.

[23] "The Black Panther Party." National Archives: African American History. (22 March 2021). https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/black-power/black-panthers#:~:text=The%20Black%20Panther%20Party%20for,defense%2C%20particularly%20against%20police%20brutality

While considering the conscientisation of the Blackwomen I interviewed, all important voices of the early Black Consciousness Movement, the history cannot be written without the acknowledgement of the men, young and old who politicised the young women. Given the gender make-up of the society this is not surprising as men would have far more access to ideas and theories at the time. For Sibongile, one such man was Mr Mthimkhulu, the principal at Naledi High School. Mr Mthimkhulu was amongst the many educators at the school that pushed the students to look past the limits prescribed by Bantu Education and encouraged the students to understand themselves as young Black children in an anti-Black world. He set out to ensure the students knew their sense of self and what they were capable of.

Naledi High School, located in Jabulani, Soweto was at the centre of student uprisings against the apartheid government and its regime. One such uprising was on the 8th of June 1976 when security police went to Naledi High School to arrest Enos Ngutshane, the leader of the local branch of SASO. Students stood against this as they stoned police officers and burned their car. This was one of many protests led by students, as well as the 16th of June 1976 student uprising against the apartheid government's attempt to implement Afrikaans as the medium of instruction[24]. Sibongile, a young student activist at the time, formed part of the masses of students that protested that day.

Sibongile often discusses books that she was introduced to while at Naledi High School which influenced her conscientisation. This includes the writings of Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, and Chinua Achebe. Many of the debates they had at school and in study groups were about what was happening on the African continent. Sibongile joked that at first her only interest was in beating the other team in the debate, but in doing so, she realised how much more was happening in South Africa and the world at large. This prompted many of the students to go out and read beyond what they were given at school, broadening their understanding, and encouraging research.

When reflecting on her home space as well as being a woman in often male dominated spaces such as the BCM, Sibongile said:

[24] "Naledi Highschool is founded." South African History Online. (30 September 2019.) https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/naledi-high-school-founded.

> I could hold my own. And I suppose that came from following my brother for so long. And also, from being brought up by a mother who had no education but who gave me probably the best grounding I could ever hope for on gender. Because, you know, we grew up with a mother who says, 'I don't have boys and girls in the house'. And no one ever in my house would say 'I'm a boy, and therefore I don't… or I do...'.

In a piece written on her life[25], Sibongile frames her life very much around her mother reflecting on how her mother believed in the power of education. For Sibongile there was a strong connection between education empowerment and women at home. This was later reflected at the YWCA where she interacted with women in leadership, such as the writer and women's rights activist Ellen Kuzwayo. Both her home space and spaces such as the YWCA encouraged a strong sense of self in young women.

Mama Daphne

Mama Daphne was born in her family home in Witbank, and at the age of 4 her family relocated to Sharpeville. She attended Anglican church schools in the area and despite the fact that her parents did not attend school and could not read or write, they insisted that she have a strong education. In 1953 when Hendrik Verwoerd, then Prime Minister of South Africa, declared that the apartheid government would instil and formalise Bantu Education, which according to Mama Daphne was "a rotten education system", her parents made the tough decision to send her to a neighbouring country to escape. The Bantu Education system was put into effect in an attempt to infiltrate the education received by "non-white" students. This was done to restrict political activity that was growing in schools (Nxongo 2019, 15).

Growing up, Mama Daphne had a friend named Nombulelo whose father was a graduate of Fort Hare University, and also an ordained minister in the Anglican church. In 1959 Nombulelo's father wrote to the school in Lesotho and pleaded for them to allow Mama Daphne to join the school despite having grown up Presbyterian. She then went on to St Agnes High School in Lesotho. She then completed her high school at St Michaels Girls High School in Swaziland (now Eswatini). Once she finished high school, she had to return to South Africa for university.

[25] This piece is entitled 'I've Been Raised' in the book *Reflections of Women from the Black Consciousness Movement* (2018).

After having spent years trying to escape Bantu Education, she now had to return to the country to the University of Zululand. This was her only option for university, as her surname classified her as Nguni, and the University of Zululand was designated as a Nguni institution. Mama Daphne then began her degree in social work. She feels this was a turning point for her.

The year Mama Daphne began her degree, 1969, was the year that the Black students broke away from the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). The Black Consciousness Movement began to move into all of the "Bantu" institutions around the country. Mama Daphne reminisced:

> People were going from campus to campus. We were talking the "SASO manifesto". At each and every so-called Bantu institution we are talking "the SASO manifesto".

It was this campaigning of students that brought Mama Daphne into the movement. Students hitchhiked to SASO meetings to review the manifesto and engage in political discussion. They were all energised and ready to break away from NUSAS.

These dynamic meetings began to encourage students to engage more with what was happening around them. Students began to question their lecturers and the language used in lecture halls. As we spoke about this Mama Daphne stood up excitedly and exclaimed:

> Black Consciousness (claps). We were… we were eating it! Drinking it! We were so so radical and we were so so courageous. We were fearless!

This body language as she spoke, and the repetition of words made it so very clear how proud she is of the work they did. Reflections such as this show us the importance of organised student groups in South Africa's history.

While Mama Daphne enjoyed her time in student politics, she did not escape the wrath and the eye of the apartheid government. One day she was called into the rector's office once there she was threatened. Her involvement in student politics did not go unnoticed, instead she was told to stop all activity, or they would ensure her sister lost her job at the national radio station. At the time her sister was paying for part of Mama Daphne's university fees, meaning despite the fact that the rector did not threaten to expel her, she would still be deeply affected by the possible outcome. This is the extent to which the apartheid government monitored people in the country.

However, the fervour of these students shows through in Mama Daphne's response to this threat:

> So, he was using my sister as something to make me think "woo if my sister gets fired, I won't even finish this degree". But I didn't care! Because we were being harassed at university. Some students were being planted in our midst, as spies. So we were fired up! We were prepared to be expelled. We were prepared to be expelled.

