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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

School of Arts
Heritage Studies Programme

The Transformation of Gandhi Square: the Search for Socially Inclusive Heritage and Public Space in the Johannesburg City Centre

By Eric Itzkin

A research report submitted towards the completion of a Master of Arts in Heritage degree by coursework and research report.

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ABSTRACT

The need to create socially inclusive public space has gained increasing attention among policy makers at the City of Johannesburg. A rise in the privatisation of public space has however been criticised by some analysts as exclusionary. In that context, this study explores the recent development of Gandhi Square as a central city heritage site which operates as privately-managed public space. The re-imaging of the Square has been inspired by M.K. Gandhi's association with the site. As its main aim, the study assesses the effectiveness of heritage interventions made at the site in meeting their intended goal of addressing a legacy of spatial exclusion through the creation of socially inclusive public space. It evaluates the historical legacy of M.K. Gandhi as the figurehead for the new Square, considered in relation to issues of social inclusion and diversity. Further, the study explores whether the private management of Gandhi square accommodates diversity. It concludes that Gandhi Square is, on both a symbolic and functional level, broadly inclusive of diversity in the context of the Johannesburg inner city.

DECLARATION

I the undersigned hereby declare that this work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this research report to the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature ……Date…….

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Abbreviations

APO	African Peoples' Movement
ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
BID	Business Improvement District
CJP	Central Johannesburg Partnership
CWMG	Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
CID	City Improvement District
ESKOM	Electricity Supply Commission
JDA	Johannesburg Development Agency
JMPD	Johannesburg Municipal Police Department
LRC	Legal Resources Centre
NID	Newtown Improvement District
OPH	Olitzki Property Holdings
SAPS	South African Police Service
SWID	South Western Improvement District
YMCA	Young Mens' Christian Association
ZAR	Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek

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A Biographical Note

From the outset, it is important to declare my interest and engagement, professional and personal, in seeking to re-imagine and re-shape Gandhi Square over the past ten years. Working with many other people along the way, I was privileged to play a part in the re-invention of the Square, moving from a decaying bus terminus carrying a history of discrimination and oppression to its emergence as a heritage site forming part of the public culture of post-apartheid Johannesburg.

Beginning in the late 1990s while employed as a curator at MuseuMAfricA, the City's cultural history museum, I began research into the history of the then Van der Bijl Square as part of a project to uncover the city's Gandhi sites. In recording the many localities where the Indian leader was present at one time or another, the Square impressed itself as a key site for appreciating Gandhi's Johannesburg experience.

The findings from this research were presented in the exhibition *Gandhi's Johannesburg: Birthplace of Satyagraha* which opened at MuseuMAfricA in 1999. Conceived as a contribution to "a museum without walls", linking MuseuMAfricA with a trail of sites spread across the city, the exhibition encouraged visitors to explore the Gandhi sites sign-posted in the museum displays. The intention was thus to turn our gaze outwards, looking beyond the museum building in order to connect with the wider city. Flowing from this was the idea of an activist museum re-inscribing Gandhi's presence on the urban landscape through intervening at sites that carried his story. So it was that MuseuMAfricA advanced a proposal, eventually accepted by the City Council, to change the name of Van der Bijl Square to Gandhi Square.

Further opportunities to work on the site came after I took up a post as heritage manager for the City administration. This led to the commissioning of a statue for Gandhi Square in 2003, in consultation with the management of the Johannesburg Art Gallery.

Experience gained at Gandhi Square and other heritage sites in Johannesburg has helped to inform another area of my work, namely that of writing cultural policy for the City. In the sphere of policy drafting, my role has centered around the preparation of the Heritage Policy Framework, followed by the Public Art Policy. Since 2004, I have also been called on for comment and opinion on policy and proposals for the naming and re-naming of public places.

Workday pressures do not always allow for sufficient time and opportunity for systematic and sustained review and reflection on one's professional practice. The present research project provides a welcome opportunity to step back in order to critically examine the experience at Gandhi Square (by which is meant my own experience of the site, that of the City, as well as its reception by other users and stakeholders).

I bring to this study not only experience gained as in my roles as a city official and heritage practitioner, but also a user-perspective. As a commuter using the municipal bus service, the Square has been for me a point of embarkation from time to time. And on some of those trips, I stopped off to dine at one or other of the food outlets clustered around the Square – a good opportunity to reflect on the stories and people who inhabit the Square, past and present.

Introduction

Recent years have seen the redevelopment of Gandhi Square as a major urban renewal project designed to enhance the imagability[1] of the Johannesburg central city. Historically a place of racial exclusion and oppression, the Square has since been re-configured as a public space intended to be socially inclusive and to project more democratic values.

Since 2000, the physical makeover of the Square has been joined with the re-imaging of the site along heritage lines, drawing on the story of M.K. Gandhi's involvement in the area. The cultural transformation and marketing of the site has involved the re-naming of the Square followed by the development of a Gandhi statue, a series of interpretive plaques and other heritage material. This heritage project was envisioned as promoting the development of more democratic, hospitable and inclusionary public space.

The ideal of inclusive public space covers not only issues of physical accessibility, but also conception, design, and use. Following Paddison and Sharp (2003, p 4), inclusionary, democratic public space is understood to mean "spaces that are not only open and accessible to all, but where such inclusion is intentional and sustained, reflecting not only the decision-making processes underlying the provision of public space but also its use". Further, issues of meaning, both intended and received, become critical for appreciating the way in which such places are experienced by different groups of people.

[1] The term imagability is used to mean the capacity to form and re-shape associations, perceptions, image and imagery tied to a place in the popular imagination. City government and private sector actors are increasingly the drivers of efforts to leverage this form of place-making. Particular re-imaging projects may focus on projecting parts of the city as fertile sites for the historical imagination, for social engagement, for financial investment, or a combination of these.

A study of social inclusion in public space is however necessarily equally concerned with processes of exclusion. Much as it deals with social acceptance of those deemed worthy of incorporation, this report deals also with the exclusion of those others found not to fit in, representing groups and individuals who are either unacknowledged or rejected.

The study examines the use of symbols, historical representations and imagery at Gandhi square, exploring how heritage interventions at the site intersect with processes of urban reconstruction in the post-apartheid inner city. It examines attempts to introduce heritage imagery meant to promote spatial justice and social inclusion in a prominent central city public space. The focus is on the most recent re-naming and re-development of Gandhi Square, dating from around 1999, and how this arose from a merging of urban restructuring and heritage interests.

Heritage has been identified in the City of Johannesburg's cultural policies as an important catalyst for building social cohesion within a post-apartheid dispensation (see Chapter 1). The case of Gandhi Square is used to explore the role of heritage in promoting cultural diversity, multi-culturalism and inter-culturalism, seen within the context of the democratisation of urban space.

In this study, multi-culturalism is understood to refer to policies and practices that promote mutual respect for the traditions and expressions of different historical and cultural communities as they interact within the urban environment. Inter-culturalism refers to positive interactions between cultural groups requiring openness and responsiveness towards the culture of the 'other' (National Heritage Council 2007, p. 26). While acknowledging a diverse heritage embracing different historical streams and cultural traditions, emphasis is placed on commonalities and shared values.

Other themes in this study concern the increasing privatization of public space, and the questions which this raises for public policy. Gandhi Square was re-developed through a public-private partnership and functions as a privately-run public space, managed by the surrounding property owners as a City Improvement District (CID). Elsewhere, business-led initiatives to re-make public space have been criticized for excessive social control, for privileging corporate interests, and for excluding the urban poor (see for example, Mitchell 2003). Such arguments will be considered in relation to the way Gandhi Square functions as a cultural, social and commercial space.

The commemoration of Gandhi on the Square was supported by the City of Johannesburg and was welcomed by many of his latter-day admirers. It has however drawn criticism from some of Gandhi's detractors who accuse him of slighting Africans. During his time in South Africa, Gandhi concentrated on bettering the position of his Indian compatriots, stopping short of forming a common front with African political movements. Critics have also pointed to disparaging remarks about Africans made by the young Gandhi. This raises the question: how appropriate and socially inclusive are the heritage stories and themes on Gandhi Square?

In evaluating Gandhi's legacy, the research report considers a variety of complex and alternative meanings, some unifying and some potentially divisive, which are embodied in Gandhi as the historical figurehead for the Square.

1.1 Aim and Rationale of the Study

This report assesses the effectiveness of recent heritage interventions on Gandhi Square in addressing a legacy of inner city segregation and racialisation. In the process, it considers how representations of heritage and public culture can be inclusionary / exclusionary within a broader project of urban restructuring.

Heritage-based development has been identified in City of Johannesburg policies as an important force for urban renewal, social reconstruction and the re-making of public space. The aim of harnessing heritage to serve a set of agendas around spatial dignity and social integration lies at the heart of the City's cultural policies. The case of Gandhi Square has accordingly a larger significance for examining the role and potential of heritage for stimulating and supporting post-apartheid reconstruction and urban renewal.

Issues around the private control and management of public space are often hotly contested. Gandhi Square offers an important case study for understanding the contest and intersection between public and private interests in the negotiation of public space.

1.2 Research Question

The central research question is:

Has the re-development of Gandhi Square succeeded in creating a more socially inclusive public space, and if so how has this been achieved?

A sub-question considers the effects of the private-sector CID management on the character and operation of the site in relation to the goal of social inclusion:

Has the CID management of Gandhi Square resulted in a site which is socially exclusive, or one that is broadly inclusive and accommodating of social and cultural diversity?

1.3 Literature Review

In keeping with the themes of diversity, inclusion and multiple-view-points, this study traverses conventional subject boundaries. Drawing on a variety of ideas, perspectives and interpretations located in the social sciences, arts and humanities, it seeks to reflect varied experiences and interpretations of time, space and place. Literature for this inter-disciplinary study is drawn from such fields as cultural geography, local government policy-making, heritage studies and history, including some veins of literary history.

One major area of research concerns the relationship between spatial justice and heritage representations in public spaces. Another concerns the historiography of M.K. Gandhi's political practice, his connection with Gandhi Square, and his broader legacy in South Africa. Some of the texts to be employed are briefly reviewed below.

Govender's 2002 research report on Gandhi Square was the first study made of the re-development of the site at the start of the 21st Century, and has hitherto been the only work devoted to this subject. The research focused on the role of heritage tourism in re-making the site. In reality, however, tourism has not turned out to be a primary activity on the Square, which has developed more towards a combination of public transport and food and beverage services. Concerns are raised by Govender around the over-commercialisation of Gandhi Square through the "economisation of culture", seen as possibly threatening to eclipse heritage as a public good for the site. Govender also considered the politics of difference at symbolic sites. This involves the representation at Gandhi Square of a plural society marked by diverse histories, multiple narratives and continuing cultural differences. The representation and accommodation of difference in a multi-cultural society will be the subject of further scrutiny in the

present study, which will also consider developments at Gandhi Square since 2002.

A history of Gandhi Square is outlined in the book *Gandhi's Johannesburg: Birthplace of Satyagaraya*, covering the years 1893 to 2000 (Itzkin 2000). The book details M.K. Gandhi's connection to the site, set within his broader experience in Johannesburg during the early 1900s. Building on this research, the history of Gandhi Square will be further fleshed out in the present text, including aspects not directly related to the Gandhi narrative. Other themes to emerge from this historical investigation relate to, firstly, the ceremonial takeover of Johannesburg by the British Army as enacted on the Square at the turn of the Twentieth Century; and, secondly, to the intermittent presence of the writer Herman Charles Bosman at the site.

As one of the most charismatic leaders of the twentieth century, Gandhi is the subject of a vast and growing literature. Most of these accounts concentrate on Gandhi's later years as a leader of India's independence struggle, although many begin with an introductory section on his formative South African years. Some works concentrate on his experiences in South Africa over two decades, 1893-1914, from which he first emerged as a fully-fledged leader (see for example Virisai 1968; Swan 1985; Reddy 1995; and Brown 1996). During that period, Gandhi developed his moral philosophy and political technique of Satyagraha which first brought him to prominence in South Africa. Later the doctrines and political skills developed in South Africa were to take him to the front rank of the independence struggle in India, where he was widely hailed as a 'Mahatma' ('Great Soul').

Gandhi's relationship to the African people has however been an under-researched aspect in the scholarship on Gandhi in South Africa. Two notable exceptions are the studies by Hunt (1990) and Nauriya (2006). Hunt suggests

that Gandhi's relation to the African people of South Africa has been seen as problematic, contradictory and ambiguous. Nauriya however stresses that Gandhi shed earlier prejudices towards Africans, moving towards greater support for their cause. In common with Hunt, Nauriya argues that the limitations of the young Gandhi's attitudes were over-ridden by the profound personal transformation which he later underwent. In the present report, Gandhi's changing attitudes towards Africans will be examined in relation to primary sources drawn chiefly from the first twelve volumes of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG), containing his writings from his twenty-one years in South Africa.

Sharp *et al.* (2005) investigate how public art can be inclusionary/exclusionary as part of wider projects of urban regeneration. In the development of public art - and we may add, cultural interventions more broadly - what conditions contribute to or hinder democratic inclusive practices? As highlighted by Sharp and her co-writers, a common practice associated with spatial injustice involves *non-recognition* of marginalized groups which renders them 'invisible' in public narratives. Monuments and public art offer a vehicle by which such groups can validate their histories and inscribe their presence in public space. This process of affirming identity will be examined in relation to the Gandhi Square, posing the argument that the new identity of the site confers recognition to the city's Indian minority.

Public art interventions are typically highly visible and immediately apparent, as in the example of the statue introduced to Gandhi Square in 2003. By contrast, other strategies for the presentation and organising public space are less exposed and obvious.

Some forms of spatial exclusion may be blatant, stark and apparent, as exemplified historically in the case of apartheid as a highly legislated form of

racial discrimination. Sibley (1995) however draws attention to more "opaque" instances of exclusion which arise from controls embedded in ordinary life. Such exclusions take place without most people noticing, as part of the routine of daily life. Here the mechanisms of exclusion involve barriers, restraints and prohibitions which are more implicit than explicit.

Although pervasive and insidious, these processes of control are often taken for granted, and are to that extent concealed and hidden. Some controls are more inconspicuous and understated than others, but they commonly operate at different levels which are mutually reinforcing. At the more discrete end of the spectrum, for example, design elements for an urban improvement area frequently signal who is deemed to belong there. Should 'undesirables' or 'loiterers' fail to get the message, though, security guards may step forward to ask them to move on.

In order to interrogate these practices and make them more transparent, it is necessary to examine assumptions about inclusion and exclusion which are implicit within the design and management of spaces. Some basic questions we should ask are: who are the places for, who do they exclude and how are these prohibitions maintained in practice (*ibid.*, p. x)? In the present study, such lines of questioning will be used to probe symbols, rules and practices of inclusion and exclusion as found on Gandhi Square.

In seeking to uncover and understand practices of spatial exclusion and control, our own practice as social observers and analysts needs itself, Sibley argues, to become inclusive. If we are to gain the necessary insights, one has to reach beyond the comfort of mainstream perspectives from dominant groups by considering and embracing alternative viewpoints of those who are subordinate, marginalised and excluded. Following Sibley, we should seek to include multiple

view-points and interpretations from both 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' on the practices and experience of inclusion and exclusion.

In a wide-ranging analysis of urban public culture in late Twentieth Century America, Zukin (1995) discusses the privatization of public space. The new public spaces managed by private agencies use spatial controls to exclude those considered to be undesirable elements. The increasing role of private interests threatens to erode public space in terms of two basic principles: open access and public stewardship. Yet many city dwellers value these privatized sites as public space, finding them safe and attractive. Such is the complex intersection of public and private, confounding simple distinctions between the two categories, that Zukin implies the need to re-conceptualise the public and private spheres. Perspectives drawn form Zukin will be applied to the case of Gandhi Square in order to illuminate the interplay between public and commercial interests in shaping this space.

1.4 Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 on *Cultural Policy for Inclusive Public Sp*ace examines policy initiatives aimed at constructing socially integrated public space in the post-apartheid city. Since the opening years of the twenty-first Century, the need to create inclusive public space has gained increasing attention among policy-makers at the City of Johannesburg. New policy directions link physical reconstruction with the re-imagining of the heritage, meaning and symbolism of public spaces. To what extent have these policies and strategies been borne out by the experience of Gandhi Square?

An exploration of the historical background of Gandhi Square follows in Chapter 2, charting the transformations by which the site has been repeatedly re-imagined and re-made within a changing city. Important changes in the image,

use and social character of the site are tracked from 1893 up to the present time.

In chapter 3, *M.K. Gandhi: Inclusive Icon or Sectarian Symbol?,* the nature of Gandhi's political legacy is explored and interrogated. We consider Gandhi's record in relation to issues of diversity and of social inclusion and/or exclusion. Special attention is given to debates around Gandhi's relationship to the African people of South Africa. A section on *Johannesburg as a Catalyst for Gandhi's Inclusive Vision* focuses on the transformation of Gandhi's political thought and practice during his residency in Johannesburg. Through this period, from 1903 to 1913, Gandhi was exposed to a ferment of cosmopolitan ideas and diverse influences. Drawing on these elements, Gandhi was able to forge an inclusive nationalist vision which was rooted in his Johannesburg experience.

A chapter on *Heritage Symbols and Signifiers* seeks to interpret and deconstruct heritage representations on Gandhi Square. Heritage displays include the Gandhi statue, a series of plaques and a billboard canvas with heritage imagery. A complex of other stories and meanings are carried by names attached to the site, and by buildings which occupy the space. Acting together with more formal heritage markers, names and structures form a complex interplay of meanings and symbols.

Aside from the commemoration of Gandhi, attention is drawn towards other prominent figures associated with the site, including Herman Charles Bosman and the anti-apartheid lawyers Bram Fischer and George Bizos. Each of these personalities adds to a rich store of stories, symbols and meanings - sometimes intersecting, overlapping, complementing or competing – with which the site is invested. Through these multiple connections and presences, the heritage of Gandhi Square could conceivably have been themed in several alternative ways, each of them legitimate and historically defensible.

The dual nature of Gandhi Square as a privately managed public space is examined in Chapter 4 on *Private Management, Public Space.* This chapter focuses on tensions between the private management of the site, and counter-claims arising from its use as public space. It examines ongoing debates on the sharing out of responsibilities between private and public interests – raising questions around the core of state prerogatives and the safeguarding of public interests versus private and profit-seeking interests.

1.5 Methodology

In this study, heritage texts and imagery from the site are interpreted in light of the history of the Square, and seen in relation to the City's broader project to re-construct public spaces in ways that make them more democratic and inclusive. Heritage development will be viewed as process of construction, by which particular stories and symbols are selected and framed. The interpretive process will seek to identify the values and meanings being advanced, as well as gaps, silences and omissions in the representation of heritage, and how these relate to social inclusion and exclusion.

Since 1999, the writer has been engaged as a heritage practitioner with the re-development of Gandhi Square. Prior knowledge and positioning in relation to the site has been employed as a rich source of data. The background gained through this experience has been used to identify sources and inform other aspects of the research.

Interviews were conducted with selected decision-makers and stakeholders able to throw light on the development, management and/or operation of Gandhi Square. Semi-structured interviews were employed to elicit insight, depth and rich detail. The selection of interviewees targeted a limited number of people,

forming a panel of key informants rather than a representative sample. Interviewees or panellists were selected for holding information of greatest utility – in the words of Weiss, "People who are uniquely able to be informative because they are expert in an area or were privileged witnesses to an event" (quoted in Maxwell 1996, p. 70).