Mama Daphne stood up as she narrated this memory. Reliving the feelings she had standing in that office over 50 years ago, steadfast in her beliefs. The action of students, such as her, reflects South Africa's long history of student led action and campaigns.

Mama Daphne did not stop her political involvement. Rather, after she graduated she began working for the Black Community Programmes (BCP), a development arm of the Black Consciousness Movement, housed at the SASO offices in Durban, Natal[26]. They were continually harassed by the security police, but she says that did not deter them from their political work. Mama Daphne continued her work in various programmes implemented by the Black Consciousness Movement despite over the next few decades, despite being continually watched and monitored by the Security Police. For her it simply became a way of life.

Conclusion

The road to consciousness is not straight, and it has been interesting to speak to my respondents about the various routes they took in learning about and engaging with Black Consciousness ideology. Through discussions with the women I interviewed it is clear that they all came to their consciousness at different times of their lives, and through different influences, most having heard about the movement from friends and family. Given the spaces they came from, and the manner in which apartheid segregated Black, Coloured, and Indian communities, if it were not for their entry into the Black Consciousness Movement, they indeed may never have met. Their diverse backgrounds and their coming together, is testimony to the work of the movement in bringing together Black people who were segregated by the apartheid government. This commitment to change and identity of the self would be seen through the next decades of struggle.

[26] Colonial powers carved South Africa into four main provinces namely, Transvaal, Orange Free State, Cape and Natal. Natal was later renamed KwaZulu Natal as South Africa gained its independence. The name is a combination of Natal (the previous name of the province) and Zululand (the name of a Zulu kingdom in the Natal region).

Chapter 2: Blackwomen's Conceptions of Black Consciousness

Introduction

Moving from how the Blackwomen in this research came into Black Consciousness and the figures that influenced them, this chapter focuses on understanding and reflecting on how these women conceptualise Black Consciousness. The chapter also focuses on how they have integrated this into their own personal belief systems. This will include a discussion of a re-evaluation of the concept through a gendered lens. In doing this, I am reflecting Biko's (2017 [1978], 22) own sentiments:

> Hence what is necessary as a prelude to anything else that may come is a very strong grass-roots build-up of black consciousness such that blacks can learn to assert themselves and stake their rightful claim.

It is important to understand how women define themselves, understand Black Consciousness and how this plays out in their lives. As Lorde, a Blackwoman, so aptly stated "… if I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive"[27]. In apartheid South Africa, the Blackwomen that I have spoken to were all constantly being defined by forces outside of themselves, in many ways something that was then of the utmost importance to them, was self-determination and self-definition, as is espoused in Black Conscious ideology.

In writing this chapter, I have returned to the conversations I had with these women as there is limited literature of Blackwomen's conceptions of Black Consciousness. I am choosing to use their experiences as the theory and basis of this chapter. It is from this point that I have built the literature to accompany this. The main concept behind this, is that there is no single point of entry into the Black Consciousness Movement. Rather, it is a journey into Consciousness. In this journey, informed by my participants I propose two main aspects namely, grounding oneself and then the recognition of the self in another. Therefore, the following chapter will investigate how they have come to define Black Consciousness, and how they relate this to their lives.

[27] "Audre Lorde: 'Learning from the 60s'" Black Past. (12 August 2012). https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1982-audre-lorde-learning-60s/

"In order to achieve real action you must yourself be a living part of Africa and of her thought"

Steve Biko (2017 [1978], 35)

Grounding

In order to enter Black Consciousness meaningfully, one must begin with Grounding. There are two factors at play in this, a movement towards self-love and a movement towards self-development. These processes bounce off of one another constantly. In this there is realising for oneself what Blackness is.

Grounding is a dynamic relationship that happens when self-love and self-development come into contact with one other. This is a theme across all of the conversations I have had, as is reflected by Jacqui:

> We must be able to take certain struggles beyond the icons. Steve Biko said Black Consciousness is a state of mind and a way of life. I am saying Black Consciousness is me. The way that I see myself and the way that I live which doesn't differ from Steve Biko's definition. But Biko's struggles then are not my struggles today. They are not your struggles today.

Jacqui brings to the conversation a discussion about the self being at the centre of Black Consciousness ideology. As I spoke with Rowayda I asked her to think about how she would define Black Consciousness ideology, she echoed what Gqola (2001, 132) articulates, that the apartheid system made it their objective to emphasise differences in people to encourage division. The basis of this was an attempt to create "a negative self image in those it sought to subjugate" (Gqola 2001, 132). The Black Consciousness Movement in turn sought to unite people within the groups that the apartheid government intended to divide, in including by the definition of the state, Black, Coloured and Indian, and defined them as politically Black. This Black self-redefinition was grounded in a recognition of the self.

While stirring her coffee and looking into the sky, Rowayda said:

> For me, Black Consciousness is about self… more than self-development. It's about self-determination. Black Consciousness goes far beyond skin colour. It's a lived experience, and it's based on the deep sincere need for equality at every level of society.

> But not just equality, but compassionate equality. Where people actually feel the need to treat everyone equal. And not at a superficial level, but at a very deep spiritual level that we are all the same. And that you cannot move forward if someone else is left behind. I think in a nutshell I would say to determine your own destiny and to… ah to have compassion for people around you.

This self-development and self-determination is the basis of this chapter, because, as is shown by all of the women spoken about, the journey of finding and then knowing the Self has accumulated into Consciousness, Black Consciousness. In doing this, they were redefining concepts and ideas that were fed to them by society. As Gwala (1972, 13) states:

> The Black who becomes aware of his Blackness and its implications in a racist society will often strive, to a large measure of success or failure, for self-definition… This is when Black Consciousness takes form. Black Consciousness calls for a redefinition of concepts. Cultural, economic, social and theological concepts as seen by the Black and seeing them through his own Black self.

Both Rowayda and Gwala (1972) reflect on the importance of the self. Self-love, self-definition, and self-development are all part of a journey of recognising the Black self, the next step is actualising and extending this realisation. Mmagauta reinforces this view:

> You realise that indeed, Black Consciousness is a way of life. It is nothing special. It is a way of life to empower ourselves. We were oppressed because we were black. So we needed to be strong psychologically to be able to come out of the operation. You need to be aware. In order to be aware, you need to be empowered. So you need to know who you are, you need to be able to define yourself as a human being and accept that you are not a lesser individual. And then once we have that strong psychological power, then you are able to fight the injustices of the world. But it needs to start with you.

For many this process of actualising the self was initially ignited in students by their educators in the school setting. Sibongile reflected on her time at school, and the consciousness that was instilled in her. While laughing she said at school:

> Many of the Zulu setworks, also had, you know, some political commentary in them, that we used to read. I remember that some of the prescribed works were banned during the school year. I think someone might, at some point, have said to the powers that be 'have you properly read this book? Do you know what they're telling them?'

At that point the books may have been taken out of the school curriculum, but many of the students had already seen the words. It is these foundational memories that have provided the basis of Sibongile's early memories of conscientisation. As reflected on in the previous chapter, this shows the importance of early childhood experiences on understanding one's surroundings.

Sibongile shows that the move towards Black Conscious ideology has always been a journey from self-actualisation to political consciousness.

> I don't remember at any point standing up and say at this point, now I commit to Black Consciousness. It just became how I saw the world. It's not something like a revelation. It's something that comes in slowly with discussions and conversations and self-reflection. And Black Consciousness starts with the self. So it gives you the confidence of who you are in what you how you think, and how you see things in the world. And, you know, later on, I get to get involved with issues of women and understanding a little better the issue of where women stood in our liberation movements. I was, at that time, working and engaging from a civil society perspective. And I suppose that gives you a proper perspective, because you're looking at life beyond political movements, but you're looking at socio economic issues and where women stood.

This slow journey of coming into consciousness is reflective of Rowayda's journey into consciousness and Peterson's[28] reminder that this slowness is essential. The building and accumulation of life experiences resulted in, for these women, Consciousness. The Black Consciousness Movement became a space in which conscientised people could come together. However, this did not absolve the movement of a gendered narrative.

In defining Black Consciousness Sibongile mentioned slogans such as 'Black man you are on your own' and 'You're Black and you're proud' aided in upholding her self-confidence and in understanding 'the self' as well as having her own agency:

> Black Consciousness allows me to engage from a position of strength and never come into a debate thinking we are coming from an under privileged background. You can't define yourself primarily from a negative.

Gqola (2001) also refers us to the gendered nature of some of these slogans, such as 'Black *man* you are on your own' which became a slogan of Black Consciousness. Gqola (2001) points

[28] https://hugokacanham.wordpress.com/2021/06/17/the-last-professor-has-gone/ . The last professor has gone. 17 June 2021.

to the fact that had such a slogan been said in one of the indigenous languages of South Africa, the slogan would inherently be genderless, translating in English to 'Black *person*, you are on your own'.

While taking Gqola's (2001) point into account, the slogans were still at their core about the self-actualisation despite the gendered language that was used. As Sibongile alludes to the importance of the slogans for black people were still enormously powerful and plays a role in uniting People. Another image of unity was spoken about by Jacqui.

The Handshake

I cannot oversimplify the journey from self-actualisation to seeing the self in another. In her childhood, Mmagauta was surrounded by men who ensured that they uplifted Blackgirls. While these men were not necessarily being outwardly political with their statements, when reflecting back on them now, Mmagauta sees how very political their statements were. When thinking about the similarities of the values she learnt at home from her father, and the values instilled in her as a student by Mr Musi, an educator who had a great influence on his students, I am struck by this generational transference of knowledge and of the acknowledgement of the importance of the Black self.

Unjinee's childhood also reflected this, having a father that was a teacher and encouraged progressive thinking in their household. When I asked Unjinee what drew her to Black Consciousness she took a pause and then said, "it just made sense to me". When discussing the environment she grew up in, and the people that were around her, Unjinee stated that:

> We were a highly conscientised group of people and there were people that thought like I do but weren't necessarily activists. That's the way they lived their lives, you know, I mean the thing is that it's very difficult under an extremely repressive regime. You could be taken in and killed at any time and so the extent to which people revealed themselves differed.

Unjinee then linked this to the many women she encountered that helped anti-apartheid movements in other ways. Many women did not actively participate at protests, but they supported people who did.

Sibongile felt this too as she said:

> During Naledi time if you look around, you know, what happens in 1972, ’73, ’74, ’75 there was turmoil at universities. And many of the students who were part of the South African Student Organisation (SASO), were suspended from universities, and many of them found themselves teaching at high schools. And that was a big part of our influence, because we had this huge coming in of very conscious teachers who had a view and who wanted to influence and wanted us to begin to think for ourselves. And so even my thinking around Black Consciousness was very much formed during those times, by the kinds of teachers that we had at school. The teachers would teach you history and say, remember *this* for your exams, and remember *this* for your life, because *this* is the truth. Every teacher was helping you to be the best of yourself.

School played a major role in the development of young people’s consciousness. These highly conscientised teachers, who had themselves been through this process of grounding and self-actualisation, then played a part in the grounding and self-actualisation of younger generations.

This building of community that started with young children then grew into a generation of Black Conscious political activists; Jacqui describes a symbolic gesture of this actualisation through the use of the term ‘tower’. This term was introduced by a general in the Azanian National Liberation Army (AZANLA). Jacqui said that in BC, ‘tower’ is a term of endearment accompanied by “the powerful handshake of BC” that members of the BC used to show that you do not have to relate by blood to see the humanity within others.