Some of the interviewees have long known me in my role as a City official with the Directorate of Arts, Culture and Heritage. For the purpose of the interviews, it was important that as far as possible they should not tailor their responses to fit what they might think I wish to hear as an official. I therefore made it a point to invite them to speak frankly, and not to feel a need to follow any "official line".

Chapter 1

Cultural Policy For Inclusive Public Space

Following the demise of apartheid, Johannesburg's city administration led by the African National Congress has faced the challenge of creating new spaces and identities to replace the race-based cleavages of the past. During the previous era of apartheid, Johannesburg was a strictly-managed, orderly city built on race-based seclusions and spatial division, where the central area was officially reserved for white business and residence.

Johannesburg's spatial order was deeply divided to include the white group and exclude all others, following a hierarchical pattern first set during colonial times, and these divisions were to be further entrenched and heightened under apartheid rule. Public space was mistrusted and strictly curtailed by the authorities for whom public interaction and access carried with it the threat of loitering, inter-racial mingling or insurrection.

Over the decades of apartheid, the Groups Areas Act of 1950 set a powerful imprint, enforcing strict racial and spatial segregation and, as stated by McCarthy, creating "an urban form that was more structured and quartered than anything that had preceded it in either colonial or early industrial capitalist times" (McCarthy 1991, p. 260).

Johannesburg's image was an exclusive one that celebrated white dominance and discounted alternative black experience of the city. Founded as a citadel of white dominance, Johannesburg had seen itself as a European (and predominantly English) city in Africa. Through the height of apartheid, there was

officially a single Johannesburg which the minority white population claimed as theirs, while other experiences of the city were hidden and suppressed.

But beginning in the 1980s, the social and economic exclusions of the past were no longer sustainable, as racial barriers tumbled across central Johannesburg. Indians, Coloureds and then Africans increasingly contravened racial restrictions and settled in the central city. Thus by 1993, an estimated 85% of inner city residents were black and by 1996 only 5% were white (Bremner 2000, p. 187). With the desegregation of urban space, Johannesburg's streets and public spaces became more diverse than ever, giving rise to new life-styles, claims and practices.

In place of the European image of the apartheid years, the central city acquired a distinctly African identity. The influx to the central city areas by previously excluded Africans was greatly accelerated by the 1990s, to the extent that there was a possibility of the emergence of a central African ghetto, almost as segregated as those previously created on periphery by the apartheid dispensation (Christopher 2001, p. 455). As Johannesburg entered the Twenty-first Century, parts of the Inner city had became overwhelmingly black and African, with an inflow of immigrants from other African countries providing the overlay of a "new African cosmopolitanism" (Tomlinson *et al.*, 2003, p. xiii).

The repeal of urban segregation laws, including the removal of the Group Areas Act in 1991, came in response to the *de facto* breakdown of apartheid, underway by that time in Johannesburg and, to varying extents, in other urban centres of South Africa. In the aftermath of South Africa's first multi-racial national elections in 1994, bringing to power the African National Congress-led Government of National Unity, what remained of statutory apartheid was finally abolished. At a local authority level, it was also around the mid-1990s that moves began to reconstitute Johannesburg as a 'Unicity' in which white and non-

white areas were brought under the same local authority headed by ANC leadership.

The advent of democratic forms of government, seen at both national and local level, opened up new possibilities for the spatial re-integration of the residents of South African cities. For the first time, the broader citizenry of all races and social categories could look forward to the relatively unrestricted use of public space.

As part the project to dispel the legacy of urban segregation and apartheid, the need to re-think Johannesburg's spatial dispensation became increasingly apparent. A new commitment to social re-integration was reflected in moves to re-formulate symbols, names and identities in order to mark the re-birth of a new city in a new nation. This led to new policies at city level aimed at creating a new spatial dispensation for an integrated multi-cultural city with a greater sense of belonging for the majority black population.

Seen in the context of post-apartheid urban reconstruction, heritage offers a means of promoting social integration and healing. By changing the ways in which public spaces are experienced, heritage interventions can be used to re-shape cultural identity in support of the symbolic transformation from a city of apartheid to one embracing the values of democracy, multi-culturalism and spatial justice. This is a view which has, since about 2004, been incorporated in the City's cultural policy positions.

As a source of images and memories, heritage symbolizes 'who belongs' in particular places. New symbols and images give visual testimony to the multitude of presences which have historically staked claims in the city centre and which continue to influence its changing dynamics. Such re-imaging can heal old divisions and promote a more inclusive and democratic culture, so

enabling the citizens of a multi-cultural city to live together in difference. As observed by Zukin (1995, p. 20):

> "…*incorporating new images into visual representations of the city can be democratic. It can help integrate rather than segregate social and ethnic groups, and it can also help negotiate new group identities"*.

However much it harks back to the past, heritage is a mobilizing force for change in the present, often aligning itself with particular social, economic and political movements. To argue that heritage is above or outside of politics is to disguise the interests that mobilize the past in service of the future. As explained by Hall and Bombardella (2002):

> *"One way of understanding 'heritage' is as the mobilization of culture. Heritage works with the diverse remnants of the past: artefacts, buildings, cityscapes, landscapes, documents, literature, oral traditions, memories. These are things that have been passed down the generations, and the awareness of them makes tangible associations in the present, whether by ethnicity, class, geographical region, language, gender, race or other category. And in working with the present, heritage makes claims on the future, for example, by making a claim for land, furthering a nationalist agenda or promoting future language rights. As such, heritage gives form to the public sphere … While it makes use of academic disciplines such as history, archaeology, art history and architecture, it is not synonymous with them. Heritage is invariably bound up with a political programme, whether at the level of a local community (such as Cape Town's District Six Museum) or as part of an international agenda (such as UNESCO's World heritage Sites). Heritage is history with a point"*.

This notion of mobilizing memory in the service of current needs and programmes lies at the heart of the City of Johannesburg Heritage Policy adopted in 2004. In this scheme, cultural and symbolic capital are cast as strategic resources serving a set of wider agendas for economic development, urban reconstruction and social integration. Heritage is positioned as an agent of social change, reconstruction and development. To quote from the Heritage Policy document:

> *"Heritage is widely acknowledged to have an important potential as a catalyst for development. Johannesburg's heritage resources should therefore be marshalled in support of the City's long-term development goals and 2030 Strategy. The challenge is not only to preserve historic resources, but also to use them as positive instruments for growth and change"* (City of Johannesburg. Arts Culture & Heritage Services 2004, p. 9).

Policies of the City of Johannesburg occupy two main categories or tiers. Located on the upper tier are over-arching policies which are meant set the direction of the City as a whole. Here high-level policies cut across different functional areas and service departments, and are intended as a framework within which other more specific second-tier policies can be worked out for particular spheres of the City's operations. Examples of the second-tier policies include the Public Art Policy, the Policy on Naming and Re-Naming Public Places and the Heritage Policy Framework.

The first of the City's new high-level policies was the City's economic vision and strategy entited *Joburg 2030 .* First published in 2002, *Joburg 2030* presented a long-term growth strategy for the economic revival of the city over the next 28 years. *Joburg 2030* focuses on economic growth as the driver for building a better city, with the local authority is cast as a key agent of economic development through the creation of an environment conducive to investment.

In this scheme, the goal of building "a globally competitive African World class City" will depend crucially on making central Johannesburg a more attractive business location in which to invest. The old CBD is to be regenerated, according to *Joburg 2030,* to become a prime business location once more. Two major obstacles to attracting economic growth and investment are identified: crime and a shortage of labour markets skills. Advancing to world class status will entail developing a competitive urban environment able to attract world-class

businesses and the skilled people on whom they rely. Seen in this light, the heightened emphasis on place-marketing seen at Gandhi Square and other City Improvement Districts (CIDs) stands to contribute to realising at least part of the 2030 vision.

Since 2000, inner city regeneration has been declared a priority by the City's political leadership under Executive Mayor Amos Masondo. Under the banner of constructing "A World Class African City"[2], the City administration has launched a series of ambitious programmes to reposition Johannesburg's central core. Public-private partnerships figure prominently in this effort, with the private sector coming increasingly to the fore in recent years. Based on the diagnosis that public sector investment is not sufficient to reverse urban decline or power economic development, City Improvement Districts (CIDs) have been seen as a catalyst to mobilise both private and public funding in order to achieve the goals of *Joburg 2030* (Peyroux 2005 p. 5).

Privately-managed Business Improvement districts (BIDs) originated in North America in the 1970s and 1980s as a business response to declining municipal budgets and services, disrepair and crime. The BID concept has since spread to many countries across the world, crossing over from Canada and the United States to take hold in the United Kingdom, continental Europe, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere (Houstoun 2003, p. 164-175). By the 1990s the Improvement District[3] concept was brought to South Africa, where the BID management model took on the local name City Improvement Districts (CIDs). While following the North American model of BIDs, South Africa's CIDs brought a

[2] The overarching goal of constructing a "World Class African City" has come to permeate official discourse within the City administration. This maxim aims at making Johannesburg internationally acceptable and competitive without however compromising the city's distinctively African character and identity. On one hand, the term extols the idea of globally accepted standards of best practice (assumed to be universally applicable); while on the other hand, it expresses ideals of African identity and pride. The result is a malleable construct, used in the context of shifting emphasis between the local and the global, to advance a variety of agendas.
[3] The term 'improvement district' will be used here when referring to both BIDs and CIDs.

heightened emphasis on the need for security. A CID is a defined geographic area within which property owners agree to pay a self-imposed levy for certain services to enhance the environment. The services provided are supplementary to those provided by the local authority and usually include security guards, cleaning and maintenance services.

Improvement districts have proliferated in South African cities, particularly in Johannesburg and Cape Town. By 2007 Johannesburg had fourteen legislated City Improvement Districts, including five in the inner city (Dlamini 2007). In addition to the legislated CIDs, there are several voluntary projects like the Main Street Mining Mall, where property owners have not waited for the legal process for setting up a CID to be completed, but are contributing voluntarily to upgrading their areas. Following on from Gandhi Square in 1999, business interests in central Johannesburg have funded a network of privately-managed City Improvement Areas (CIDs), where property owners form private administrations to manage the public environment and pay for added services such as security, cleaning and marketing.

As the regeneration process has deepened, gaining in confidence and ambition, renewal strategies have become more diversified. Urban strategists have looked not only to the baseline issues of cleansing and physical security, but have increasingly turned to such aspects as improved aesthetics and marketing. Moving beyond the basics of sweeping and patrolling, bold place marketing has gained increasing prominence in these schemes. As part of this process, such improvement areas as Gandhi Square and the adjoining Main Street Mining Mall have been developed as visual spectacles with themed attractions aimed at enhancing the image of that part of the city.

These initiatives to re-invent the city centre came in response to the long-term economic decline of the central city experienced since the 1980s. This period

saw the start of the mass relocation of the private sector as numerous businesses left the central city for the northern suburbs (Bremner 2000; Tomlinson 1999). The impact on the central area was severe, as property values plummeted, crime increased and physical decay set in. Responding to perceptions of the declining central city as blighted by disorder, crime and grime, City authorities and private sector actors embarked on a series of initiatives to re-invent, re-image and re-market the central city. The re-making of Gandhi Square was to become a notable early success of this campaign.

In the sphere of re-naming public places, the first democratically elected administration of Johannesburg's new Unicity made only a few changes to begin with (Jenkins 1997, p. 136). In 1999, Van der Bijl Square became the first major public space to be re-named in Johannesburg, appearing at the time as an isolated 'once-off' change. Seen in retrospect, the re-naming of Gandhi Square can be seen as the forerunner of a more concerted campaign to re-name a whole number of places which gathered momentum in the years that followed, and which is, currently, proceeding apace across the city. In the inner city, some important name changes of recent years have included the re-naming of the Library Gardens as Beyers Naudé Square in 2001; the naming in 2003-2004 of streets in Newtown after popular artists and musicians; and the re-naming in 2006 of Harrow Road to Joe Slovo Drive.

Practice largely preceded policy in the re-making of Gandhi Square. Appearing as a pioneering project of post-apartheid urban reconstruction, the makeover of Gandhi Square pre-dates the development of current cultural policy within the City.

The new name for Gandhi Square was approved some two years before the first appearance in 2001 of the City's Policy on Renaming Public Spaces [4]. Similarly, the Gandhi statue installed on the Square in 2003 became the first major piece of public art introduced to the Johannesburg inner city in the post-apartheid period, ahead of the adoption of the City's Public Art Policy in 2006.

The re-development of Gandhi Square heralded ideas of blending heritage interventions with new forms of urban management which were gaining currency within City administration circles, and which would come to be enshrined in new policy over the successive years. The project pointed also towards the use of arts and culture as important instruments for reconstructing society and, in particular, for promoting social integration – a theme which would come to the fore in later policy. In this sense, Gandhi Square anticipated aspects of subsequent policy formulation.

The re-development of Gandhi Square was rapidly followed by several other new 'iconic' space projects in the inner city, including Constitution Hill, Mary Fitzgerald Square and the Drill Hall. The development of such 'iconic' spaces is generally focused on key sites with strong heritage or cultural significance, and which are seen by city strategists as providing geographical anchor points to the urban form and fabric of the inner city (City of Johannesburg 2007, p. 19). A growing emphasis on place-making, and especially the development of landmark public places, helped to stimulate a need for new cultural policy to inform, guide and regulate such initiatives.

Joburg 2030 was a point of departure for much of the policy work that followed. With economic growth as its over-riding thrust, the 2030 strategy is however

[4] The *Policy on the Naming and Renaming of Streets and Other Public Spaces* was first approved in December 2001. A first revision of the policy was approved in 2004, followed by a second revision in 2007.

largely silent on such social issues as heritage and cultural development. Subsequent policy formulation has sought to extend the 2030 vision by moving City policy towards engagement with the cultural sphere. As part of these new policy directions, the benefits of arts, culture and heritage have come to be framed not only in economic terms, but also in relation to the goals of promoting social integration and inclusion.

The City's first post-apartheid cultural policy appeared in 2004 as the Heritage Policy Framework. Taking it's cue from the economic thrust of *Joburg 2030*, the Heritage Policy Framework points to the economic benefits of heritage development as a catalyst for investment and urban renewal.

Harnessing of heritage assets is seen as critical in the construction of a world class city which celebrates its own diversity:

> *"Johannesburg's heritage creates a unique sense of place and has a critical role to play in the construction of a World Class African City as envisioned by Council. Key assets from Johannesburg's past provide the makings, in cultural terms, of a world class African City which is at the same time both cosmopolitan and distinctively African"* (City of Johannesburg. Arts, Culture & Heritage Services 2004, p. 7).

Social inclusion is underlined as a key principle for the city's heritage programme. The Heritage Policy Framework provides for a broad conception of heritage, one which is inclusive, multi-faceted and open, giving recognition and respect to the memories and heritage of all those who live in Johannesburg and take part in the life of the city.

The Public Art Policy (2006) further advances the twin goals of promoting cultural diversity and building social inclusion. Public art is cast as a powerful force for re-claiming and activating public space that can accommodate all

people and interests. The document's Preamble offers a rationale for a programme of public art which has as its watchword the celebration of diversity:

> *"A vibrant public art programme offers a range of benefits and opportunities for enhancing the urban environment, increasing the use and enjoyment of public space, and building social cohesion. Public art provides a means of celebrating Johannesburg's unique culture, diverse communities and rich history. It offers shared symbols which build social cohesion, contribute to civic pride and help forge a positive identity for the city"* (City of Johannesburg. Arts, Culture & Heritage Services 2006).

Continuing themes of celebrating diversity, of promoting social inclusion and of place-making appear in the *Policy on Naming and Re-naming Public Places*. The importance of naming as means of giving meaning and of claiming territory is made explicit in the preamble to the 2007 revision. Criteria for motivating and prioritising name changes are guided by the aim of making public space more inclusive and democratic. Ranked in order of importance, the Naming Policy sets forth the following criteria for re-naming:

1. Where the existing name is considered offensive.
2. Where the existing name is meaningless or historically irrelevant.
3. Where the name change is desirable to promote the goodwill of the people now living in the new South Africa.
4. Where the change of name will assist in building a sense of ownership and community and in redefining society.
5. Where there is a strong degree of community participation and ownership.
6. Where a name change is needed into a language more relevant to the local community.
7. Where the name change is to increase the marketing potential and investment attractiveness of the area.

The issue of social exclusion is raised for attention as a major challenge facing the City in a new high-level City policy and strategy document, *The Human Development Strategy* (HDS). *The Human Development Strategy* was released in 2005, intended to take its place alongside the City's economic blueprint of *Joburg 2030* as a major pillar of City policy.

While setting a long-term vision for economic growth, *Joburg 2030* has been criticised for failing to address immediate problems of poverty, inequality and social exclusion affecting the urban poor. *The Human Development Strategy* arose partly to address gaps in *Joburg 2030*, and respond to criticisms of that document. As a way of trying to balance and humanise the City's economic development strategy, the HDS is dedicated to responding to the needs of marginalised and excluded communities, especially among the urban poor.

Within this human development perspective, the City's vision statement for world class status is pointedly re-cast and extended to make it inclusive and equitable, becoming the achievement of "a World Class African City *For All*". Among the various strategies and programmes advanced for realising this ideal for all city residents, are initiatives for promoting spatial equality and dignity through the creation and transformation of public space.

A tilt towards developmental local government can be seen in the formation in 2006 the new City Department of Community Development to bring social and cultural services to Johannesburg residents. Established s part of a restructuring process carried out across the City administration, the mandate for the Department of Community Development mirrors the discourse of social inclusion advanced in the Human Development Strategy. The vision statement for the Community Development Department aims towards:

> "*a city where community development, personal growth and social mobility are enhanced so that the challenges of poverty and vulnerability, inequality and social exclusion are fundamentally addressed"* .

In sum, goals of social inclusion and spatial justice have come increasingly to the fore in policy development at the City of Johannesburg during the period 2004 to 2007. Arts, culture and heritage initiatives are identified as an important force for democratising public space. New visions have been advanced of post-apartheid public spaces, denoted by unifying new names, graced by public art that speaks to the cosmopolitan identity of the city, and offering appealing venues where people interact in their full diversity. In this report, we consider to what extent such visions for socially inclusive public space have been realised at Gandhi Square. But first, in the following chapter, we set the scene by tracing the history of the Square.