This reflects the Afro-centric view that “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu”, which is often translated as “a person is a person because of others” (Mfecane 2020, 4). This echoes the BC sentiment that community is at the centre, and that looking beyond the physical is essential. Sitting up and leaning forward while motioning with her hands, Jacqui explained the significance of this:

> When it comes to Black Consciousness we call each other ‘tower’. When you look at the definition of a tower you will understand that it all has to do with the strength. It doesn’t only mean physically but also psychologically and emotionally too. It doesn't matter whether you are a man or a woman, we shake hands and it's only then that you realise how strong your brother or sister is by the shake of the hand. You know because we touch, we extend, we touch, we pull, and we shake. Just to give you strength. You take my strength and I take your strength. We drink from each other's cups.

This recognition of the self in another, and vice versa, is an essential aspect of Black Consciousness. This is seen through the symbolism of the handshake, a physical acknowledgement of oneness and a formation of solidarity. The importance of touch is seen here, as in many ways it humanises the people involved, affirming their existence, showing that their individual selves are in fact connected.

Biko (2017 [1978], 35) echoes this:

> In order to achieve real action you must yourself be a living part of Africa and of her thought; you must be an element of that popular energy which is entirely called forth for the freeing, the progress and the happiness of Africa. There is no place outside that fight for the artist or for the intellectual who is not himself concerned with, and completely at one with the people in the great battle of Africa and of suffering humanity.

This too, reflects Lorde's[29] assertion that self-definition is essential, because if one does not define themselves for themselves, they are defined by others. It is interesting though, that Biko chooses to feminise the African continent, while masculinising the activist, once again showing that despite the assertion to be a living part of the continent, there seems to only be one gendered entity doing so. The self-actualised, living part of the African continent, is seemingly not a Blackwoman.

Conclusion

As our conversation came to an end, when asked if Rowayda is still involved in the Black Consciousness Movement she answered:

> I'm involved in the sense that my entire being is based on the Black Consciousness philosophy, as espoused by Steve Biko, but also my own ideas around development of the mind, development of the soul. Development in its purest sense of the being. I live Black Consciousness. I live uplifting young people. I live uplifting women.

This sentiment was shared by all of the women I spoke with. Whether or not they are still active member of the Black Consciousness Movement, they all still live Black Consciousness ideology.

[29] https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1982-audre-lorde-learning-60s/. Black Past. 12 August 2012.

As is seen above, for many, one's conceptions of Black Consciousness are so intertwined with one's conceptions of the self. An essential aspect of Conscientisation, therefore, is the acknowledgement of the Black self and what this means in the space around.

Through the interviews with the women I have spoken to it is clear that the first step to Black Consciousness in their lives was their own personal realisation of the Black self. This realisation was part of a journey that would connect them to a community with the same way of thinking about self and community. This is shown in multiple facets of the movement, from the symbolic handshake to the language used, which became strong symbols of unity.

Chapter 3: Side lining of Blackwomen

Introduction

Throughout history there has been little attention given to the involvement and contribution of Blackwomen within political spaces. South Africa is no different. This has much to do with male hegemony and the resulting male-centred approach and control of how history is written and memorialised (Kelly 1986, 2). As hooks (2015 [1990], 45) stresses, "we are currently in danger of forgetting the powerful role black women have played in constructing for us homeplaces that are the site for resistance. This forgetfulness undermines our solidarity and the future of black liberation struggle." hooks (2015 [1990], 45) goes on to warn that devaluating this role undermines attempts to "resist racism and the colonizing mentality which promotes internalized self-hatred." Through the experiences of the interviewees in this study, the chapter considers ways in which Blackwomen were constantly being side lined within the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and how they manoeuvred within the limited elbow room they had. Further, it raises the question of whether the interviewees consider the strides they made in the early days within the BCM, to have had an impact on the future status of women in the organisation and on gender relations in the society in general.

In researching the impact of the role women played in liberation organisations, the telling of Blackwomen's stories, by women is of utmost importance, as Mmagauta states:

> the stories are written by men, so they write about men. You know you'll never hear them saying "in 1974 Mamphela said this…", because they are men. In fact, I remember one time I had a problem when a professor wanted to negate the activism of Dr Mamphela. Mamphela did a lot for the community, but they never took the women seriously. They never took the women seriously and that's why there is no quotation.

The focus of this chapter is therefore on the gendered experiences of women in the BCM and their feelings about how they have been treated in BC spaces, including the levels of seclusion and exclusion they experienced.

"all the women are white, all the blacks are men, but some of us are brave"
Hull, Bell-Scott & Smith (1982)

The peripheralisation of Blackwomen from the retelling of history is clear. Despite their bravery, they are too often not put at the centre. Jacqui mentioned that a male comrade telling other people that she was not involved in the struggle, that it was only her parents that were involved. Yet she tells the story of handling guns at a young age, and being called in to other meetings and plans by people such as himself. This erasure of women, particularly by men within their spaces, is the basis of this chapter. This is reflective of Unterhalter's (2000, 174) words:

> Women may be ungendered equal comrades, they may be heroines who inspire, but somehow do not live the struggle. They may be the wounded, or the innocent, or the supportive relatives. In all of these guises they have no autonomy, no different political interests, and no struggle. Their views are always expressed or interpreted by men.

As Jacqui says, this hurts women who were involved. It diminishes the sacrifices they made and the trauma they went through, only to be erased from this history now.

As Sibongile reflects:

> When exiled people came back into the country, we saw that women's voices had been marginalised in sometimes what has been aimed to advance women. Women's desks and women's this and women's that. These are often programmes that are hardly fully and properly capacitated. We gradually see a marginalisation of women and women's voices.

Sibongile also talks about how this differs from when she was growing up as when she was younger women were at the forefront. Yet when you hear how women tell the stories now, they leave women out.