Chapter 2

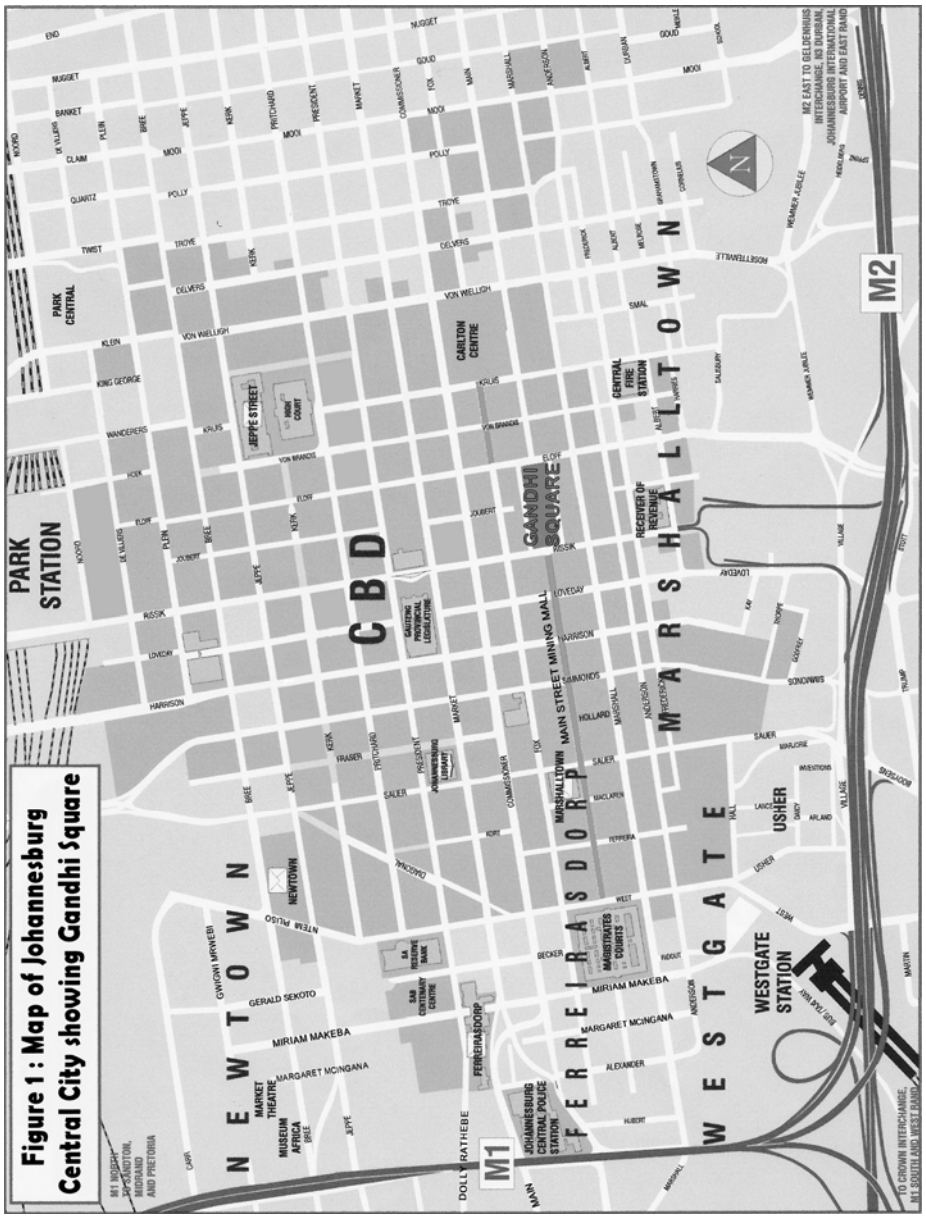
Historical Transformations on Gandhi Square

Now configured as a post-apartheid public space expressing democratic values, Gandhi Square has for much of its existence been a place of racial exclusion and oppression. The present Gandhi Square is only the latest incarnation of a site which has carried different roles, names and identities over the years. This chapter explores the transformations by which Gandhi Square has over time been repeatedly re-imagined and re-made within a changing city.

The area now known as Gandhi Square is a large public space located near the middle of the Johannesburg Central City and bounded by Rissik, Eloff, Fox and Marshall Street. The appellation 'Gandhi Square' is only the latest in a series of names attached to the site. In tandem with physical changes wrought to the area, name changes have supported the appropriation of the place by successive interest groups.

Contest over control and use of the site has been ongoing since the earliest days of the formation of the Square. In essence, such contest has revolved around who is entitled to exercise rights there, who 'belongs' in the space, and connected to that, who is represented there. As borne out by the more recent history of the site, such contestation continues down to the present.

The site came to prominence from the 1890s as Johannesburg's original legal precinct, the site of the law courts where many were convicted under discriminatory enactments. Later the old courthouse made way for an apartheid-era bus terminus, a whites-only facility within the segregated and unequal public


Figure 1 : Map of Johannesburg
Central City showing Gandhi Square
PARK STATION
CBD
NEWTOWN
MARSHALLTOWN
WESTGATE
FERREIRASDORP
GANDHI SQUARE
MAIN STREET MINING MALL
CARLTON CENTRE
PARK CENTRAL
JEPPE STREET
HIGH COURT
CENTRAL FIRE STATION
RECEIVER OF REVENUE
GAUTENG PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE
SA RESERVE BANK
SA CONSTITUTIONAL COURT
MAGISTRATES COURTS
JOHANNESBURG CENTRAL POLICE STATION
JOHANNESBURG LIBRARY
MARKET THEATRE
MUSEUM AFRICA
NEWTOWN
WESTGATE STATION
USHER
M1
M2
M1 NORTH TO SANDTON, MIDRAND AND PRETORIA
M2 EAST TO GELDENHUIS INTERCHANGE, N3 DURBAN, JOHANNESBURG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND EAST RAND
TO CROWN INTERCHANGE, N1 SOUTHLAND WEST RAND
DOLLY RATHEBE
MIRIAM MAKEBA
MARGARET MCINGANA
GERALD SEKOTO
GWIGWI MRWEBI
HARRISON
SIMMONDS
LOVEDAY
RISSIK
MARKET
KERK
FRASER
PRITCHARD
PRESIDENT
SALIER
HOLLARD
MARSHALL
ANDERSON
MACLAREN
PEPPERA
BECKER
INDUSTRIAL
MAIN
NICOLSON
ALEXANDER
HUBERT
MARTIN
MARSHALL
WEST
HALL
LANCASTER
DAIRY
ARLAND
VILLAGE
MOORE
INVESTORS
SMOOREDOOR
TRUMP
FLOYD
LOVEDAY
SALDANHA
ALBERT
VANNAM
MELMOTH
MOSSTTEMALLE
MEMBER JURILLE
HERBERTON
MOOI
POLLY
TROYE
DELVERS
VON WIELLIGH
KRUIS
VON BRANDIS
ZOUBERT
KLEIN
KING GEORGE
WANDERERS
TWIST
QUARTZ
CLAIM
BANKET
NUGGET
END
GOUD
FOX
MAIN
MARSHALL
ANDERSON
ALBERT
CLARAN
SMAL
CORNELIS
VANNAM
MELMOTH
MOSSTTEMALLE
MEMBER JURILLE
HERBERTON
N

transport system of the time. By the 1990s the Square was tainted also by urban decay associated with the decline of the central city area [5].

Initially known as Kerkplein or Church Square, the site was set aside by the Republican Government of Paul Kruger in 1887 for use by the Dutch Reformed Church. Soon after the founding of the first Dutch Reformed Church in Johannesburg, the site was exchanged for one further north where the Supreme Court is situated today. The ground was then purchased by the Goldfields Mining Company who built an impressive clubhouse in the centre, intended for the relaxation of mine managers. Before the interior finishes were completed, the government of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (Z.A.R.) bought the building and surrounding land. The building was converted into a courthouse and government office, and the area was renamed Government Square in 1893 (Leyds 1964, p. 144).

The Square's symbolic status as a seat of local state-political power came to the fore during the Anglo-Boer War, when it became the scene of the hand-over of Johannesburg to the victorious British forces. At a ceremony held in front of the courthouse on 31 May 1900, Johannesburg was surrendered to the British under the command of Lord Roberts (Cartwright 1962, p. 131-133). Here the Vierkleur[6] of the Z.A.R. was taken down, and a silken Union Jack made by Lady Roberts was hoisted, followed by the handing over of the keys of the town to the British. The handover of power was watched by large crowds, including some spectators on the balconies of the courthouse.

[5] The Johannesburg central city refers to what was traditionally called the Central Business District, an area of approximately 2km² comprising the commercial and financial districts of the central town area. Surrounding it is a larger area known as the Johannesburg Inner city, made up of high-density residential suburbs as well as office accommodation and light industrial areas.
[6] The Vierkleur was the flag of the Transvaal Boer Republic.



Figure 2: Outside the Magistrate's Court, 31 May 1900: the surrender of Johannesburg, making it a British town.

(Drawing by Benny Gruzin. In: Cartwright 1962, p. 133).

The Z.A.R. Commandant for Witwatersrand, Dr. F.E.T. Krause, gave the surrender to Field Marshall Roberts, but not before arranging a 24 hour truce. Thanks to this brief armistice agreed to by the British, the retreating Boers were able to regroup and continue fighting the guerrilla war which continued for another two years.

Johannesburg's mines were seen as a great prize of the conflict, but the town surrendered without a fight, with its mines intact, eight months after the declaration of war. During his time in charge, Krause acted under orders from President Kruger and General Louis Botha to prevent the destruction of the

mines, and to hand Johannesburg over intact to the British forces who were by then, advancing on the town (Krause 1948).

Mike Alfred (2006, p. 6) describes the decisive action taken by Krause to prevent the dynamiting of the gold mines by a band of saboteurs:

> *"On May 29 1900, encouraged by a Volksraad faction supportive of dynamiting the gold-mines and laying waste [to] Johannesburg in the manner of 'Moscow Burning'[7], a Judge, now self-styled General, Antonie Kock, arrived at the Robinson Mine with a band of mounted wreckers. There he discovered a substantial amount of gold which had not yet been delivered to Pretoria. Fortunately thus diverted, he rode with his men to Government House where he confronted Krause who had just returned from arranging the defence of Johannesburg's southern hills. Kock, alone in Krause's office, demanded an explanation for the undelivered gold, whereupon Krause, assisted by Police Chief van Diggelin, disarmed and arrested Kock. Then, demonstrating inventiveness under pressure, Krause went outside brandishing several papers, to inform Kock's waiting horsemen that they were needed to divert a British advance column at Geldenhuys Mine, nearby. Leaderless, they galloped off, posing no further threat".*

As British troops marched into Johannesburg for the first time, entering the town in a triumphal parade, there were African workers on the pavements, among the crowds there to greet them. As observed by Beavon (2004, p. 67), there was a special significance in the African presence there, in that pavements had hitherto been forbidden to all Africans and 'coloureds', since Transvaal law required them to walk in the street[8]. Yet one of the first measures of the new British military government in Johannesburg was to get Africans off the pavements.

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[7] Some senior officials of the Z.A.R. favoured sacking Johannesburg and laying waste to the mines, on the example of the Russians who had burned Moscow rather than let it fall to Napoleon.

[8] During this period, the generic term 'Coloured' was used for all those who were not white, including Africans, Cape Malays, coloureds and Indians. In common with other people of colour, Indians were barred from walking on the sidewalks in the Z.A.R. Soon after his arrival in South Africa, M.K. Gandhi himself faced the indignity of being kicked into the road in terms of this restriction. The incident occurred outside President Paul Kruger's residence in Pretoria around

Two days after taking over Johannesburg, on 2 June 1900, the British who had been welcomed as liberators by some local African people, re-imposed the pass laws of the Z.A.R., in an effort to channel workers to the mines. Under the pass laws, now applied with greater efficiency and ruthlessness than under the Boers, unemployed or self-employed African men were threatened with expulsion from the urban centres of the Witwatersrand.

After the Anglo-Boer War, an interventionist British administration took measures to stabilise the white work-force and segregate the black working classes. From Johannesburg's first forced removal involving the residents of Coolie Location[9] to Klipspruit in 1904 (Brink 1994, p. 15-22), the history of Johannesburg for most of the Twentieth Century was, until the changes of the recent past, one of gradual and increasing segregation on the basis of race, class and space.

Yet from as early as 1900, most of the features that were to characterise Johannesburg up to the 1990s, were already set in place. The exclusion of Africans, as well as other people of colour, from public spaces and other amenities was the order of the day. As noted by Beavon (2004: p. 68):

> *"Africans had to carry passes, they were prohibited from walking on the pavements, they were excluded from public places, they rode in cattle trucks behind the Rand tram and its main line replacement, they were not permitted to use the regular intra-urban public transport, and they were largely confined to the single-sex 'barracks' of the mines, the 'Kaffir Location', and the servants' quarters of the opulent whites"*.

September 1893, when Gandhi was ejected from a footpath by a police constable (Gandhi 1957, p. 130).

[9] In March 1904 a plague epidemic struck the Indian slum settlement in the area now known as Newtown. For the authorities, the outbreak of plague offered a pretext for expelling Indians and others who made up the racially-mixed population of the "Insanitary Area" on the western side of town – a scheme which had been pre-planned by the town administration (Lewis 1979). The population of the Coolie Location was removed to an emergency camp at Klipspruit, 13 miles south-west of Johannesburg. At the time of the evacuation, Coolie Location was home to a mixed population comprising 1 6420 Indians, 1 420 Africans and 146 Cape Coloureds (Carrim 1990, p. 6).

Indians too experienced increased hardships following the British triumph. The many Indians who left the Transvaal during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 – 1902 were barred from returning to their homes and businesses once the war was over. Those Indians who remained in the Transvaal also found that their position had worsened after the British victory. Indians could not live outside segregated locations, own fixed property, or trade outside designated bazaars. The new British administration revived the anti-Indian laws of their Boer predecessors, enforcing them with new vigour, and sought to impose new discriminatory measures. Responding to the government offensive, Gandhi settled in the Transvaal in order to support Indian rights[10]. For his operational base, Gandhi chose Johannesburg, the fast-growing mining town with the largest Indian population in the Transvaal.

At the time, the Witwatersrand High Court and Magistrates' Court were located at the centre of the then Government Square. Attracted by the convenience of being close to the courts, lawyers' offices soon sprung up around the Square. Joining them in 1903 was M.K. Gandhi, who was admitted as an attorney of the Transvaal Supreme Court, and set up chambers in Rissik Street. As Johannesburg's only Indian attorney, Gandhi's services were in great demand, with a series of anti-Indian laws bringing many clients to his doors. Gandhi continued to keep his Johannesburg law office until 1910, but as passive resistance intensified, he moved increasingly into the political fray, withdrawing from direct involvement in legal work around 1908.

Much of Gandhi's professional and political activity revolved around the Law Courts on Government Square, where he appeared on both sides of the dock,

[10] In 1902, after a decade in South Africa, Gandhi left for India where he intended to establish a legal practice. The following year, Gandhi returned to represent Indians who were prevented from entering the Transvaal, so honouring a pledge that he would return to South Africa if needed by the Indians of that country. Aside from this 'pull' factor drawing him back to South Africa, 'push' factors helped motivate his return to that country, in that Gandhi's practice in India got off to a slow and disappointing start, first in Rajkot and then shifting to Bombay.

first as an attorney and then as an accused in political trials (Itzkin 2000, p. 16). As an attorney, Gandhi appeared professionally at the High Court in defence of Indians accused of failing to register for passes, picketing and other political offences. He also appeared in the Criminal Court as a defendant in two high-profile political trials.

In December 1907 the Court ordered Gandhi and 26 others to leave the Transvaal within 48 hours for refusing to register for passes under the Asiatic Registration Act [11]. After failing to leave the Transvaal, Gandhi was arrested and brought back to Court in January 1908. Inside the crowded courtroom were many Indian supporters as well as Gandhi's fellow legal practitioners. In his book *Satyagraha in South Africa,* Gandhi (1968: p. 203) recalls the conflicting emotions he experienced while in the dock:

> *"I had some slight feeling of awkwardness due to the fact that I was standing as an accused in the very court where I had often appeared as Council. But I remember that I considered the former role as far more honourable than the latter, and did not feel the slightest hesitation in entering the prisoner's box"*

Gandhi was sentenced to be jailed at Johannesburg's Fort prison, the first of many terms of imprisonment which he served in South Africa and in India. After sentence was passed on Gandhi and five of his co-accused, hundreds of Indians demonstrated waving black flags outside the courthouse before their protests were broken up by police.

Another momentous trial opened in 1926 at the old courts on Government Square. Unlike the political drama surrounding Gandhi, this was a criminal matter, involving the school teacher Herman Bosman, charged with the murder of his step-brother. At the start of the trial which brought him early notoriety,

[11] Under the Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act of 1907, all 'Asiatics' were required to carry registration certificates. The Act provoked mass resistance from Indians and Chinese.

the young accused was still largely unknown, only later to be hailed as one of the greatest South African writers of the Twentieth Century. The circumstances of Bosman's case were sufficiently dramatic to excite considerable interest from the Johannesburg press of the day (Rosenberg 1976, p. 47- 55; Grey 2005, p. 99 -137). At the age of 21, Bosman killed David Russell with a rifle shot, apparently over trivial disagreements[12]. Later in life, Herman Charles Bosman made his name as a gifted humorist, fiction writer and essayist. But for all the literary accolades he was accorded, Bosman was an enigmatic figure, dogged by flaws and marked by personal tragedy.

The preparatory hearing of Charles Bosman took place before Mr S. Ellman at the Magistrates' Courts on Government Square. Bosman was then held over for four months at the Fort Prison before the main trial was held at the Witwatersrand Criminal Court, housed at the Supreme Court building on Pritchard Street. Bosman's trial before Mr Justice Gey van Pittius ended with a conviction for murder, a catastrophe that re-directed his life and was to haunt his writing.

After being sentenced to death by hanging, Bosman spent nine days in the condemned cells at Pretoria Central Prison before hearing that he had been granted a reprieve (Blignaut 1981, p. 7). Bosman's sentence was commuted to ten year's imprisonment, and he was released four years later after remission of sentence. His jail term served for the murder of David Russell formed the basis of Bosman's fictionalised prison memoir, *Cold Stone Jug*, published in 1949.

[12] The motive for Bosman's crime was never made clear during his trial. After sentence was passed, Bosman's statement to the court included the following words: *"In that tragic moment, the happenings of which are still unclear to me, I was impelled by some wild and chaotic impulse in which there was no suggestion of malice or premeditation"*.



Figure 3: A demonstration outside the courthouse after Gandhi and five others were sentenced in January 1908. Mounted police dispersed the crowd with batons.
(Drawing by F. de Haenen from a sketch by H. Egersdorfer.
From *The Graphic, 15 February* 1908)



Figure 4: Herman Charles Bosman aged 21 at the time of his conviction for murder.
(Photograph from Rosenberg 1976)

Close to two decades after his release from prison, in an essay entitled 'The old Magistrates' Court, Bosman turned to reminiscing about the prisoners' yard in which the awaiting trial prisoners were herded. The piece dates from 1944 when the courthouse was first threatened with demolition (although the building was only torn down in 1948). Writing in the *South African Opinion* (September 1944), Bosman conjures up the scene:

> *"The glint of the spring sunshine on handcuffs. On tarnished people and on dreams that have gone. The gaudy scarf which a man will wear around his neck only a little longer: the scarf is shortly going to be replaced with a rope. The crimson lipstick on the mouth of the harlot, as vivid now as it was twenty years ago. And the corpus delecti. And the placid clouds in the sky overhead. And the detectives. And the pallid terrors in the hearts of men"* (quoted in Grey 2005, p. 101).

Bosman returns to the scene of the courts in his 1948 essay *Old Johannesburg is Vanishing,* prompted this time not by the threat of demolition but by its reality, lamenting the disappearance of Johannesburg's heritage buildings at the hands of demolition-gangs (Bosman 1986, p. 75-77). A changeable, impatient city, Johannesburg was quick to throw off its past and demolish its historic landmarks. The knocking-down of the courthouse met with general indifference, its passing marked by few regrets and little protest. Yet, for Bosman, the memories it evokes are intensely personal:

> *"The prisoners' yard was very cramped. And a fact you can't deny was that the toilet facilities were cramped in the extreme. That old blue wash-basin in the corner. And the piece of cracked mirror that you glanced into very hurriedly when your name was called."*

Bosman encounters a city pioneer who describes the site before the courthouse was built, commenting wryly on the recycling of Johannesburg's spaces:

"I saw the first sod being turned there for the foundations, when the place was surrounded by bluegums. I saw the site as a vacant stand. And one of these days I'll see it as a vacant stand again. That's how it goes".

As it happened, the old courthouse made way for long lines of bus shelters that occupied the site for the next 50 years. By the close of the century the Square would again be transformed, largely cleared of structures to become open space once more[13].

The old High Court section of the building went out of use in 1911, replaced by the present Supreme Court building located on Von Brandis Square. The Law Courts on Government Square fell into complete disuse by 1935-6, when the present magistrates Courts arose in Ferreirastown on the western edge of the central city. This came as a severe blow to established buildings around Government Square. Over the next few years the attorneys would move their offices west towards the Magistrates Court in West Street, and north towards the Supreme Court in Pritchard Street. In 1948 the old law courts and administrative offices, by then run down and dilapidated, were demolished to make way for Johannesburg's new bus terminus.

Following on from the clearing of the court building, the Square was reduced to a tarmacadimised bus terminus. Coinciding with the onset of apartheid in 1948, it was reconfigured as the hub of the city's whites-only bus service. A year later, the City Council decided to rename the site Van der Bijl Square after the Chairman of the parastatal Electricity Supply Commission (Eskom), Dr. Hendrik Johannes Van der Bijl (Smith 1971, p. 551).

Towering over the site from 1937 to 1983, was the legendary skyscraper, Eskom House, at the western boundary of the Square in Rissik Street. Although Eskom

[13] Though not built up, the Square is today by no means vacant. Businesses line the edges of the site, its central lanes are traversed by buses, while its paved surfaces are often teeming with commuters and other users.

was a government company, it did not build its headquarters in Pretoria, but chose instead to construct its flagship in the centre of South Africa's major commercial centre, Johannesburg. At night the building was flood-lit to show off the glow of electricity set off against the dramatic clean-cut lines of the Art Deco design (Chipkin 1993, p. 147). Eskom House was itself a paean to the role of electricity in powering industry and lighting the lives of consumers. Given the context of the time, the association was inevitably with white-controlled industry and predominantly white consumers, particularly since many African townships were not electrified.

The 21-story building was for a time highest modern structure in Africa and epitomised the ideas of technical progress and modernity of Dr. Van der Bijl and Eskom. The area's physical link with Eskom and its Chairman was however broken when the Eskom headquarters was imploded in 1983. Eskom House was replaced by the Nedbank Group Central Building at the corner of Rissik and Main Street, an example of 1980's corporate architecture.

By the 1990s, the site became increasingly neglected and run down, adding to the general air of decay and deterioration in the central city area. The bus terminus fell into disrepair, homeless people and street children made it their home, and the site became linked with petty crime. For over 40 years, through the apartheid period, Van der Bijl Square had stood at the heart of Johannesburg's segregated transport system. Now caught up in a time of change and uncertainty, and bearing the aftermath of a divisive colonial and apartheid past, the ailing Square was in many ways a microcosm of the Johannesburg central city of the time. As elsewhere in the city centre, owners of property bordering the Square suffered financial losses through high vacancy rates, falling rentals, and declining property values.



Figure 5: Demolition of the Law Courts, overlooked by Eskom House, 1948.

(Water-colour by Frank Bauer, MuseuMAfricA Collection: MA 1968/2699)



Figure 6: The Implosion of Eskom House in 1983.

(Source: Clarke 1987, p. 232)





Figures 7 & 8: Views of Van der Bijl Square in the 1990s. Street children stored their possessions on the roofs of the bus-shelters, as can be seen in Figure 7.

(Photographs courtesy of Kagiso Urban Management)

In the late 1990s property developer Gerald Olitzki came up with a vision for revitalizing the Square which he took to the Central Johannesburg Partnership (CJP), a private sector organization dedicated to inner city renewal and serving business as their primary client. The CJP established the Van der Bijl Square Consortium, consisting of property owners and retailers around the Square, to fund the redevelopment of the area. A 45-year lease agreement over the Square was negotiated with the City Council which required the Consortium to upgrade the Square and maintain it at their cost, making it the first major public space in Johannesburg to be privately managed via a City Improvement District (CID) (Simmonds 1999; Giesen 2000; CJP 2006).

The Square was re-developed in 1999 at a cost of R 2.5 million, with 40% of the site being used for a public bus service. The rest of the Square was converted into a paved, landscaped area, with paving extending up to the surrounding buildings on the north and south sides. Channels along the north and south sides of the Square (new Street North and New Street South) were redesigned to create a broad paved public way with a pedestrian ambiance. The boulevard-style space is designed to allow for sidewalk cafes to spill onto the Square, and to free up more walkable space (Giesen 2000).

A new vision for a sociable, multi-purpose site was advanced in an 'advertorial' to announce the redevelopment:

> *"The old bus holding space was to be 'given back' to the city to be used as a space to stroll about and mingle, transforming it into a venue for the benefit of pedestrians, commuters and office tenants collectively, rather than just a bus stop"* (In: *Planning* June 2000, p. 28).

The need for a new name to shape the Square's emerging new image was widely felt, with competing proposals for the name-change being made on one hand by MuseuMAfricA, and on the other by the local business community

represented by the Van der Bijl Consortium and the Central Johannesburg Partnership. 'Renaissance Square' was the name put forward by the business community, expressing their sense of ambition and linking with the African Renaissance concept which was in vogue at the time, associated with the vision of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki for continental re-birth and renewal. The rival proposal from the Museum, on the other hand, was for Gandhi Square, taking its cue from new research on the Indian leader's time in Johannesburg.

After the end of apartheid, the Indian government sought to re-establish cultural links with South Africa. Uncovering the Gandhian legacy shared by the two countries was central to this project, and by 1997 MuseuMAfricA was commissioned by the Consulate of India to research Johannesburg's Gandhi sites. Findings from this study were presented in the exhibition *Gandhi's Johannesburg: Birthplace of Satyagraha* and in a book of the same name. Through this research, the Square was identified as an important site standing at the intersection of two key areas of Gandhi's experience in Johannesburg – his professional life and his political activism.

The two competing proposals for re-naming the Square were discussed among councillors in the Inner City Committee. As noted in the Minutes for their meeting of 20 April 1999, Clr. Cachalia urged that the site be re-named Gandhi Square, and was supported by other Committee members (Greater Johannesburg Inner City Committee 1999). Clr. M.S. (Mohammed Saeed) Cachalia recalls the meeting:

> "Those members of the Council that felt it should be re-named Gandhi Square were looking at the historical context. Although the renaissance concept was a very appropriate response to the continent's problems, it had no particular connection to the people of Johannesburg at that stage. [The name] Gandhi Square had that connection, and that was the kind of approach we had taken" (Interview with Clr. M.S. Cachalia).

The Chairperson for the Inner City Committee, Sibusiso (Sbu') Buthelezi, had an important influence on proceedings, not so much in the Committee meeting itself but more from behind the scenes. Prior to the meeting, Clr. Buthelezi intimated to Clr. Cachalia that he supported the suggestion that the Square be re-named after Gandhi, but that, in his position of as chairperson, he did not deem it proper to intervene in the debate (ibid.). With the support of the Chairperson, moving the motion for the naming of Gandhi Square then fell to Clr. Cachalia, known as a prominent member of the Gandhi Centenary Council[14].

Eventually both sides agreed to support MuseuMAfricA's proposal, and the site was officially renamed Gandhi Square in 1999. Once the Council had made its decision, the Central Johannesburg Partnership (CJP) adopted the Gandhi name with some enthusiasm, as brightly-coloured "Gandhi Square" banners soon appeared at the site and the new Gandhi branding was launched in CJP publicity material[15] (CJP 2000).

In 2003, a bronze statue of M.K. Gandhi was added to the Square, so boosting its standing as a heritage site. The artwork was unveiled by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Clr. Amos Masondo at a public ceremony held on Gandhi's birth anniversary, the 2nd of October. The addition of the statue was viewed by decision-makers in the city as a logical culmination of the re-naming of Gandhi Square, giving physical form, depth and expression to the new identity conferred on the Square several years earlier. The first major public sculpture to be introduced to Johannesburg's the post-apartheid city centre, it presents Gandhi

[14] The Gandhi Centenary Council was formed in Johannesburg in 1969 to commemorate the centenary of Gandhi's birth that year (hence the name 'Centenary Council'). The organization has, as its continuing mission, sought to promote Gandhi's legacy.
[15] While commemoration of Gandhi became the headline branding element for the Square, a reference to African Renaissance was re-inserted in a muted form. Beneath the Gandhi Square name emblazoned on banners and other publicity material for the site, the tagline appears: "Emerging from the African Renaissance" .

as a young lawyer looking towards the centre of the Square where once the law courts were located.

Chapter 3

M.K.Gandhi: Inclusive Icon or Sectarian Symbol?

For many people, Gandhi represents a figure of tremendous moral authority, an icon of tolerance. The launch in 2003 of a bronze statue on Gandhi Square to salute the Indian leader's civil rights work in South Africa was however greeted by some mixed reactions. At the unveiling ceremony, local and Indian dignitaries hailed Gandhi as one of the great moral leaders of the 20th Century. Chief among those welcoming the initiative was Nelson Mandela. In a message read out on his behalf, the former President of South Africa offered fulsome praise of the Indian freedom fighter who initiated the struggle against discrimination in South Africa. But critics condemned the tribute to Gandhi, arguing that it overlooked racist comments made by him during his stay in South Africa.

Within a week of the unveiling, a sharp attack on Gandhi was launched in *This Day* newspaper[16] (10 October 2003). Under the headline *Ghosts of Gandhi: Behind the Mark of Divinity,* Nhlanhla Hlongwane argued that Gandhi was an inveterate racist who managed to deceive and betray the very black leaders whose trust he won. A flurry of like-minded letters and articles followed in sections of the South African press between October and December 2003, condemning Gandhi's alleged racism (for example, Fred Rundle in *The Citizen*, 3 November 2003). Supporters of Gandhi responded with a series of letters and polemical articles of their own, defending Gandhi's record (see for example, Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie in *This Day*, 24 October 2003, and Anil Nauriya in the *Mail and Guardian*, 14-20 November 2003).

[16] The inauguration the Gandhi statue in October 2003 coincided with the South African launch of *This Day* newspaper, a Nigerian-owned daily. The South African edition of *This Day* was short-lived, closing down a year later. Amid financial turmoil and disappointing sales, the newspaper suspended operations in November 2004.

Differing reactions set off by the introduction of the Gandhi statue point to a gap between the intended meanings of the artwork and other possible interpretations. From the perspective of the City administration, and of others who joined in supporting the venture, the statue offers a fitting tribute to Gandhi's civil rights work in Johannesburg, as well as a means of celebrating the city's multi-cultural diversity.

The introduction of the Gandhi statue was greeted by vocal reactions on the part of both supporters and detractors. Public debate on the artwork flared up and then receded within the first few months of its appearance. Having weathered this controversy, the statue has since been absorbed into the accepted landscape of the city. Nonetheless, initial criticisms raised by opponents of the project testify to the presence of alternative readings of Gandhi's legacy and of its representation on the Square.

The case of the David Dewar statue in Glasgow illustrates how normative readings of public space, and of public art within those spaces, may be challenged by alternative and oppositional readings (Paddison & Sharp 2003; Sharp *et al.* 2005). In 1999 a sculpture was erected to Donald Dewar, often credited as the father of Scottish devolution, and an important civic figure in the history of Glasgow. Launched as part of the celebration of the reinstatement of the Scottish Parliament, and of the regeneration of the city, the tribute was erected at the head of a prominent pedestrianised area in central Glasgow.

In the light of Dewar's contribution to devolution and to the development of the City, the statue appeared as a fitting celebration of his achievements, certainly in the view of the Glasgow City authorities. Nevertheless, the Dewar statue has been repeatedly vandalized, defaced and periodically spray-painted with graffiti. The motivations of those responsible for defacing the statue are unclear, but the

desecration is thought to be the work of drunken revelers who frequent night-time bars and clubs of the area, intent on consuming the "City of Fun".

The Gandhi statue was never physically defaced, but was initially challenged through arguments articulated in newspaper articles. In particular, critics charged that Gandhi scorned Africans, and that, acting out of prejudice, he did not draw non-Indian blacks into his movement in South Africa. Certainly, if well founded, claims of abiding racism towards Africans should disqualify Gandhi as a symbol of post-apartheid unification. However, much of the debate carried in the newspapers revolved around the selective use of quotes deployed to make particular arguments. Gandhi's outlook developed constantly over time, his attitudes unfolding in a complex way that can be misunderstood by considering only a few of his statements without appreciating the evolution of his thought.

Over the course of his stay in South Africa, Gandhi underwent profound personal and political change, demonstrating a capacity to learn from experience and change his views. Many writers have however failed to appreciate the force and trajectory of these changes. On one hand, many of Gandhi's most sympathetic biographers have projected the supposed 'Mahatma-ness' or saintliness of the 1930's and 1940s backwards onto his early life. The effect has been to obscure Gandhi's early shortcomings in what is essentially hagiography. Detractors have, on the other hand, condemned Gandhi for early views without recognising the transformation by which he moved beyond many of his earlier limitations.

Against overly-static conceptions of Gandhi's career, we will now turn our attention to his changing attitudes towards Africans in South Africa. No longer simply reducible to either a life-long saint or sinner, Gandhi will be shown as a more complex, dynamic figure. Seen in the context of Gandhi Square, this historical review is intended to contribute to a revised understanding of the

political symbolism of Gandhi Square which is more historically-rooted and less polarising.

Gandhi came to South Africa in 1893 on a temporary assignment to take up an offer of legal work from a Durban-based Indian businessman, Dada Abdullah. At the age of twenty-four years old, the young and inexperienced attorney was to spend most of his next twenty-one years in South Africa. Gandhi's earliest statements about Africans show a great sense of social distance from them. Speaking at a public meeting in Bombay after three years in South Africa, Gandhi's words were harsh and contemptuous:

> *"Ours is one continuous struggle against a degradation sought to be inflicted upon us by the Europeans, who desire to degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir whose occupation is hunting, and whose sole ambition is to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife and, then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness" (CWMG*, vol. 2, p. 74).

His statement is a veritable catalogue of racial stereotypes common at the time among both white settlers and Indians, and the young Gandhi did not rise above the prevailing prejudices. Gandhi's comments reflect also the tenuous intermediary position of Indians in South Africa's social hierarchy during this period, set between the privileged whites and the mass of Africans. Efforts by the authorities to strip Indians of their limited rights fuelled fears on the part of many Indians of being cast down to the status of Africans at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Indians in South Africa were themselves deeply stratified, split between a majority who were very poor, having come as indentured labourers, and members of a smaller merchant class, some of them relatively wealthy. In Natal nearly 400 Indians who owned property had the right to vote, but from 1893

efforts were launched by white settlers to strike off these voters[17]. It was this threat of disenfranchisement that caused the merchants call on Gandhi to stay on in South Africa, engaging him as their spokesman to lobby the authorities. In seeking to protect their own privileges, the merchants believed that they had to separate themselves from the Africans. When petitioning against the loss of Indian voting rights, they complained that such measures would degrade Indians who were the bearers of an ancient civilisation, depressing them to the level of the "rawest native".

The Indian political activity of the 1890s in which Gandhi became absorbed was amongst Muslim merchants from the northern state of Gujarat, comprising an elite stratum of society in relation to the "coolie" labour force on the plantations, made up predominantly of Hindus from the south of India. When Gandhi came to Natal in 1893, it was as the legal representative of these merchants, employed to defend their social privileges. As the paid political representative of Indian traders, Gandhi's statements from this period of the 1890s often reflect the ideological sway of merchant politics. He believed that Indians faced a greater threat of discrimination than did Africans, because of white fears of economic competition from Indian traders. While supporting improved conditions and status for African people, Gandhi protested against the lowering of Indians to the rank of the oppressed Africans. Yet during this same period, Gandhi also asserted that Africans had as much right to the franchise in Natal as the whites or the Indians. In a letter published in the *Times of Natal*, 26 October 1894, Gandhi wrote:

> *"The Indians do not regret that capable natives can exercise the franchise. They would regret it if it were otherwise. They (the Indians), however, assert that they too, if capable, should have the right. You, in your wisdom, would not allow the Indian or the native the precious privilege*

[17] Moves to bar Indian voters led to The Franchise Amendment Bill of 1896 which prevented Indians from being added to the voters' roll, while allowing those already on the rolls to remain. Within a few years, the limited Indian vote in Natal was entirely eliminated.

> *under any circumstances, because they have a dark skin"* (*CWMG,* vol. 1, p. 166).

In Gandhi's early writings, there are numerous references to native Africans as uncivilised and even savage. The first eight volumes of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG)*, covering the period until 1908, contain derogatory references to *kaffirs*, as well as assertions of the supposed superiority of Indians over the African people[18]. For example, in a petition which he drafted in 1899 concerning the removal of Indians in Pretoria to a segregated location, Gandhi wrote:

> "Your petitioner has seen the Location intended to be used by the Indians. It would place them, who are undoubtedly infinitely superior to the Kaffirs, in close proximity to the latter" (*CWMG*, vol. 3, p. 76)

Throughout his stay in South Africa, Gandhi concentrated on bettering the position of his own Indian community, not seeking to draw into his movement the oppressed African and Coloured populations. The question has therefore often been asked: why did Gandhi not seek to work together towards common goals in co-operation with the organisations and leaders of those groups? Gandhi was not ignorant of these organisations or their leaders, nor was he unsympathetic with their objectives. He did however question whether the conditions for an amalgamated struggle existed in South Africa at the time.

In 1906 when the Indian Passive Resistance movement was launched in Johannesburg, it came in response to the introduction of discriminatory legislation that applied only to Asiatics, enacted the following year as the Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act (TARA). Under the Act, which affected only Indians and Chinese, Asiatics were required to carry registration certificates or passes. From the inception of the campaign, Gandhi found an ally not among Africans or coloureds, but rather formed a united front with the numerically tiny

[18] It was only from 1908 that Gandhi avoided the use of the term *kaffir*.

Chinese population[19], based on mutual self interest of the Indians and Chinese and bound by the shared oppression of anti-Asiatic legislation.