Jacqui was previously the Publicity Secretary of the Black Consciousness Movement. However, she started being aware of how differently she was treated by men, and also became aware of how men thought they could say whatever they wanted to and do things to undermine her. She decided she could not be in that space anymore, as being treated like that was not worth staying.

The fact that the political organisations themselves were spaces that did not respect women, while claiming to change the broader society, is an indication of what Blackwomen were up against. It was the space that should have been, and often claimed, to be the most open to challenging gender roles and identity.

An important space where women, and certainly most of the Christian interviewees, spoke about was the church. This in itself is one of the ironies of the South African reality. The teachings of the church played a major role in maintaining the status quo, not only in terms of race domination of white people over Black people but was also a space where the patriarchal notions of the roles of men and women in society, were reinforced. The church teaches community, and yet Blackwomen have in many ways had to create their own communities within the church. They have been able to reimagine the church as a site of resistance, and used the spaces that they made for themselves, but this was not handed to them.

For Biko (2017 [1978], 33) the place of Christianity remains a question:

> What of the white man's religion - Christianity? It seems the people involved in imparting Christianity to the black people steadfastly refuse to get rid of the rotten foundation which many of the missionaries created when they came. To this date black people find no message for them in the Bible simply because our ministers are still too busy with moral trivialities. They blow these up as the most important things that Jesus had to say to people.

Despite this, the Christian church became and has remained an integral place for many Black people in South Africa and has played an integral role in providing Black people with the space to navigate their faith. The Black Christian church in South Africa played a major role in the liberation of peoples. The church became important space in the liberation struggle, with all its complexities.

Many of these spaces were found or negotiated by Blackwomen. Sibongile, mama Daphne and Mmagauta all spoke of their experiences in Black Christian churches in South Africa. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa's Women's Manyano has been recognised as of great importance to Blackwomen in the country. Ngcobozi (2020, 10) reflects on such stories:

> "in the black church, the Manyano is the longest standing and most prolific African matriarchal organisation".

For Ngcobozi (2020) the Black churches were agents of change, as Black Christian women claimed these spaces to meet, debate and redefine their role within Christianity and the society at large. Ngcobozi (2020, 10) goes on to say:

> "[t]o this day, within the personal and private domain of black people and for black women specifically, the black church remains an integral part of communal black life".

The Women's Manyano gave women room to speak about topics that were key to them, including the Bible, societal issues, and personal life challenges. Blackwomen have used Manyano meetings as a space of resistance by politicising the church. They did this by reimagining what "Christian values" are and how reinterpretations of this may be beneficial. The Women's Manyano, and their members, have held a crucial space in reimagining Blackwomanhood and women's involvement in political activity (Ngcobozi 2020, 9).

However, for Sibongile while the Women's Manyano has undoubtedly been a very positive force and influence for Blackwomen in South Africa, it is still designed as a separate space to the mainstream influence of the church, that being controlled and designed by men. It was born out of the male dominated structures to be a part within the male centric and dominated church.

The Christian church has a long history in South Africa and has been an integral aspect of many Black people's lives. According to Biko (2017 [1978], 59), religion, in this instance Christianity, is so intertwined with society that it becomes embedded in behavioural patterns creating many of the boundaries people follow. Biko (2017 [1978], 59) goes on to argue that because of this, Christianity was used as a tool to subjugate Black people systematically and institutionally. Biko (2017 [1978], 61) so eloquently states:

> In a country teeming with injustice and fanatically committed to the practice of oppression, intolerance and blatant cruelty because of racial bigotry; in a country where all black people are made to feel the unwanted stepchildren of a God whose presence they cannot feel; in a country where father and son, mother and daughter alike develop daily into neurotics through sheer inability to relate the present to the future because of a completely engulfing sense of destitution, the Church further adds to their insecurity by its inward-directed definition of the concept of sin and its encouragement of the "mea culpa" attitude.

As a consequence of this, as it embedded itself in its institutionalisation this led to the creation of further policy, rules and boundary making that upheld and further deepened this level of subjugation.

In order to combat this, interest in Black Theology grew. Sibongile gave great emphasis to the Christian church and the role of Black Theology which encouraged one to look at one's faith as a liberator. As Biko (2017 [1978], 64) asserts, in order for Christianity to impact people, it must be reflective of their environmental problems, it must mean something to them. Sibongile joined the Student Christian Movement during the rise of Black Theology which placed emphasis on theological reinterpretation. She spoke of her God as the 'God of the oppressed'. As Christianity, had for so many years been used against Black people, this divergence was an important moment as it gave many people a space to turn to for strength and support. This was an important shift away from the way in which Black people were represented within the church and interpretations of scripture, which previously portrayed a "whiter" Christianity that did not reflect Black peoples lived experiences.

Mmagauta reflects on this when speaking about how the church, the bible and God have been used against Black people for centuries. It is for this reason that church members, both men and women, as well as church leaders later used this space to encourage people to speak up. The role of the church therefore spread further than faith, as churches were often used for political meetings. This reflects the notion that the Church was challenged by congregation members, to become a space more reflective of their own lives. Mmagauta spoke of the Black church as a place where she found her voice and saw other people stand up to debate aspects of the Bible, but also where members of the congregation would use church services to discuss politics. This is an overturning of the very nature of the type of Christianity that was encouraged by early missionaries as congregation members encouraged others within the church to join rallies, protests, and conversations.

Black Theology aimed to analyse scripture and the Church, in order to better reflect the lived experiences of Black Christians. According to Biko (2017 [1978], 33):

> Black theology seeks to depict Jesus as a fighting God … Thus in all fields "Black Consciousness" seeks to talk to the black man in a language that is his own. It is only by recognising the basic set-up in the black world that one will come to realise the

> urgent need for a re-awakening of the sleeping masses. Black consciousness seeks to do this.

Once again, this language is focused on the emancipation of Black *men.* In the language used, Blackwomen do not seem to have a place in this language.