Gandhi and other Indian leaders often addressed meetings of the Chinese resistance movement, while the Chinese reciprocated by attending Indian protests. Nonetheless, each of the two groups maintained their own separate organizations. Explaining this position, Gandhi later wrote in his political memoir *Satyagraha in South Africa* (1968 p. 200):

> *"Still from first to last the activities of the two communities were not allowed to be mixed up. Each worked through its own independent organization. This arrangement produced the beneficent result that so long as both the communities stood to their guns, each would be a source of strength to the other. But if one of the two gave way, that would leave the morale of the other unaffected or at least the other would steer clear of the danger of a total collapse".*

Both strategic and pragmatic considerations were important for shaping Gandhi's relations with other groups, not only towards the Chinese, but also vis-à-vis Africans and coloureds. Gandhi readily acknowledged that Indians suffered from discrimination in common with Africans and other people of colour, but argued that they did not suffer under the same discriminatory laws and not for the same reasons. His approach was that each oppressed group should fight its own battles, although each should support the others. "They have little in common regarding the points of view from which each section can urge its claim", he said. "The Indian and non-Indian sections of the coloured communities should and do remain apart and have their separate organisations". He conceded however "that each can give strength to the other in urging their common rights" (*CWMG*, vol. 5, p. 242).

[19] In *Satyagraha in South Africa* (1968, p. 199), Gandhi recalls that the Chinese residents of Johannesburg numbered three or four hundred.

While he did not advocate a united front, a non-existent notion at the time, Gandhi supported other non-European groupings and maintained ties with their leaders. He was on particularly good terms with the Coloured leader in the Cape Dr. Abdullah Abdurrahman, the President of the African Political Organisation (later known as the African Peoples' Organisation), with whom he, at times, shared a political platform. While Abdurrahman favoured closer unity between Indians and coloureds, Gandhi did not however view an amalgamated struggle as feasible.

Soon after meeting Dr Abdurrahman and other coloured leaders in 1906, Gandhi wrote in *Indian Opinion* on the difficulties of combining the struggles of the two groups:

> *"It is true that British Indians and other coloured people have much in common regarding their grievances, but they have little in common regarding the points of view from which each section can urge its claim. Whereas British Indians may, and do effectively, use the Proclamation of 1858 in support of their claims, the other coloured people are not in a position to do so; and whilst some sections of the coloured people can claim full rights as to property and movement in the Orange River Colony, British Indians have no footing whatsoever. Similarly, in the Transvaal, many sections of other coloured people are capable of owning landed property, but British Indians are de-barred [sic] from doing so under Law 3 of 1885[20]".* (*Indian Opinion* 24-03-1906, reprinted in *CWMG* vol. 5, p. 242)

Indians, Africans and coloureds often fought their battles against different laws and forms of discrimination, in different colonies, and on the basis of different claims. Whereas coloured struggles were focused on the Cape, the Indians were concentrated in Natal and the Transvaal. Moreover, Africans and Coloureds could lay claim to rights in South Africa as their homeland. In contrast, most British Indians, including Gandhi, viewed India as their true homeland. Of the

[20] From 1885 onwards, the Z.A.R. restricted the rights of Indians to own and occupy property in the Transvaal.

Africans, Gandhi maintained that, "as South Africa is their mother country, they have a better right here than we have". In Gandhi's view, the indigenous Africans and Coloureds could demand full equality, whereas Indians were recent settlers who should concentrate at that stage on their civil rights, rather than full political rights.

The separatist views of Gandhi and the Indians were often matched by leaders of other non-European groups. With the exception of Dr. Abdurrahman, it is doubtful whether the notion of forming a united front was seriously contemplated by any of the other opposition leaders (Nauriya 2006, p. 9). In practice, even the African Peoples' Organisation (A.P.O.) founded to voice the grievances of Coloured people, remained essentially a Coloured movement under the leadership of Abdurrahman.

Records of Gandhi's interaction with the African people are scanty, and Gandhi himself said little of his discussions with their leaders. In his memoirs written ten years after he left South Africa, Gandhi made no reference to any individual Africans. However Gandhi's newspaper in South Africa, *Indian Opinion,* kept the Indian community informed of major political events in the African community and shows that he was aware of their grievances and aspirations. In the journal *Harijan* (July 1, 1939) which Gandhi published in India, he later wrote of his close relations with Africans: *"I yield to no one in my regard for the Zulus, the Bantus and the other races of South Africa. I used to enjoy close relations with many of them. I had the privilege of often advising them"* (quoted in Nauriya 2006, p. i). Specifically who Gandhi advised among the African people, and what was discussed, we are not told from his writings.

The one African leader with whom Gandhi and associates at Phoenix Settlement are known to have had frequent social contact was John Dube, who was in 1912 to be the first President of the South African Native National Congress. Gandhi

and Dube were neighbours in Inanda, Natal, where both men established settlements close by, the Ohlange Institute and the Phoenix settlement respectively.

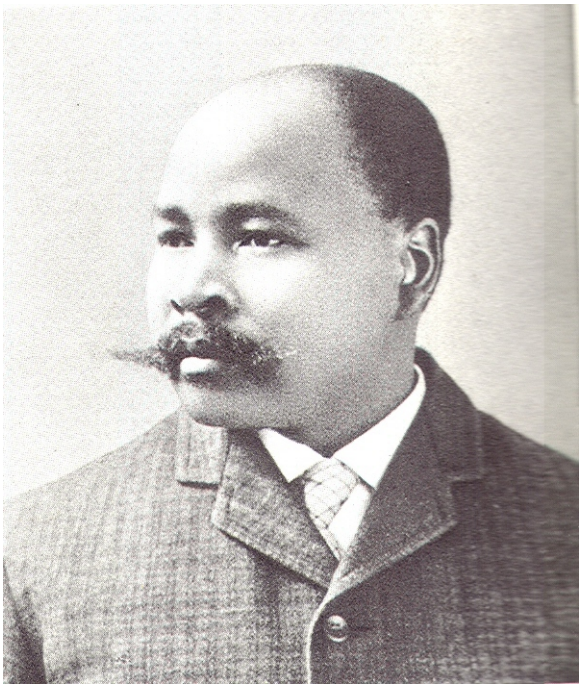


Figure 9: Rev. John Dube who became the first President of the African National Congress. Dube and Gandhi were neighbours in Inanda, where the two leaders developed a relationship of mutual respect.

(Source: Davidson 1972, p. 282)

Gandhi and Dube shared educational and political interests, and each influenced the other. Dube was like Gandhi an admirer of the educational methods of Dr. Booker T. Washington, the African-American leader in the United States who stressed self-help and vocational education. In 1901, Dube established the Ohlange Institute, the first African-controlled industrial school in South Africa, modelled after Booker Washington's Tuskagee Institute. Two years later, in 1903, Gandhi established his own Phoenix settlement, dedicated to self-help and simple living, only a mile or two from Ohlange. The same year Dube launched

an African weekly newspaper in English and Zulu newspaper, *Ilanga Lase Natal* (Sun of Natal), printing the first copies on a printing press controlled by Gandhi, which also printed his newspaper *Indian Opinion* when it was founded a year later.

Dube was warmly introduced to readers of *Indian Opinion* in 1905. Reporting on a visit of the British Association for the Advancement of Science to meet educated Africans in Natal, Gandhi wrote:

> "Mr Dube, their leader, made a very impressive speech. This Mr Dube is a Negro of whom one should know. He has acquired through his own labours over 300 acres of land near Phoenix. There he imparts education to his brethren, teaching them various trades and crafts and preparing them for the battle of life. In the course of his eloquent speech Mr Dube said that the contempt with which the Natives were regarded was unjustified … For them there was no country other than South Africa and to deprive them of their rights over lands, etc., was like banishing them from their home" (*Indian Opinion* 2 September 1905; reprinted in *CWMG*, Vol. 5, p. 55).

There is also evidence of that Dube held Gandhi in high regard, and took careful note of the Indian struggle. When Gandhi's Satyagraha campaign began in Johannesburg, Dube praised the Indian resistance movement in his newspaper. *Ilanga Lase Natal* (as quoted by *Indian Opinion* of 18 January 1908), expressed admiration for the courageous protests of the Indians in the Transvaal.

In his landmark speech to the Young Mens' Christian Association (YMCA), delivered in Johannesburg on 18 May 1908, Gandhi refuted the notion that differing civilisations could not co-exist, arguing that both the Asian and the African were assets to the British Empire and that differing cultures support each other[21] (Indian Opinion, 6-13 June 1908, reprinted in *CWMG*, Vol. 8, p. 242-246).

[21] Gandhi's address delivered at the YMCA was given in moving the negative motion in a debate on the question: "Are Asiatics and the Coloured races a menace to the Empire?"

"We can hardly think of South Africa without the African races", Gandhi told his audience, adding: "South Africa would probably be a howling wilderness without the Africans". Now in his late 30s, Gandhi spoke at the YMCA of his vision of an inclusive, multi-racial society and polity in South Africa: "If we look into the future, is it not a heritage that we leave to posterity that all the different races commingle and produce a civilisation that perhaps the world has not yet seen". The African races, Gandhi told his audience, "are entitled to justice, a fair field and no favour. Immediately you give that to them, you will find no difficulty".

By 1909 Gandhi repeatedly recommended the adoption of Satyagraha by Africans. He told the *Natal Mercury*:

> *"If the natives were to adopt our methods, and replace physical violence, it would be a positive gain for South Africa. Passive resisters when they are wrong, do mischief only to themselves. When they are right, they succeed in spite of any odds"* (quoted in Hunt 1990).

Speaking in similar vein, Gandhi turned again to the question of passive resistance methods being adopted by Africans on 7 June 1909. In a speech at Germiston he argued:

> *"The colonists would, therefore see that no exception could be taken to Indians using this force in order to obtain a redress of their grievances. Nor could such a weapon, if used by the Natives, do the slightest harm. On the contrary, if the natives could rise so high as to understand and utilise this force, there would probably be no native question to be left to be solved"* (*Indian Opinion* 12 June 1909, reprinted in *CWMG* , vol. 9, p. 244).

3.2 Johannesburg as a Catalyst for Gandhi's Inclusive Vision

Based on a study of Gandhi's writings and speeches, Nauriya (2006) argues that with the benefit of extended experience, Gandhi discarded the prejudices of his early attitudes towards Africans. Gandhi began in the 1890s as a conventional

Indian colonial lawyer who shared prejudices towards Africans which were then current. Over time, Gandhi outgrew the arrogance and bias which stamped his earlier racial views, while growing in his regard for Africans.

The broadening of Gandhi's outlook owed much to his encounters in Johannesburg with a ferment of newly-arrived townspeople, cultures and ideas. It is to this enriching influence of Johannesburg's cosmopolitan milieu that we now turn.

Gandhi gained in professional confidence during his years in Durban before the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, becoming an able lawyer and petition-writer, though not yet the political leader of later years. However, the decisive developments in Gandhi's political development took place in the metropolitan context of Johannesburg after the end of the war (Itzkin 2000; Hyslop 2007). During his ten-year stay in Johannesburg, Gandhi founded an inclusive Indian nationalism based on universal values, rising above divisions of religion, language and class and caste. At the same time, he formulated a moral philosophy appealing to humanistic values which had international relevance and appeal beyond the immediate concerns of his own political constituency. Gandhi's shift towards a more inclusive politics developed in an important sense out of Johannesburg's diverse, multi-cultural and cosmopolitan milieu.

Johannesburg was cosmopolitan from its inception, receiving waves of newcomers from across the Southern African region but also from many other parts of the world. Beginning in 1886, the gold rush brought a huge surge of migration, attracting a burgeoning population from a variety of places and walks of life, anything but homogenous with regards to ethnic origin, class and creed.

The first arrivals were mainly white male diggers, prospectors and fortune-seekers from all over the world. New contingents came from far and wide: from

England, Germany, Russia and Lithuania, Australia and North America, as well as the Cape and Natal colonies. With the turn to deep level mining, the demand for both skilled and unskilled labour increased. At the higher end of the job market, there was a need to employ skilled artisans and experienced miners from Britain and other industrialised countries. At the same time, a large corps of low-paid labour was required to perform unskilled work. In order to feed this need, the mining industry drew on cheap migrant labour taken from across the southern African region, with recruitment for the mines extending to Mozambique in the north-east and as far south as the Transkei in the Cape.

Others followed to serve and profit from the needs of those most directly involved in mining, taking up a variety of occupations. Work-seekers, small entrepreneurs, hawkers and bar–owners came from far and wide, followed by prostitutes of all colours. Towards the higher end of the social scale, mine owners and managers were joined by the town's first lawyers and other professional men.

Table 1: Population of Johannesburg (including the mines) by Racial Group, 1896-1911

	1896	**1911**
White	50 907	121 857
African	14 145	102 668
Indian	4 807	4 599
Coloured	3 831	11 007
Total	73 690	240 131

(Source: Beavon 2004, p. 83)

Table 1 shows the changing demography of residents of the young mining town, divided among whites, coloureds, Indians and Africans. Most populations grew

rapidly, including whites and Africans and, starting from a lower base, Coloureds and Malays. Indians showed however a slight decline, due to restrictions on Indian immigration preventing a largely male population from importing wives. The Transvaal Immigration Restriction Act was introduced in 1907 to prohibit further Indian Immigration into the Transvaal and to deport those illegally resident there.

Among many other immigrant communities, Jews from Western Europe, Russia and the East European territories of Latvia and Lithuania, made up a small but growing population, accounting for 10% of Johannesburg's white population by the mid 1890s (Robertson & Kaplan 1991, p. 22). By the turn of the century, there were some 25 000 Jews in the area now known as South Africa, almost half of whom were in Johannesburg (Saron 1976, p. 15).

Adding greater numbers to Johannesburg's white population were a continuing stream of destitute Afrikaner families who were squeezed off the land. During the 1890s many of Johannesburg's impoverished burghers[22] turned to self-employment as brick-makers, transport riders and cab-drivers. But especially once early attempts at self-employment broke down, starting in the late 1890s, Afrikaners fresh off the land became identified as the poorer section of the towns white component (van Onselen 2001).

Indians were among the first groups to arrive in Johannesburg, with the town's first Indian settlement 'Coolie Location' being established in 1887, a year after Johannesburg was founded. By 1896 there were close to 5 000 Indian people in Johannesburg, made up of traders who had paid their own passage from India, as well as workers who had served their period of indenture on the sugar cane plantations in Natal. Together with the Indians, a small number of Chinese who

[22] Historically the term "burghers" referred to Afrikaans citizens of the Transvaal Boer Republic (Z.A.R.).

had come to Johannesburg in the nineteenth century were considered by the authorities as part of the 'Asiatic problem'. By 1904, about 500 Chinese were settled in Johannesburg, many of them working in general stores and steam laundries (Yap & Man: 1996, p. 85).

In the development of Gandhi's philosophy, an important influence was exerted by a small group of Europeans who were his close friends and associates. These were mainly Jewish intellectuals who shared an interest in eastern religions and western critiques of contemporary society. Among the most important of these individuals was Gandhi's closest friend and supporter, the German architect Hermann Kallenbach. Others included two of the staff in his law office, Henry Polak from England and another Anglo-Jew, the theosophist Lewis Ritch. Gandhi was a great proselytiser, quick to convert these friends and colleagues to his ideals. They went on to play a part in Gandhi's struggle. But more than mere followers, their own ideas impacted powerfully on Gandhi's thinking.

Gandhi's European friends shared a fascination with Asian religions, a pre-occupation developed through their involvement with Theosophy, a mystical cult which attained international influence at the turn of the century. Theosophist thinking was also part of the intellectual ferment in Johannesburg at the time. Kallenbach, Polak and L.W. Ritch were all at some time members of the Johannesburg Lodge of the Theosophical Society established in 1899 (Saks 1998, p. 46). Lewis Ritch[23] was one of the original sponsors of the local Lodge, and introduced Gandhi to the Theosophical Society in Johannesburg (Lean 1949, p. 14; Dhupelia-Mesthrie 2004, p. 55).

[23] Gandhi got to know L.W. Ritch as a businessman in Durban during the 1890s. Ritch later gave up the world of commerce to become an articled clerk in Gandhi's Johannesburg law office, and went on to become a solicitor (Meer 1996, p. 1208 and 1210; Dephalia-Mesthrie 2004 p. 55).

Soon after his arrival in Johannesburg, Gandhi joined regular discussions with a theosophist circle at a vegetarian restaurant, the Alexandra Tea Room, where he took his morning and evening meals. Owned by the theosophist Miss Bissack, the restaurant was located across the road from Gandhi's offices, around the corner from Government Square (Itzkin 2000, p. 11-12). Bissack's restaurant was a favourite meeting place for members of the Theosophical Society, where they gathered for long discussions (Lean 1949, p. 15).

At the Alexandra Tea Room Gandhi made the acquaintance of Henry Polak, who became an articled clerk and later a fully fledged attorney in his law office, and who shared Gandhi's Troyeville home from 1904-1906. Gandhi and Polak each greatly influenced the other. Polak was introduced to Theosophy by Gandhi[24] around 1905, and went on to become a prominent member of the Theosophical Society (*ibid*., p. 42). It was Henry Polak who gifted Gandhi with John Ruskin's book *Unto This Last* to read on a train trip in 1904. In Ruskin's text, Gandhi found a synthesis of key thoughts he had been formulating. Ruskin's utopian vision described a community of equals living in close contact with nature and spurning the inequalities of modern industrial society. Gandhi resolved to change his life in accordance with Ruskin's ideals.

Theosophy developed as a syncretic belief system which combined eastern religious thought, western philosophy and elements of Jewish mysticism drawn from the *Kabbalah*. Through the prompting of the Theosophical Society, Gandhi delved more deeply into his own legacy of Hindu religious thought, a subject which had not previously held his interest.

[24] Gandhi's first encounter with the Theosophical Society was during his years as a young student in London during the late 1880s, an experience which laid a foundation for his broad and tolerant view of the essential worth and inter-connectedness of the world's religions (*CWMG*, vol. 1, p. 354-355; Meer 1995 p. 41). Gandhi was enrolled as an associate member of the London Theosophical Society in 1891.

Linking with ideas of the commonality of the various branches of human knowledge, theosophy proclaimed ideals of equality and universal brotherhood as a central to its doctrine. First among the declared objectives of the original Theosophical Society founded in New York, was "to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of Race, Creed, Sex, Class or Colour" (Lean 1949, p. 1). For a movement formed as early as 1875, such enlightened sentiments were far ahead of their time.

In his autobiography (1948, p. 321), Gandhi recalls his engagement with the theosophists in Johannesburg. Their ideals led to some deep self-examination on Gandhi's part:

> *"During my first sojourn in South Africa it was Christian influence that kept me alive in the religious sense. Now it was the theosophical influence that added strength to it. Mr Ritch was a theosophist and put me in touch with the Society at Johannesburg. I never became a member, as I had my differences, but I came in close contact with almost every theosophist. I had religious discussions with them every day. There used to be readings from theosophical books, and sometimes I had occasion to address their meetings. The chief thing about theosophy is to cultivate and promote the ideal of brotherhood. We had considerable discussion over this, and I criticised the members where their conduct did not appear to me to square with their ideal. The criticism was not without its profound effect on me. It led to introspection".*

Gandhi's vision of a multi-racial polity and society in South Africa, articulated on 18 May 1908, was infused with a universalist ethos drawing from, among other sources, theosophist thought. In his speech at the YMCA, Gandhi extolled the prospect of a united South African nation in which "all the different races commingle and produce a civilisation that perhaps the world has not seen".