Within the Black Conscious Movement itself an important formation was Imbeleko, the women's wing of the Black Consciousness Movement. There was undoubtedly a lot of thought put into the name, as 'Imbeleko' refers to a ceremony that takes place to celebrate the birth of a child. It also refers to the carrier that is used to hold a baby on a woman's back. It also refers to the removal of the umbilical cord from the mother. It is a powerful image, as it is essential to keep this in mind, naming the women's wing 'Imbeleko' because there is the belief that women carry the nation, and as Sibongile said, women carry the burden of family.

In a thesis focusing on particular Zulu ceremonies, Ngcongo (1996, vi) stated:

> Zulus regard it as a must to perform the imbeleko ceremony for every child in the family. The reasons for this ceremony vary from (a) thanksgiving ceremony, (b) the official introduction of the child to ancestors, (c) the rite performed late to protect the child from misfortunes, (d) and to provide an opportunity for naming the child.

There are also a number of other imbeleko ceremonies performed.

There is also an isiZulu proverb, "ingane engakhali ifela embelekweni" (a child who does not cry dies in the cradle/sling). The meaning behind this proverb is seen in the responsibility that has been bestowed upon the women's wing. Sibongile's reminder that women are seen to carry the nation and the family, the responsibility to cry out.

Despite the powerful imagery that 'imbeleko' evokes in describing the women's wing, the wing itself continues to be an area of contention for some women in the Black Consciousness Movement. Many women view the women's wing as a 'copout', as they feel the creation of the wing separates women's issues from that of men, taking this further to then evaluate women's liberation as separate to that of national liberation. These kinds of separations within a structure can in many ways work towards upholding and maintaining male dominance within the organisation. In some ways these separations also encourage a distinction between national liberation and women's liberation.

When asked about this distinction, Rowayda said, “there can be no liberation if you say women have to liberate themselves”, and Sibongile echoed this, first laughing, and then pointing out that they are one and the same thing. Political analysis needs to come from a gendered perspective and if not, national liberation loses its meaning.

On the 8th of March 1987, Thomas Sankara, president of Burkina Faso, echoed this while giving a speech entitled ‘The Revolution Cannot Triumph Without the Emancipation of Women’ in which Sankara (1990 [1987]) stressed the importance of including women in the revolution and the process of national liberation. As he expressed “[t]hough our men have already reached the edges of this great garden that is the revolution, our women are still confined within the shadows of anonymity” (Sankara 1990 [1987], 8). Walker’s (1983) book, from which the title of my own research came, goes in search of her mother’s garden, in search of the voice of her mother who comes to represent the voice of Blackwomen as a whole, who have too often been placed in the shadows Sankara (1990 [1987]) alludes to. So, while Sankara’s (1990 [1987], 8) sentiment is felt, he is still using terminology that encourages a sense of ownership through statements such as “our women”. Are women not their own? Or will women always, in some way, ‘belong’ to men?

Jacqui and Sibongile argued that the gender relations in the Black Consciousness Movement are not an anomaly, but rather reflect the patriarchal society in which we live. This is seen in how the movement is run and the sexual division of labour (Gqola 2001, 137). An example of this is when women are involved or invited to speak at events. In many ways women have felt that this is simply to tick boxes or to speak specifically on ‘women’s issues’ such as women’s health, they do not feel it is because their opinions are valued for the ‘greater cause’ of national liberation. Jacqui sees this as contradictory to the BC’s message, as they are, in theory, a non-sexist organisation. A similar sentiment was felt by Sibongile who questioned why women have been ‘deleted’ from retellings of South African history even though they were very obviously an important part of the country’s struggle movements. Gqola (2010, 8) states that this forgetting and unremembering is a calculated act that play into this power dynamic. Sibongile’s sentiments agreed with this when she stated:

> Part of it might be that we tell stories differently. Men have a need to tell stories with some heroism in them and women tell the story as is. Or sometimes we tell the stories with an intention of moving a generation forward.

This erasure, or unremembering of Blackwomen's contributions is reflective of a phenomenon seen time and time again in which women's voices are drowned out in retellings of history. (Masola 2020, 49) argues that the resistance to this unremembering is at the centre of creating a nation.

When speaking about the gender dynamics within the BCM, Rowayda took a pause, sighed, and then explained that anti-apartheid political movements reflected the patriarchal society in which they were located, while they may have been well intentioned at the beginning.

This turned our conversation to the issue of representation. AZAPO, the Azanian People's Organisation, was the first movement to have a woman as their president. Winnie Motlalepule Kgware began her political defiance by forming a Methodist prayer group on the campus of the University of the North, Turfloop, this then allowed student movements the space to organise. Kgware was at the helm of the formation of the first South African Students Organisation (SASO) branch at the university in 1969. In 1972 Kgware then became the first president of the Black People's Convention, a BCM-affiliated adult wing community-based organisation[30]. Rowayda highlighted the role of Kgware to illustrate that while patriarchal ideologies were rampant, many women still 'elbowed' their way into the centre. This mental, and sometimes spatial, elbowing was done out of necessity. A necessity to take up space despite men's reluctance.

Magaziner (2011, 48) explains:

> As the 1970s unfolded, activists first directly entertained the question of women's consciousness of themselves as women – with the move towards liberation as women that this entailed. This was in keeping with the 1960s' roots of Black Consciousness, which held that identity was something internal, formed in conversation and contestation with the external world of politics. But over the course of the next decade, although blackness remained in theory a matter of self-identification, gender was increasingly a matter of ascription.

[30] "Winnie Motlalepule Kgware." South African History Online. (10 November 2020). Accessed: 15 August 2022. https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/winnie-motlalepule-kgware.

While Blackwomen's racial identity was acknowledged as internal, a matter of self-identification, the roles ascribed to them by their "woman-ness" was bestowed upon them by men. This was inescapable.

Mmagauta's memory reflects this. While there were indeed many women AZAPO, at its inception, there were many women, however they sat at the back of the halls in which they met. A stark image of what was to come – the peripheralisation of Blackwomen. Not only was women's marginalisation physical, but it became ingrained in the movement.

The question arises whether having women in the organisational structure was convenient to men and furthered the male domination agenda. To be a female activist in Black Consciousness, Ramphele suggests, was to strive to be 'one of the boys'. This sort of politics rendered the male experience – and the male subject – normative.

This reality that for Rowayda, made Imbeleko a misnomer, as she stated :

> As a liberation movement, you don't need a women's wing. Everybody needs to be liberated equally in society … Why are we not all part of the bigger picture?

Often women were not part of the broader conversation. They would be encouraged to join groups that met separate to the larger group of men. Meaning they were involved to the extent that they were having politically focused conversations, but in spaces separate to the men, often in rooms to the side. It is clear that it was essentially not encouraging fundamental change to have women's groups as it was mirroring the society that already existed, not challenging 'the norm' of segregating women, but rather reflecting the framework of the existing traditional gender narratives of separating men's and women's issues and ways of organising society.

A major act of defiance in this regard and show of strength of women came through the 9th of August 1956, approximately 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria protesting, it was at this protest that the song "Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo!" (You strike the women, you strike the rock!) was heard throughout the day[31]. Women from all over South Africa gathered in Pretoria to participate in the march[32]. This is reflective of women led

[31] You strike the women, you strike the rock! SAHA Archive for Justice. https://www.saha.org.za/women/national_womens_day.htm.
[32] The 1956 Women's March, Pretoria, 9 August. South African History Online. (06 August 2021). https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/1956-womens-march-pretoria-9-august.

political action that has taken place around the country for hundreds of years. This is but one form of political action spearheaded by women. We as a people need to recognise the multiple forms of Blackwomen's involvement and political action that have largely gone unnoticed.

What is of importance about the 9th of August 1956 Women's March is that it was about the Pass Laws, which affected both men and women. Women were essentially not marching for 'women's issues' alone but for abusive and discriminatory laws against Black people. It is examples such as this, that need to be taken into account for the recognition of Blackwomen's chief role as struggle stalwarts.

The question is what, if any, of the actions taken by women through political organisations had long-lasting impact on the status of Blackwomen in South Africa? Mmagauta questions what Imbeleko would be doing now if the liberation struggle that they all fought in, had drastically changed the society in which we now live:

> If the political or the liberation movement was effective, it would operate and do what it's supposed to do, and this is not only politics, but we also need to go out and work in the community. We need to empower communities. We need to empower the youth. If we are doing that effectively I still feel structures like in Imbeleko would be irrelevant. Because wondering what Imbeleko would do if we had an effective liberation movement.

Sibongile reminds us that gendered perspectives and analysis need to be brought into the conversation from the beginning and these debates would shape the organisation and conception of structures such as the BCM. Thus, one would not have 'women's groups' that need to understand that the work on gender would be 'done later on'. With many of the liberation movements in South Africa such as the ANC and PAC, Sibongile has felt that women's liberation has been seen as separate from the national issue and therefore the notion of national liberation.

This issue of the erasure of women is seen in multiple spheres of South African history. One such example is *Staffrider*, a widely read magazine in the late 1970s into the early 1990s. When talking about women at *Staffrider*, Boitumelo Mofokeng (1989, 42) questions "Where Are the Women?", Mofokeng (1989, 42) then goes on to say:

> To the women whose contributions to *Staffrider* in the period 1978-1988 were ignored, I should like to say:
> keep on writing: make your voices heard;
> denounce all forms of sexual and racial discrimination;
> insist on your importance as cultural workers, role-modes and teachers;
> reach out to other women writers; whether possible, work together.

A similar point of view has been shared by many of the women in the BCM that I spoke with. As is seen above this sentiment has been expressed by Blackwomen activists, the fact that they were treated poorly by men has not stopped them from working together with the intention of making real change for women, not only in the political structures but in the society that they were working to liberate. This includes being included in conversations, and not only being allowed a voice when discussing women centred issues.

For Sibongile:

> liberation would have included the liberation of women. It would have if we had remained conscious of the issues that specifically affected women. In the national liberation, if we're talking about 1994, we started strong. But we have fallen short a long time ago. But the liberation movements themselves, especially those that were in exile, seem to have long forgotten about women and the role of women. So, I think... yeah… I think we've fallen short in this liberation.

hooks (2015 [1990], 45) stresses the danger of forgetting the role that Blackwomen have played. hooks (2015 [1990], 45) goes on to warn that devaluating this role undermines attempts to fight against racism and decolonise mentality. What has been illustrated again and again through the interviewees and the discourse around women's involvement in liberation struggles, specifically AZAPO, is the tenacity of South African women and the continual quest for elbow space in a system that was exclusionary. Yet this part of the story continues to be disregarded.

For Mmagauta it is a route that has continued. Many women found it difficult to participate in AZAPO, and it is for this reason that a group of women including Mmagauta formed Black Women Unite, to empower women both in AZAPO and outside of the movement. This was done out of necessity, as they felt that if they joined together as a group made up only of women,

they would feel more comfortable. In this group they held workshops and brought in speakers to encourage this empowerment. As Mmagauta stated:

> It worked because then the women could decide to join the political organisation if they wanted to. But basically, we were brought in to do community work like visit pensioners, visit evicted people. So those were some of the things that we were doing. And we would organise for them to get medical care to be taken to clinics and things, to have their eyes checked. Yeah, so as Black Women Unite, we were doing that.

As Nxongo (2019, 11-12) argues and Mmagauta's experiences confirm, "[t]he BCM had a masculinized discourse which silenced the participation of black women. However, a closer look into the role's women played, and gender relations within the movement shows that women were neither silent nor passive". Groups of women often gathered themselves to engage in discourse, and to create community that they did not always find within male dominated spaces.