Around the time of Gandhi's January 1908 imprisonment in the Johannesburg Fort, he was able to synthesize his recent experiences and his reading of the Hindu scriptures, the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Upanishads*, as well as the Koran and

secular texts. Gandhi studied the works of European philosophers including Ruskin, Thoreau, Emerson, Mazzini and Tolstoy. Using his time in jail, Gandhi was able to combine secular and religious humanism, drawing on eastern and western sources, and integrate these to formulate his philosophy of non-violent struggle. By 1908 Gandhi had formulated the main elements of his doctrine of *Satyagraha* ('Soul Force' sometimes misleadingly called passive resistance). Gandhi's moral and political thought had, by this time, taken on an increasingly humanistic and universal sweep, transcending the limits of narrow nationalism, and acknowledging its debts to cosmopolitanism.

Anti-Indian legislation introduced in the Transvaal did not differentiate between the many different groups and affiliations among the Indian community. Indians were sharply divided along ethnic, language, religious, caste and class lines. However, while concentrated together in Johannesburg, Indians found themselves confronting the common threat of oppressive measures which cut across their social boundaries. Gandhi was able to use the situation to good effect in order to overcome divisions among Indians, a task made far easier in Johannesburg than it would have been in India. As explained by Hyslop (2007):

> *"Migration had ripped up people from their context and juxtaposed them in a dramatic way. Muslim merchants with origins in almost every part of India, (though predominantly Gujarat), Tamil and Telegu small traders and labourers all lived in close proximity and all faced common problems. Gandhi's political genius was to find a language that would speak to this common situation".*

Gandhi was not alone in building Indian unity, but worked in concert with the leading Muslim organisation in the Transvaal, the Hamidia Islamic Society. The Hamidia Society was based at the Newtown Mosque, where mass meetings were held in the courtyard. Although as a Hindu, Gandhi was not part of the leadership of the Society, he often sharing a platform with them, addressing weekly meetings at the Mosque grounds. An impromptu meeting was also called

during a short postponement in Gandhi's trial on 10 January 1908, attracting a large crowd despite the short notice (*CWMG*, vol. 8, p. 36). Protest meetings held outside the mosque attracted virtually the entire Indian population: Hindus together with Muslims and a small number of Christian Indians, wealthy merchants as well as petty traders and ordinary labourers (Itzkin 2000, p. 53-55).

Gandhi was beginning to generate an Indian identity that cut across the barriers of religion, class, caste and language - a unifying conception which he later carried back with him to India[25]. In South Africa, Gandhi contributed towards the development of a more cohesive Indian community which later fed into the growth of the broader South African nation. Although he was creating an Indian nationalism, it was one which was linked to a humanistic universalism which recognised its debt to a diverse and eclectic range of sources brought together in the context of a cosmopolitan Johannesburg.

3.2 Gandhi's Legacy for national Liberation in South Africa

To what extent did Gandhi's conception of peaceful protest continue to influence popular struggles in South Africa after he left the country in July 1914? It is all too easy to either over-or under-estimate the contribution of Gandhi's influence on the further course of South African liberation history. Nevertheless, Gandhian traditions of non-violent protest undoubtedly became an enduring influence for the unfolding African liberation movement (Erwin 1995, p. 25-33; Reddy 1995; Tandon 1995, p. 298-310; Mandela 2000).

Up to the time of Gandhi's assassination in 1948, his ideas and example failed to inspire a Satyagraha movement among the African majority in South Africa. But

[25] Gandhi's commitment to a unified India embracing both Hindus and Muslims was frustrated when the independence movement divided along sectarian lines, leading to the partitioning of India and Pakistan in 1947.

when resistance was revived by Indians in 1946, the great majority of whom were born in South Africa, it was to Gandhi's techniques of civil disobedience that they turned. From 1946-48 Indians were engaged in a new passive resistance campaign, led by Dr Yusuf Dadoo in the Transvaal and Dr. G.M. Naiker in Natal, with some 2 000 volunteers going to jail in defiance of discriminatory property laws. Their use of Gandhian methods of struggle seems to have had a wider impact within South Africa than when employed in earlier times by Gandhi himself.

The re-igniting of Indian passive resistance greatly impressed some of the younger African nationalists rising to prominence in the ANC Youth League (ANCYL). In his autobiography, Nelson Mandela describes the impact of the Indian protests of 1946-48 felt by himself and others in the ANCYL leadership:

> *"The campaign was confined to the Indian community, and the participation of other groups was not encouraged. Even so, Dr. Xuma and other African leaders spoke at several meetings, and along with the Youth League gave full moral support to the struggle of the Indian people. The government crippled the rebellion with harsh laws and intimidation, but we in the Youth League and the ANC had witnessed the Indian people register an extraordinary protest against colour oppression in a way that Africans and the ANC had not. … The Indian campaign became a model for the type of protest that we in the Youth League were calling for. … The Indians' campaign harkened back to the 1913 Passive Resistance Campaign in which Mahatma Gandhi led a tumultuous procession of Indians crossing illegally from Natal to the Transvaal. That was history; this campaign was taking place before my own eyes* (Mandela 1994, p. 97-8).

The Indian Passive Resistance of 1946-48 was a source of inspiration for the Programme of Action adopted by the ANC in 1949. The Programme of Action introduced by the Youth League at the ANC's December 1948 conference called for the use of civil disobedience, strikes and boycotts in the struggle against apartheid. Speaking years later, during the Treason Trial of 1956-1961, ANC

leader Prof. Z.K. Matthews[26] described the passive resistance of 1946 as the "immediate inspiration" for the decision of the African National Congress in 1949 to take up civil disobedience (Karis & Carter 1973, p. 103).

By the early 1950s passive resistance methods moved to the centre of the anti-apartheid demonstrations of the ANC. Non-violent protest spread among African activists in 1952 with the launch of the Defiance Campaign, the first mass anti-apartheid campaign, organised by the African National Congress and South African Indian Congress and modeled on pattern of non-violent civil disobedience set by Gandhi. In this campaign, Africans entered into non-violent resistance inspired by the example of Satyagraha in South Africa and campaigns of civil disobedience headed by Gandhi in India. Led by Nelson Mandela as Volunteer-in-Chief, thousands of Africans joined Indians in volunteering to be arrested for breaking unjust laws. Resisters breached the pass laws, entered segregated locations without permission, and breached petty apartheid restrictions. Following the pattern set by Gandhi, there was not a single act of violence by the volunteers. By January 1953 when the campaign ended, over 8 000 people participated in peaceful protest under the ANC banner (Lodge 1983, p. 46).

By the early 1960s the African National Congress turned from purely non-violent strategies against apartheid, shifting towards sabotage and armed struggle. Yet much of the focus of anti-apartheid struggles from the 1960s to the 1980s remained not on military means, but on non-violent civil action consistent with Gandhi's methods, even if not wholly or self-consciously guided by Gandhian thought (Tandon 1995, p. 299-301). In the period of transition to multi-racial democracy in the early 1990s, the ANC leadership, and especially Nelson Mandela, consciously followed a policy of national unification and reconciliation

[26] The prominent black academic and politician Z.K. Matthews (1901-1968) assisted with the writing of the ANC's 1949 Programme of Action. In June 1949 Matthews became the ANC Provincial President in the Cape. He was one of the accused in the Treason Trial in 1956 until his release from the trial in late 1958.

with whites, moving towards peaceful resolution of conflict very much in the spirit of tolerance espoused by Gandhi.

The Gandhian legacy speaks directly to the historical experience of South Africans of Indian origin, but has also reached beyond the Indian segment of the population to touch a wider national community. Extending over the course of the Twentieth Century, Gandhi's continuing, complex and multi-faceted legacy entered the experience of a diverse South African nation in formation, influencing the course of the anti-apartheid struggle, and leaving its imprint on a national culture emerging from the intermingling of people of African, Asian and European origin.

Chapter 4

Heritage Symbols and Signifiers

"The identity of places is very much bound up with the histories which are told of them, how those histories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant"
(Massey 1995, p. 186)

The rich past of Gandhi Square offers a range of historical narratives from which different place-based identities can be formed. Seen in this light, Gandhi Square offers a malleable terrain where multiple narratives contend for recognition and influence. As noted by Govender (2002, p. 5), the identity of Gandhi Square is multiple, in that it is a palimpsest from which diverse narratives and identities can be constructed. Various narratives and interpretations may support different identities, with some of these identities being more inclusionary / exclusionary than others.

This chapter seeks to interpret heritage displays at Gandhi Square, including the statue of Gandhi, heritage plaques and a billboard canvas with heritage imagery. Other sets of meanings are embodied in the name of the space, the names and physicality of buildings which line the site, and in the design of the Square itself. Taken together, they offer a variety of symbols and signifiers which contribute to the identity of the site.

Historical representations at Gandhi Square can be read in different ways as part of a symbolic language of entitlement and exclusion. Narratives, imagery and symbols will be interpreted within the context of the history of the Square, framing and selection processes, and contending claims made on the site.

During the course of more than a hundred years of historical change, Gandhi Square has passed through a succession of names and characterisations, from Church Square to Government Square, followed by Van der Bijl Square and Gandhi square. In each of these periods, the site was stamped with a dominant vision, reflecting the interests and world-views of those groups which supported those interpretations, and tending to marginalise alternative readings of the place. Each of those competing identities was linked to selective understandings of the past, and serving to legitimise particular agendas for the present and arguments about directions for potential futures.

4.1 Re-naming the Square

Contending visions for the site were brought once again to the fore with the most recent re-naming of the site in 1999. Two proposals came forward, offering competing sets of symbolic meanings and associations. Ranged on one side of the divide were property owners who initiated and funded the physical re-development of the site. Organised around the Van der Bijl Square Consortium, the developers advanced the name 'Renaissance Square' as their proposal for re-branding the site. Against that view was the counter-proposal put by the City administration's cultural history museum, MuseuMAfricA, for naming the site Gandhi Square.

As proposed by MuseuMAfricA, the Gandhi mantle offered a way of exposing a previously marginalised tradition of struggle, rooted in an important period in the history of the site. At a site where official representations had been dominated by powerful white interests, the Gandhi narrative counter-posed a bottom-up view of local history as seen through the experience of oppressed minorities, the Indians and the Chinese, whose role had long been officially ignored.

Such re-naming was an opportunity for historical recovery, to re-inscribe the story of Gandhi and his followers on a cityscape from which it had been largely erased. During the apartheid period, Gandhi was for the most part ignored by state cultural institutions. In a country where he spent a formative period stretching over some 20 years, there was limited public knowledge of South Africa's Gandhi sites or of his Satyagraha campaign. In Johannesburg, where Gandhi first formulated his world-famous political philosophy, there were no public monuments to his struggle and no streets or public places named after the passive resistance leader.

The motivation for the Renaissance Square proposal was not as fully articulated, but had less to do with a site-specific past. Rather, this proposal looked forward to the re-birth of the Square as a starting point for the commercial re-emergence of central Johannesburg. More broadly, it was associated with an idealized African past, and notions of cultural resurgence, conceived on a continental scale.

4.2 Re-presenting Gandhi on the Square

The adoption by the City Council of the Gandhi Square name had important implications for setting the new identity for the place. At the same time, the choice of Gandhi as the historical figurehead for the redeveloped Square raised new questions about how to represent Gandhi and his legacy in ways appropriate to this particular site. One of the key issues was whether to present Gandhi as he is known around the world, as an international icon chiefly celebrated for his role in India during the later part of his life, or as a more localized figure based on his time in Johannesburg in the early 1900s.

In an overall climate of globalization, building a sense of local identity and belonging brings its own challenges. In constructing a new central-city vision

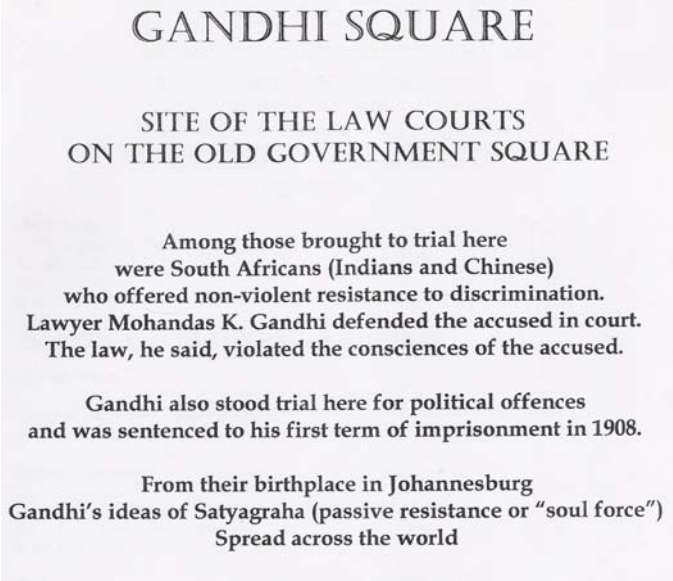
around Gandhi Square, the use of borrowed imagery drawn from abroad was deliberately avoided. Instead, local, site-specific imagery was constructed by drawing from the particular historic memories of the Square. The effect is to build a local identity and sense of place which values its own uniqueness.



Figure 10: Heritage plaque introduced to Gandhi Square in 2002

Following on from the name-change, in 2002 the City installed a heritage plaque as a first step towards marking the Square as a Gandhi site and interpreting its significance for the public (see Figure 10 above). Accompanying the text is an image of the young attorney Gandhi standing in front of the Courthouse.

The inscription on the plaque reads:



With the opening sentence, a South African identity is conferred on Indians and Chinese of the early 1900s, this being done retrospectively in the spirit of inclusion and of affirming minorities. Such status and dignity is bestowed for its symbolic value in the present, and not meant to be taken as an historically accurate statement for the past. During their own time, the early Indian and Chinese immigrants were despised by officialdom as unwelcome aliens, never to be conceived - even by themselves – as having rights as local citizens.

In evaluating heritage displays, it is important to extend our attention beyond those who are made the subject of discourse, in order to consider also those who may be excluded from the narrative. As observed by Fairclough (1995, p. 5), significant absences from texts are often significant for socio-cultural analysis. In other words, what is missing from a text could be as important as what is present, if not more so. The text of the heritage plaque above alludes only obliquely to other groups who stood trial at the same site. In particular, the accused would have included countless Africans whose stories have never been recorded, let alone commemorated. Instead, Gandhi is singled out as having not only faced but also challenged, with considerable force and eloquence, the

unjust laws of the times. Finally, the inscription points to the global impact of Gandhi's ideas of Satyagraha which was to be felt on the unfolding anti-colonial movements of the Twentieth Century.

The identity of Gandhi Square is influenced both by a history of global relationships as well as the more localised, internal relationships of the area. Heritage constructions at Gandhi Square seek to fuse local and global elements which have come together in the history of the site. Although firmly rooted in that locale, these heritage representations are a product of global contacts, linking the site with the wider world beyond the Square.

Seen in this light, the Gandhi statue introduced in 2003 embodies what Massey terms "the global construction of the local", representing a history of interconnectedness with elsewhere (1995, p. 183). The image of Gandhi is that of the young activist lawyer practicing in early Johannesburg. Instead of recycling the more familiar image of the older Mahatma (bald, bespectacled and clad in a dhoti), Gandhi is portrayed as Johannesburg knew him, as an activist lawyer in his early 30s. Gandhi is depicted in his legal gown and starched collar, recalling his time as one of the top-earning lawyers of Johannesburg.

At the same time, almost as if programmed to do a double-take, viewers commonly call to mind the famous image of the *dhoti*-clad Mahatma, wearing only a simple loincloth made of khadi, the coarse hand-spun cotton cloth common among the rural poor throughout India. A distinctive vision of Johannesburg's Gandhi connects with the more familiar image of the Mahatma associated with India and projected across the world at large, encapsulating his identification with the poor.



Figure 11: M.K. Gandhi Attorney at Law: bronze statue at Gandhi Square
(Photograph by Werner Massyn, City of Johannesburg)

The bronze figure serves to iconicise hybridity, celebrating cultural mixing and inter-connectedness. The eastern leader known for his adoption of minimalist traditional dress is re-imagined in the western legal garb of Gandhi the London-trained attorney. This representation is an imaginative reconstruction drawn from a particular point of view: there are no historical photographs or images extant of Gandhi in his legal robes.

The western apparel of the affluent city lawyer marked a particular period in the development of Gandhi's changing clothing practices, which saw him progressively divest himself of the trappings of Western material success. Over time Gandhi simplified and reduced his clothes, adopting an increasingly humble appearance that identified with the rural masses of India's heartland. Gandhi's sartorial biography is detailed by Tarlo (2005):

> *"As a young man Gandhi was attracted to what he would later call 'the tinsel splendours of Western civilisation'. Like most other educated Indian men of his generation, he made considerable efforts to adopt western dress and manners in public life, associating these with the values of modernity, civilisation and progress. At the same time, he experienced feelings of alienation and discomfort that the adoption of Western clothes often entailed. These feelings became most apparent to Gandhi during his years working as a lawyer and civil rights activist in South Africa (1893-1914) where he found himself the target of racism despite his 'civilised apparel'. At the same time, he was impressed by early nationalist critiques of colonialism in India which attributed India's poverty to the decline of the local textile industry and the mass importation of mill cloth from Europe. A growing disillusionment with Western definitions of civilisation, and progress combined with experiments in self-sufficiency, communal living, bodily labour, celibacy and the semiotics of dress – all of which later became important aspects of his social and political crusade in India. By the time he left South Africa, Gandhi had already learned to weave hand-loom cloth and had already made public appearances dressed in simple Indian styles of white cotton dress as a means of political protest and identification with oppressed peoples. When he arrived back in India the following year, he staged a dramatic appearance dressed in a white turban, tunic and dhoti, an adaptation of Kathiawadi peasant dress which*

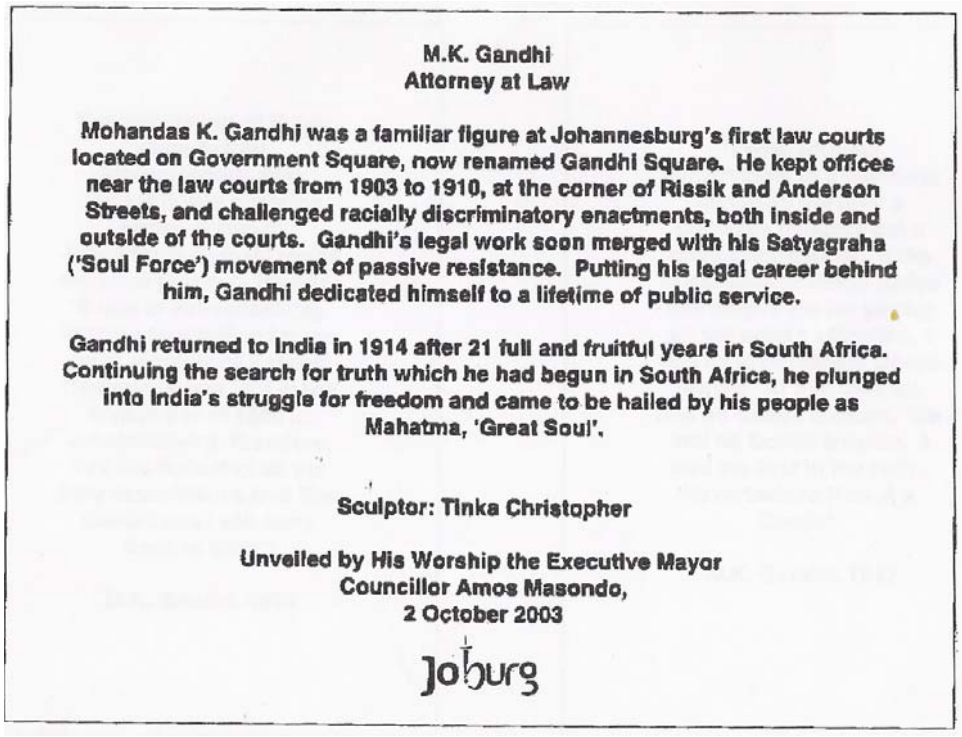
visually challenged the well established hierarchies that elevated Western over Indian, urban over rural and elite over popular".

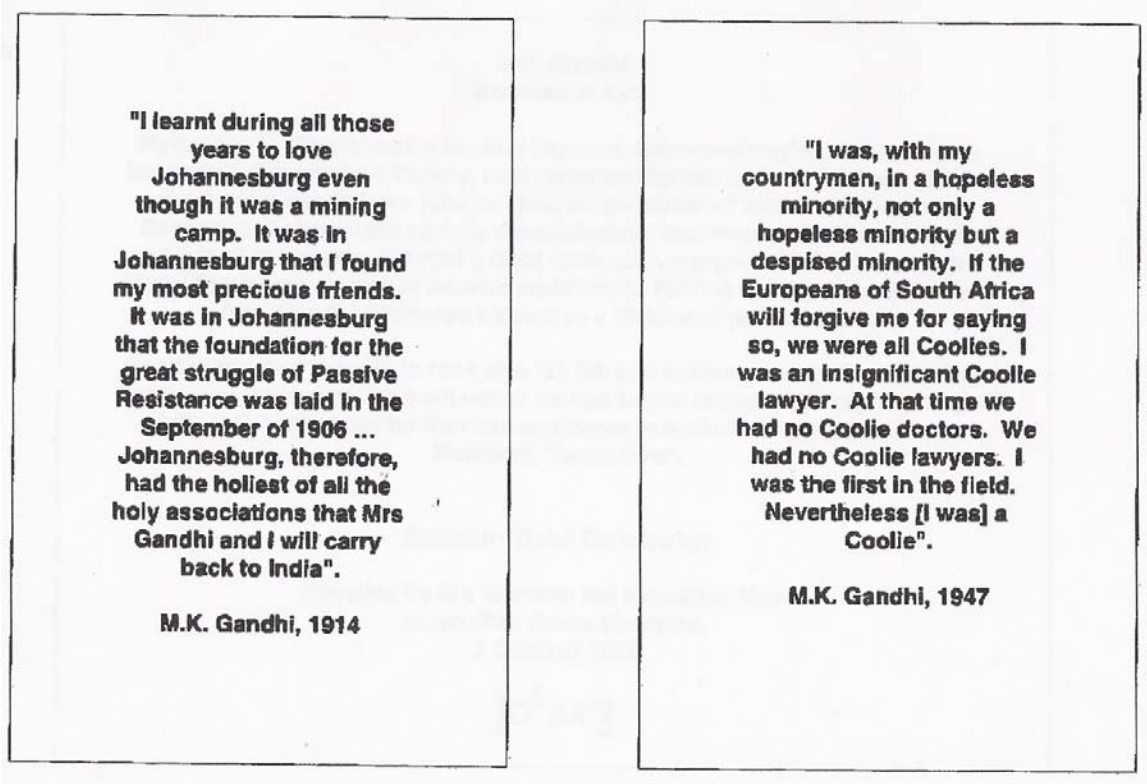
The use of a local, site-specific depiction of Gandhi is a frequent talking point. In a message from Nelson Mandela which was read out at the unveiling of the Gandhi statue in October 2003, the former South African President offered the following comment:

> *"It is most appropriate that the statue should depict Gandhi as the lawyer that he was in Johannesburg. A hundred years ago Gandhi became the first person of colour to practice law in Johannesburg … Gandhi's offices and the old law courts are long gone, but here too Gandhi paved the way for others. A few blocks away the firm of Mandela and Tambo opened some 50 years later, the only firm of African lawyers in the country at that point in time . . . Gandhi's political technique and elements of his non-violent philosophy, developed during his stay in Johannesburg, became an enduring legacy for the continuing struggle against racial discrimination in South Africa".*

Gandhi is thus credited as a forerunner of later anti-apartheid struggles, so connecting his story to the experience and liberation of a majority of South Africans. We are reminded of the struggle of pioneering black professionals to establish themselves under the trying conditions of apartheid; and too of the need of ordinary black people to seek to defend themselves in the courts against a barrage of discrimination.

The Gandhi statue is accompanied by a set of three plaques arranged around the base (see inscriptions on page 86). The inscription carried on the central panel sums up the Gandhi narrative for the Square. The site is located at the crossroads of Gandhi's early political and professional life, and identified as having brought essential experience and preparation for his continuing struggle in India.





Inscriptions for the Gandhi Statue, with the central panel above and east and west side panels below.

Gandhi's South African years from 1893 to 1914 – a period which has often been referred to as "the apprenticeship of the Mahatma" – served to mould and prepare him for the later exploits, carried out on the Indian and world stage, for which he became internationally renowned. As remarked by Executive Mayor Clr. Amos Masondo in his keynote speech delivered at the unveiling ceremony, Gandhi's outlook and personality were shaped by his twenty-one year stay in South Africa, the country where he began his political career. Whatever service Gandhi rendered to India originated from South Africa, said the Mayor, quoting Gandhi as stating: "*it was after I went to South Africa that I became what I am now*". This was echoed by the Indian High Commissioner, Mr S. Mukherjee, declaring in his speech that *"India gave South Africa a lawyer, and, in return, South Africa gave India a Mahatma, a 'Great Soul' "*.

Positive recognition of the global interconnectedness of the site's past history helps to extend its appeal, meaning and relevance for international as well as local audiences. By redrawing its connections with a wider world, the site embraces a more inclusive past shared with a global community. While it is for his work in India that Gandhi is best known, the path that took him to the head of India's independence movement leads back to his years in South Africa, and especially his political baptism in Johannesburg.

Speaking of the deep spiritual bonds that bound him to his adopted town, Gandhi paid tribute to Johannesburg in a farewell speech delivered on 14 July 1914[27]. Ironically, it was within this racially divided metropolis that Gandhi was able to develop humanist values. A quotation from Gandhi's speech delivered that night is inscribed on the west side of the base of his statue:

[27] The occasion for Gandhi's speech was a farewell banquet given in his honour, held at the Masonic hall in Jeppe Street. The report of his address was published in a special commemorative issue of *Indian Opinion* (1914).

"I learnt during all those years to love Johannesburg even though it was a mining camp. It was in Johannesburg that I found my most precious friends. It was in Johannesburg that the foundation of the great struggle of Passive Resistance was laid in the September of 1906 … Johannesburg therefore, has the holiest of all the holy associations that Mrs Gandhi and I will carry back to India".

A matching panel on the eastern side carries a quotation from a BBC radio interview recorded in 1947, towards the end of Gandhi's life. Gandhi decries the indignity of the term "Coolie," a demeaning title which was applied indiscriminately to any and every Indian, regardless of rank or station. This abiding insult had rankled with Gandhi for over 50 years. In a pamphlet published as early as in 1896, Gandhi complained bitterly that in South Africa "all Indians are Coolies "[28]. In India, this was a term was reserved for labourers and porters. Yet so common was this name in South Africa, wrote Gandhi in his pamphlet, that it was "even used in the sacred precincts of the courts, as if 'the coolie' were the legal and proper name given to any and every Indian" (Meer 1996, p. 165).

Although previously widely-used, the hurtful term "Coolie" is now less often heard in South Africa and has lost some of its sting. So it is that the word can be used on the plaque, set within a discourse of commemoration, healing and social reconstruction, without causing the offence it once aroused.

The Gandhi Statue is larger than life-size and elevated on a plinth occupying a commanding position near the centre of the Square. Through the high visibility and grand treatment of the artwork, Gandhi and the Indian resistance movement are prominently memorialised. For an Indian minority previously maligned as 'Coolies', and largely disregarded in the mainstream urban history of the past,

[28] The passage first appeared in Gandhi's 1896 pamphlet written in India, entitled *The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa: An Appeal to the Indian Public.*

the statue offers a form of symbolic redress. As noted by Sharp *et al.* (2005, p. 1007):

> *"The very visibility of public art and its traditional monumentalism and aggrandising of civic 'heroes' mean that it is a prime vehicle through which minority groups can affirm their history and physically mark their place within the layered history of urban space – the past being a keystone upon which to build the present and the future".*

The installation of the Gandhi statue in 2003 marked the first adaptation in Johannesburg of traditional civic monumentalism to a more inclusive and diverse practice. Gandhi became the first non-white historical figure to be commemorated by a public statue in a central public space contributing to the identity of the city as a whole. The image speaks not only of an Indian who is dignified and determined in resisting injustice; but also, more profoundly, of an African city, newly re-born, seeking to embrace and celebrate multiplicity and difference.

4.3 Representing Cosmopolitan Johannesburg

Gandhi Square seeks to acknowledge various groups and presences from the past, presenting a cosmopolitan identity which was previously devalued and denied by the authorities under colonialism and apartheid. These multiple presences are carried by some of the names and identities of buildings surrounding the Square. They are also illustrated on a billboard canvas entitled *Cosmopolitan Johannesburg: Gandhi Square in 1907*, reproduced As Figure 12 overleaf.

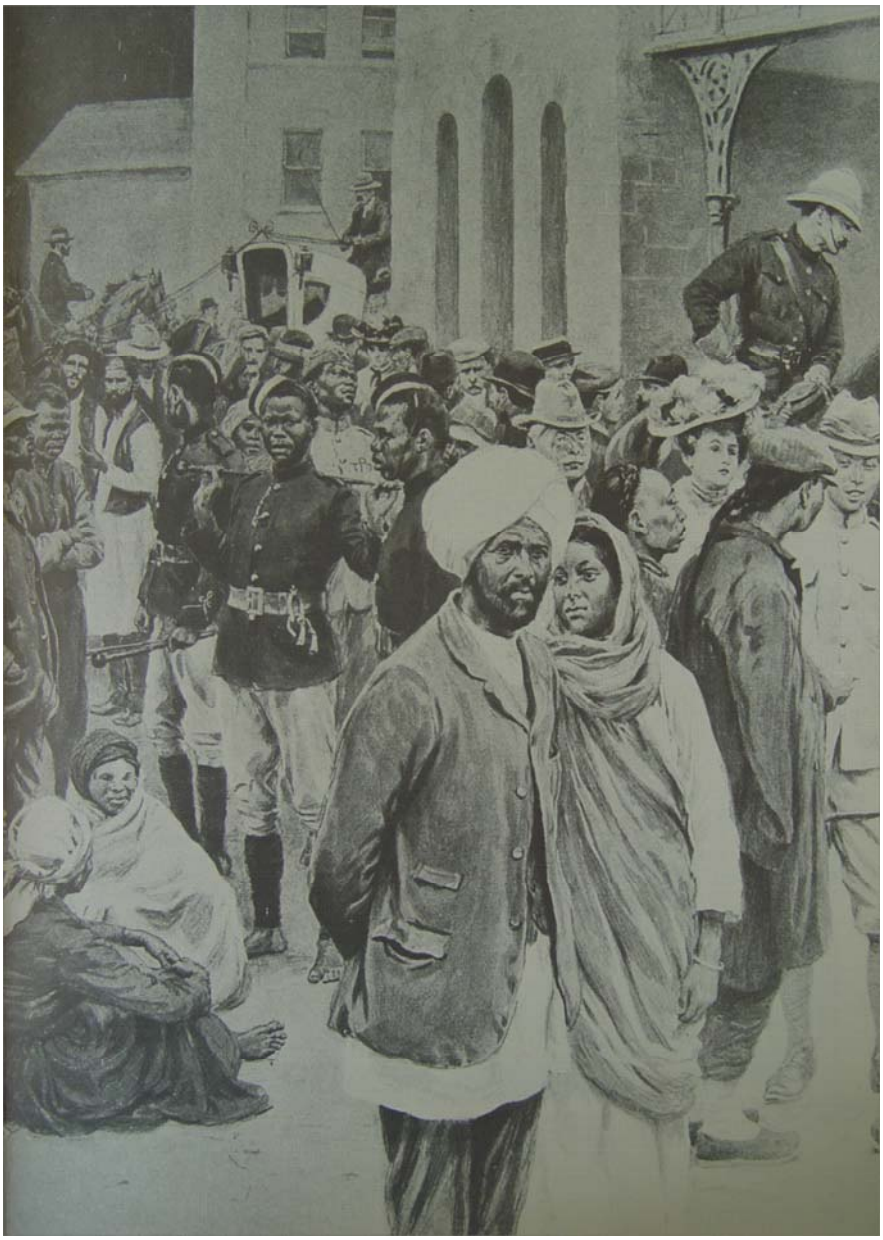


Figure 12: Billboard canvas entitled ‘Cosmopolitan Johannesburg: Gandhi Square in 1907’. Period drawing by Frank Dadd from a sketch by H. Edgersdorfer.

The giant canvas is fixed to the side of the High Court Building on the Square's northern edge. The caption for the billboard reads: "showing the varieties of humanity outside the courthouse on Government Square". Groups of family and friends of those standing trial are seen waiting for their cases to be called, comprising Indians, Africans, Chinese and others. Linking with Gandhi as an international icon, such imagery lends support to the image of a 'World Class African City", a place where differences mix, and one that is open to the world in general, as in the vision advanced by the City administration.

The tribute to Gandhi acknowledges the place and contribution of a minority figure who was largely neglected in the dominant histories of the past. Gandhi moved to the head of the Indian resistance movement almost from its inception, his charismatic leadership tending to overshadow the role of others who participated in the movement. However, to memorialise only a single individual would be contrary to the *raison d'etre* of the project to celebrate diversity more broadly.

The presence of ordinary Indians, as depicted on the billboard canvas, points towards the recognition of Gandhi's political constituents as actors in their own right. We are reminded that Gandhi did not act alone, but depended on the mass of Indians who made up the ranks of the Satyagraha movement. Such representations act as a counterweight to overly Gandhi-centric representations which concentrate on Gandhi to the exclusion, or virtual exclusion, of his followers who struggled less spectacularly than he.

The imagery and identity of the new Square confers recognition to an Indian minority who resisted efforts at removing them from the city through most of the 20th Century. By offering visual testimony to the historical presence at the site of

Indian South Africans, shown in their previous incarnation, Gandhi Square affirms the identity of a long-suppressed group. The effect is to make more visible a social group which was previously banished from the area (and so rendered 'invisible'), thereby asserting their right to 'belong' in the space once more. This is not an exclusivist Indian claim to belong there, but has to do with a shared stake in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic city.

Under the Group Areas Act of 1950, Indians and other 'Non-Whites' were expelled to segregated townships away from the central town area which was reserved exclusively for whites. Indians settled in the western inner-suburb of Pageview, and those around the central areas of Johannesburg, were consigned to the peripheral township of Lenasia, about 30 km. to the south, suffering considerable dislocation and hardship in the process. By the early 1980s, the population of Lenasia reached 90 000 (Musiker & Musiker 2000, p. 145). Yet despite the imposition of apartheid, groups of Indians maintained a continuous presence in such places as Diagonal Street, in parts of Newtown, Fordsburg and Marshallstown, and in other pockets close to the city centre. From the late 1970s, Indian businesses were increasingly moving into the central business district, a situation which was only legalised with the abolition of the Group Areas Act in 1991.

The image on the billboard canvas (shown as Figure 11 below) was taken from *The Graphic*, an illustrated Weekly London Newspaper. In the edition of 2 November 1907, it appears as half of a larger landscape panel generously spread over a double page. It is literally one side of the bigger picture, the other side being that shown in Figure 13, but never reproduced on Gandhi Square. As originally published, the full image appears under the heading: "Cosmopolitan Johannesburg: a Congregation of Nationalities Outside the Courthouse, Government Square".

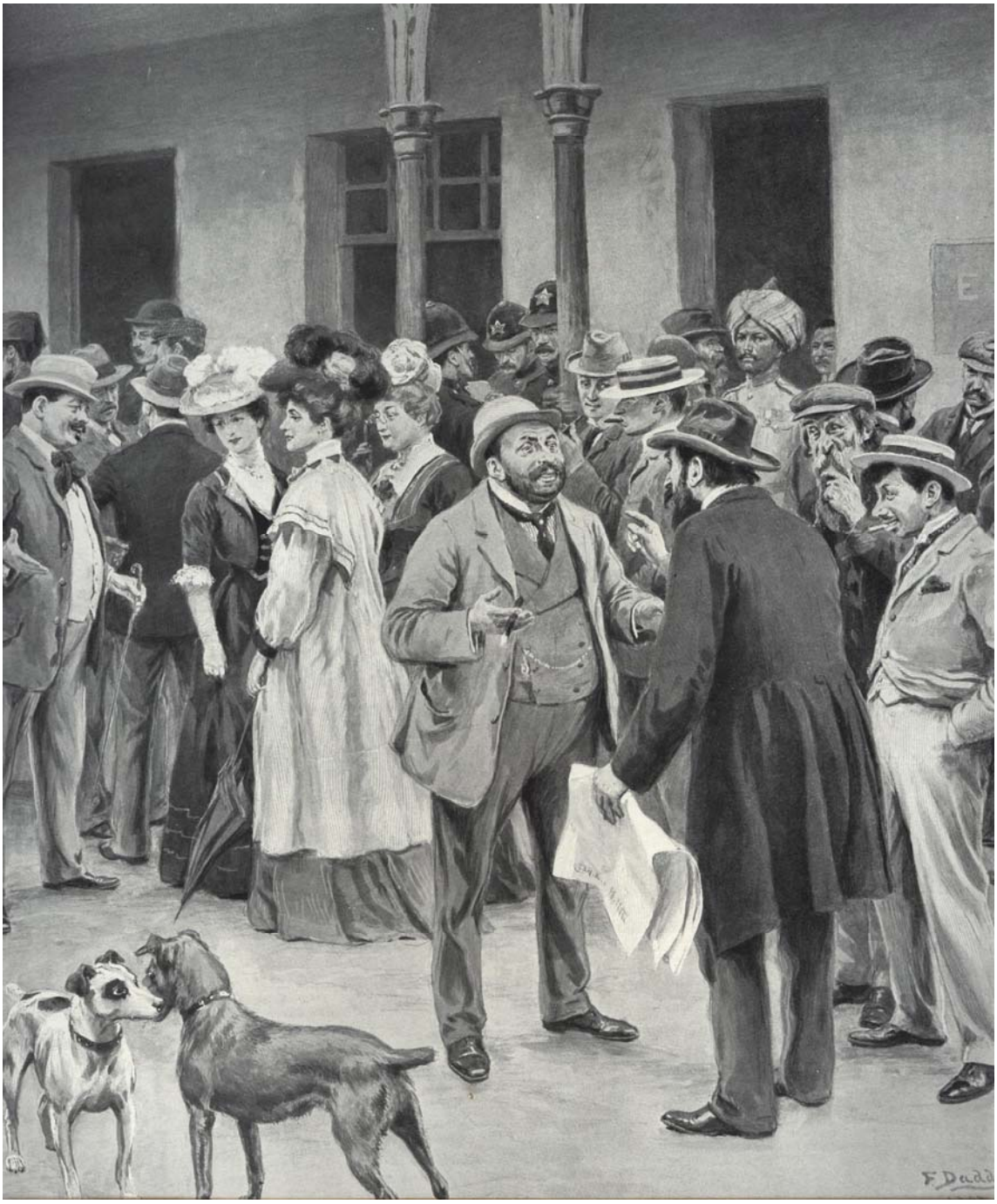


Figure 13: An unseen side of ‘Cosmopolitan Johannesburg’: comprising half of the period drawing which is not displayed on Gandhi Square.