Conclusion

Biko (2017 [1978], 35) himself states:

> To take part in the African revolution, it is not enough to write a revolutionary song; you must fashion the revolution with the people. And if you fashion it with the people, the songs will come by themselves and of themselves. In order to achieve real action you must yourself be a living part of Africa and of her thought; you must be an element of that popular energy which is entirely called forth for the freeing, the progress and the happiness of Africa. There is no place outside that fight for the artist or for the intellectual who is not himself concerned with, and completely at one with the people in the great battle of Africa and of suffering humanity.

Biko's words themselves reflect the masculinisation of this revolution. While all of the women in the liberation struggle have themselves "[been] a living part of Africa and of her thought", they have continuously and purposefully been disremembered both in terms of their physical presence in BC spaces as well as in the retelling of South African history.

However, there was undoubtedly a shift in the role and status of women during the struggle years, and this is a direct result of the engagement of Blackwomen in liberation organisations during the 1970s and 1980s.

To what degree the role and status of women in the society has been fundamentally or permanently changed, is a question that the women I interviewed raised many times in our discussions. While change in the status of women has taken place at the constitutional and legislative level, as reflected in the South African Constitution of 1996, and other key legislation, the interviewees questioned what fundamental change has taken place in the daily lives of Blackwomen in the society.

What is indisputable is that it was the women involved in the struggle for independence in South Africa, who were the catalysts of change. The challenge and duty for young academics such as myself is to ensure that their voices are heard in South African history. The role they played should be given its place in the history of South Africa. It is a story of vision and bravery and should never be underestimated or undermined.

Final Conclusion

"But this is not the end of the story, for all the young women – our mothers and grandmothers, *ourselves* – have not perished in the wilderness."

Alice Walker (1972, 403)

While this research report may come to an end, this is not the end of the story. There is growing literature on Blackwomen, and their involvement in South Africa's national liberational movements. This will undoubtedly have an impact on generations to come.

With the ethical and methodological aspects of this research in mind, this research report has provided an understanding of the experiences of Blackwomen in liberation movements in South Africa, with a particular focus on the Black Consciousness Movement. As stated, literature of varying natures including books and articles related to the experiences and work of Blackwomen in South Africa, global feminist discourses, and South African history have been assessed to understand the space that Blackwomen have occupied in the Black Consciousness Movement, their experiences and the gaps in the literature regarding Blackwomen's involvement in anti-apartheid movements as a whole. Therefore, my intention with this study was to highlight stories of Blackwomen directly involved in the Black Consciousness Movement, by looking at their experiences within these spaces, and their own understandings of Black Consciousness ideology.

I have found that despite Blackwomen's involvement at the forefront of the struggle, women have gradually been erased from this history. Whether intentionally or not. Whether consciously or not. Entire collectives of Blackwomen have been excluded from retellings of South African history. In order to see a difference for Blackwomen in South Africa, Sibongile believes women need to stand on their own, away from mainly patriarchal groups. Women's wings, women's Manyano's, women's sects should not be born out of male dominated patriarchal organisations, as Sibongile says, "if the organisation does not adopt feminism in its approach you are going to always have a problem".

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994, 27) echoes these same sentiments stating:

> "women have been placed on pedestals as goddesses, but imprisoned within domestic injustices … They have been romanticised in literature and lyrics but commercialised in life".

This is seen in historiographies of the South African liberation movement, where women are celebrated periodically as 'mothers of the nation' but are not given the recognition they deserve in discussions of frontline anti-apartheid work. Therefore, in order for future generations of Blackwomen to assume positions of power, they need to be educated on the role Blackwomen have played in history.

Therefore, as alluded to in the opening chapter, this paper has highlighted the lived experiences of six Blackwomen involved in the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa; Rowayda Halim, Mama Daphne Koza, Sibongile Mkhabela, Mmagauta Molefe, Dr Unjinee Poonan, and Jacqui Zimba.

The first ethnographic chapter outlines the notion of coming into Consciousness which has been through a variety of different journeys taken by the women in this research. Each of them has engaged with literature, people, and their own lived experiences in developing their political beliefs and identities. Each has been moulded by the people around them, from schoolteachers, to principals, to mothers, fathers, and siblings. It is essential to acknowledge this to then understand how it is that they define Black Consciousness in their own lives.

The second chapter reflects on how these Blackwomen then conceptualise Black Consciousness ideology, and how they have integrated this thinking into their personal belief systems.

The third and final ethnographic chapter details how Blackwomen have been left out of conversations and historiography of South Africa's liberation movement. Time and time again Blackwomen have been side lined despite their participation as is discussed in this chapter.

The research objective was to carefully place these personal narratives that form pieces in the puzzle that portrays the national liberation history of South Africa. In doing this, many questions have been raised: what was the extent of the impact made by these women? How has the violence of apartheid impacted Blackwomen in all facets of their identities? How is the

collective trauma of this nation being addressed? There is not one single answer to any of these questions, as the trauma that was apartheid, still is, it lives with us.

However, in an attempt to answer such questions, I have engaged with a broad body of existing literature which has made it clear that while these questions do not have simple answers, there is a movement to identify and write history from a gendered perspective, which includes the role that women have played in liberation movements. Because the current discourse is written almost exclusively from a male perspective, about male involvement in the struggle. But a revisionist approach that intends to rewrite and retell history with a strongly gendered lens, is critical when one attempts to tell the history of a people. There is an uproar, and women's stories are being told.

This research has aimed to show that despite the fact that discourse on the Black Consciousness Movement has largely silenced Blackwomen, it cannot be denied that they have played major roles in the South African struggle for liberation. Biko (2017 [1978], 56) asks "[w]hat do we do when we have attained our Consciousness?", for the Blackwomen written about here, they have continued to build this consciousness and in turn passed this on to future generations.

They have not perished in the wilderness.

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