An extended caption in *The Graphic* describes the scene:

> *"Monday morning outside the Court House, Government Square, affords one of the most interesting sights in Johannesburg. Then very many people of different nationalities congregate outside the building to await little knots – English, Germans, Dutch French, Jews, Chinese Japanese, Indians Arabs, Kaffirs – a hotch-potch of the world".*

Yet within this spread of humanity, cleavages of class and colour stand out. As originally presented in *The Graphic*, the work is more than simply the gallery of ethnic types which it purports to be. Essentially, it is a picture of two sides, reflecting social divisions and inequalities which were rife in Johannesburg a century ago. Concentrated on one side of the page, we have the "non-European" population, with its working-class character clearly evident. An Indian couple is thrust into the foreground, with subordinate African police in attendance, and glimpses of a few Chinese. By contrast, groups shown on the other side of the artwork come closer to the European ideal and are identified with more respectable society. Looking beyond a knot of garrulous Jews, we see what appear to be some of Johannesburg's leading citizens: fashionable ladies and men-about-town.

The framing process by which only half of the image of *Cosmopolitan Johannesburg* was selected for display on the Square, as revealed above, underscores the power of interpretation and display wielded by the creators of such visual displays. The framing of selective visual narratives becomes an important visual strategy for re-shaping the viewers' collective historical imagination. Through this process, particular cultural, economic and political interests are recognized, validated and legitimized in relation to other contending or potential claims.

In selecting the image deployed on the Square, preference was given by the City's Department of Arts, Culture and Heritage to affirming previously marginalized groups, people of colour and those associated with the urban poor. Presenting both sides of the picture would however be more inclusive of the full diversity of the past. By displaying the complete scope of the original artwork, recognition could be given to the full range of groups, dominant as well as dominated, who have inhabited the Square.

Ideas of reflecting a diverse, cosmopolitan environment broadly informed the design of the new Square introduced in 1999. A largely abstract aesthetic was however chosen for the Square, with any symbolic references imbedded in the design being generally muted and non-specific. The architect's conception of the brief is conveyed by Giesen (2000, p. 26):

> *"Although the square is full of historic interest, the designers decided not to reflect its history in the design or to create a typically African design. In essence, the square is located in a cosmopolitan environment and the original vibrancy and movement have been fully utilized to create a stylish environment that people can enjoy. By enhancing the European components and combining them with subtle, modern African influences and colours, a unique ambiance is being created that takes the best of both worlds …"*

The past is made present on Gandhi Square in a variety of ways. Many different versions of the site's past live on in the unembodied memories of people. More tangibly, a particular reading of the past has been consciously re-inserted through the re-naming of the Square, the construction of the Gandhi Statue, and the presentation of heritage narratives that go with it. The past also makes itself materially present in buildings which evoke particular memories.

The Square is bordered by buildings recalling the development of the city during the past one hundred years. Gandhi's offices at Court Chambers between Anderson and Marshall Street have long since disappeared, as has the historic

courthouse . A physical reminder of the lawyers who crowded round the Square does however remain. Their presence is recalled by the two oldest remaining buildings on Gandhi Square, both dating from the early 1900s, which accommodated lawyer's offices in the early decades of the Twentieth Century. Together these two adjoining buildings, Somerset House and its eastern neighbour the High Court Building, provide a physical connection with the city's original legal precinct. Building on this historical connection, in 2003 the Gandhi Statue was located in front of the two historic buildings.



Figure 14: Somerset House, with the Traffic Square Tea Restaurant at street level

Somerset House was constructed in 1906, two years after the High Court Building. The first floor was soon taken up by the legal firm Baumann Gilfillan.[29]

[29] The United Transvaal Directory of 1908 gives the occupants of Somerset House (then called the United Building) as follows:

- Basement – United Safe Deposit Company
- Ground Floor – United Building Society
- First Floor – Baumann and Gilfillan
- Second Floor – Williamson, A.E.A.

Originally called United Building, built for the United Building Society, it was renamed Somerset house when it changed ownership in 1930 (Heritage Resources Management 2006).

The High Court Building (1904) was a mixed-use building containing a variety of shops and offices, not to be confused with the old court after which it was named. The building for many years housed a number of lawyers, with the first floor offices being leased to prominent attorneys. By 1939 there were still a number of attorneys practising from the High Court Building, but the owner told the City Valuer that he had to drop the rentals in order to retain tenants[30].

Soon after this, the most famous tenant at the High Court Building was Herman Charles Bosman, by then at the peak of his success. Bosman had returned to South Africa from London, where spent the late 1930s as a poverty-stricken author. During the 1940s Bosman became South Africa's most popular short story writer, and it was around this time that he returned to Government Square where he had been arraigned as the accused in a murder trial in 1926.

His presence in this vicinity has been highlighted by writer Ivan Vladislavić, (2006, p. 45, 187), who has tracked Bosman's movements through Johannesburg and the places which he inhabited. Some notable Bosman sites include Jeppe Boys' High (his *alma mater*) and the Bellevue house where he shot his step-brother. Yet for Vladislavić, the place which carries Bosman's presence most powerfully is the High Court Building:

> *"Most vividly of all, I see him at High Court Buildings in Joubert Street, where he had an office in the forties, standing on a tiny second-floor balcony – it is no more than a crow's nest with a flagpole sticking out of it like a sail yard – scattering feed for the pigeons. This is curious, because Bosman himself never described the scene in his work. Rather, it was*

[30] Johannesburg City Council: Valuation Records, 1939.

Lionel Abrahams who saw him there, 'shirt-sleeved, bare-headed, sunlit, in a cloud of fluttering birds', and brought the moment to life in his memoir 'Mr Bosman'. It is the privilege of writers that they are able to invent their memories and pass them on between the covers of a book, to make their memories ours".

Whereas the Bosman narrative exists on the written page, and in the memory of some readers, it has to date not been physically marked and re-inscribed onto the site. For those less familiar with the writings of Bosman protégé Lionel Abrahams[31], of Vladislavić, and of Herman Charles Bosman himself, there is little in the way of tangible reminders or acknowledgement of Bosman's historical presence in the area. Whether on the High Court Building or on Gandhi Square itself, one sees no marker or plaque to commemorate his association with the area. Some such addition would help not only to bring a sense of greater historical depth, but also to make the site more reflective of diversity and inclusive of a wider range of meanings and memories.

The social values underlying Bosman's oeuvre have however been the subject of very different textual interpretations. Contending readings have sparked continuing debate over whether Bosman's writing is to be appreciated as satirical and ironic, or condemned for a perceived derogatory, racist slant towards Africans (Zondi 2007). In his best-known works, a series of humorous Voorkamer and Schalk Lourens stories published in the 1930s and 1940s, Bosman depicts the follies of Afrikaners of the Groot Marico bushveld. Many of the stories carry examples of satire directed towards the racist attitudes of Bosman's narrator Oom Schalk Lourens and his companions towards the local Africans. Yet despite the mockery and satire directed at the fallibility of these

[31] The poet, critic, editor and publisher Lionel Abrahams (1928-2004) studied creative writing under Herman Charles Bosman in the late 1940s. Abrahams later edited seven volumes of Bosman's posthumously published writings, and was an important literary figure in his own right. Through Renoster Books, which he founded in 1971 with Eva and Robert Royston, Abrahams published the first books by Oswald Mtshali and Mongane Wally Serote, heralding the emergence of black consciousness poetry during the apartheid period.

stereotypical backveld[32] farmers, Bosman's treatment of his characters is touched by an affectionate playfulness. In this way, Bosman's writing is marked by what Lionel Abrahams calls a "humane affirmativeness" (1985, p. xii), which raises it above the mean prejudices of his protagonists.

As signalled by the Bosman association, the presences on Gandhi Square are multi-vocal. The site carries multiple presences and stories, all of which can give rise to a multiplicity of interpretations. In an effort to bring a definitive new form, identity and coherence for the Square, it was however the Gandhi narrative which was brought to the fore as holding the dominant meaning of the site. The available historical information and state of knowledge about the Square was another factor in determining which elements achieved recognition in the heritage displays developed there. The identity of the new Square, constructed around the commemoration of Gandhi, was set around the opening years of the 21st Century. Gandhi's association with the Square had come to light not long before, while that of Bosman remained at the time largely unknown to those involved in re-making the site.

Among other possible themes and stories, the surrender of Johannesburg during the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902, receives recognition as part of a layered history site, albeit as a secondary narrative. The ceremonial handover of Johannesburg to the British Forces under Lord Roberts during the Anglo-Boer War is commemorated by a plaque which forms part of the heritage display on the north side of the Square. The plaque gives a brief account of the town's surrender and acknowledges the role of F.E.T. Krause as the local Z.A.R. Commandant (see Figure 17 overleaf).

[32] The term "backveld" relates to isolated rural communities - in this case the Boers of the remote Marico bushveld - who are rough and unsophisticated in outlook.





Figures 15 and 16: Views of the High Court Building where Herman Charles Bosman worked in the 1940s. (Photographs by Sally Gaule)



Figure 17: An image of the Anglo-Boer War centenary plaque on Gandhi Square

The plaque for the surrender of Johannesburg was developed by the Simon Van der Stel Foundation, an association of heritage enthusiasts, and installed in 2001 for the centenary of the Anglo-Boer War. The initiative was supported by the City of Johannesburg and the management of Gandhi Square. In 2005 the Simon van der Stel Foundation changed its name to the Egoli Heritage Foundation, a title which that organisation felt held wider appeal in a post-apartheid South Africa. By 2006, the blue ceramic plaque placed by them on Gandhi Square had cracked. The damaged plaque was replaced by a new one installed by the Egoli Heritage Foundation in association with the City's Directorate (formerly Department) of Arts, Culture and Heritage.

The Anglo-Boer War plaque notwithstanding, the overall focus of the heritage presentation is concerned with advancing the Gandhi theme and imagery as having particular resonance for the City's agenda of promoting a more inclusive vision for the site. By emphasising one past from among many, other potential layers of significance may be neglected or relegated to the background. For example, the history of Van der Bijl Square as the immediate forerunner of the present Square is not made explicit on the Square.

Gandhi's legal work in support of civil rights found a contemporary echo on the Square in recent years. Supported by the sympathetic historical associations of Gandhi Square, members of the legal fraternity have returned to the area, taking up residence in a building on the western boundary of the site.

Around 2000, Olitski Property Holdings (OPH) purchased the building at the corner of Main and Rissik Streets, previously the head office of Commercial Union Insurance. The prominent human rights law advocate George Bizos moved into the building in 2001 with the Legal Resources Centre whose national head office



Figure 18: Bram Fischer House, overlooking Gandhi Square at the corner of Rissik and Main Streets.



Figure 19: Plaque at the entrance to Bram Fischer House, formerly known as simply as 25 Rissik Street. In 2002 the building was ceremonially re- christened by the then Chief Justice Chaskalson. Arthur Chaskalson is himself a distinguished human rights lawyer and long-standing colleague of George Bizos. Chaskalson was a founder of the Legal Resources Centre in 1979.

occupied three of the building's nine floors. The Legal Resources Centre (LRC) is a non-profit law centre with an emphasis on human rights which offers free legal services to vulnerable and marginalised people.

George Bizos was asked by Gerald Olitzki whether the building could be named after him, in recognition of his contribution to the struggle for human rights in South Africa. Bizos turned down the offer and instead bestowed the honour on his past friend and colleague Bram Fischer. He recounts the discussion with his new landlord:

> "*I used the Greek aphorism 'Mithen pro tou telous makarize', meaning 'Call no man blessed until the end'. And I said that if he was looking for a name, many leading lawyers and judges were honoured by the legal profession by having chambers named after them… But there was no Bram Fischer Chambers. The owner actually said he would name it after me if we took three floors which is what we needed, because the building was empty and he thought we would attract other tenants – quite correctly, because the building filled up soon afterwards, particularly with lawyers. I suggested to him that he should consider naming it Bram Fisher House and he immediately agreed"* (Interview with George Bizos).

Formally known simply as 25 Rissik Street, in 2002 the building was re-named Bram Fischer House and now houses the library of the lawyer and anti-apartheid campaigner Bram Fischer. The law library containing the books and papers of Bram Fischer, his father and grandfather, has been added to and kept up to date by the Legal Resources Centre, and is used by staff of the LRC.

Bizos continues to operate from Bram Fischer House, where he heads the Constitutional Litigation Section of the Legal Resources Centre. As a long-time admirer of Gandhi, Bizos values his close proximity to the site of Gandhi's old office, and to the commemoration on the Square. Bizos comments on the favourable associations which drew him to the site:

> "*I looked forward to actually sitting in a room and looking out of my window, instead of the bus shed that this place was, to overlook Gandhi Square. In fact when we asked the owner of the building if he would be prepared to re-name the building – it was an insurance company in days gone by – to Bram Fischer House – he said yes, he was happy to do that. And when I gave the new address to a senior journalist on the phone, that we were in Bram Fischer House on Gandhi Square, she asked whether we would ask the municipal Council to re-name Rissik Street to Lutuli Lane*[33]*, so that we could really have a complete historical address [chuckles] … So, I'm very proud and comfortable giving people our address, that we overlook Gandhi Square, a very nice thing to say I think"* (*ibid.*).

In common with Gandhi, Bram Fischer (1908-1975) rejected the security of a life of privilege, becoming a lawyer for the oppressed, and devoting himself to a life-time of political activism and public service. Fischer was born into a prominent family of the Afrikaner establishment. After studies at Oxford, he became a member of the Johannesburg Bar, where he gained reputation as a formidable anti-apartheid lawyer. Throughout his career, Fischer readily took on cases from Africans arrested for breaching pass laws and other discriminatory enactments. A former Chairman and longest-serving member of the Johannesburg Bar Council, he Joined the South African Communist Party in the 1930s. Fischer was prominent as one of the defence council in the marathon Treason Trial of 1956-1961 in which 156 anti-apartheid figures were accused of High Treason. At the Rivonia trial of 1964 of Nelson Mandela and his co-accused, the defence team was led by Bram Fischer, assisted by Arthur Chaskalson, George Bizos, Joel Joffe and Harold Hanson. Two years after the Rivonia Trial, Fischer was himself brought to trial for anti-government activity and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1966. After nine years in prison, Fischer was released while suffering from terminal cancer, only to die six weeks later in May 1975 (Clingman 1998).

[33] Albert Lutuli was President of the African National Congress from 1952-1967. Lutuli was awarded the 1960 Nobel Peace Prize for his contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle.

Beginning in 1995, the Legal Resources Centre has arranged the Bram Fischer Memorial Lectures. The Bram Fischer Lecture has been delivered by President Nelson Mandela, Chief Justice Ismail Mahomed, Chief Justice Arthur Chaskalson and Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke (Bizos 2007, p. 321). In delivering the first in this series of lectures , Mandela paid tribute to Bram Fischer as a stalwart of the anti-apartheid movement and rebel Afrikaner:

> *"As an Afrikaner whose conscience forced him to reject his own heritage and be ostracized by his own people, he showed a level of courage and sacrifice that was in a class by itself. I fought only against injustice, not my own people"* (quoted in Callinicos 2000, p.227).

The fact that George Bizos declined having the building named for him notwithstanding, Bram Fischer House can be read as a living monument to the continuing human rights career pursued by Bizos.

George Bizos was born in Greece in 1928 and joined the Johannesburg Bar in 1928. During the 1950s, Bizos worked closely with the legal practice of Mandela and Tambo, while acting for many of their clients. His legal career is associated with the major human rights trials of the apartheid era. In the landmark Rivonia trial of 1963-4, Bizos was part of the team led by Bram Fischer that defended ANC leaders Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mahlaba, Wilton Mkwayi, Dennis Goldberg and others. When Bram Fischer was himself brought to trial in the mid-1960s, Bizos appeared as his defence Council. Appearances in a host of major human rights trials followed in the 1970s and 1980s. In the Delmas Treason Trial of 1985-1989, Bizos and Arthur Chaskalson were part of the defence team for United Democratic Front leaders Mosiuoa Patrick Lekota, Popo Molefe, Moss Chikane and nineteen others.

In the foreword to Bizo's autobiography, *Odyssey to Freedom* (2006 p. 9-10), Mandela writes of Bizo's post-apartheid contribution to human rights in South

Africa, including his role in helping to write the Bill of Rights and in shaping the new constitution. In Zimbabwe Bizos successfully defended the treason trial of opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai during 2004. Apart from such prominent clients, Bizos has taken on class actions on behalf of the poor in a number of environmental and equity cases, including a land claim on behalf of the dispossessed community of Richtersveld and a case on behalf of asbestos sufferers (Legal Resources Centre 2004, p. 8 -9; Turkinton 2007, p. 15).

By virtue of its new name and present function, Bram Fischer House been re-cast as a tribute to the law activist whose name it bears. Taken together with its proximity to Gandhi Square, the broader site becomes a celebration of a tradition of human rights law advocacy stretching across the Twentieth Century and extending into our own times, represented by the figures of Mohandas Gandhi, Bram Fischer, Arthur Chaskalson and George Bizos.

An ongoing process of re-naming, linked to the re-conceptualising of buildings and spaces, continues into the present. Gerald Olitzki, the owner of six buildings along the southern edge of the Square as well as Bram Fischer House, has a penchant for re-naming his properties once they have been upgraded (Davie 2005). One of his buildings, formerly Burlington House on the south-western edge of the Square, has been re-named Umoya, meaning 'Winds of Change'. In another move recalling the African Renaissance name previously mooted by the Van der Bijl Square Consortium[34], the building on the corner of Loveday and Main Streets, previously called Maritime House, has been renamed Kuyasa ('Dawn') House. The re-naming of the 16-storey building at the south-eastern

[34] Before the site was re-named Gandhi Square, a majority of property holders making up the Van der Bijl Square Consortium favoured calling it Renaissance Square. At the time Gerald Olitzki held a minority view that the Square should be named after Nelson Mandela, then serving as South Africa's first post-apartheid President. The Mandela name was later attached to another square connected to the plush Sandton City shopping complex in northern Johannesburg. In 2004, the Sandton Square was re-named the Nelson Mandela Square after a 6-metre high statue of Mandela was installed at the site.

corner of Gandhi Square is in similar vein. Previously called the Williams Hunt Building, it has since been re-named Renaissance Centre. Another building facing onto the centre of the Square was re-vamped and re-named Gandhi Mall in 2005[35].

Businesses which have come to the Square bring an interplay between a shifting miscellany of commercial names vying for attention, and feeding into a diverse, hybridised identity for the site. The oldest surviving business on Gandhi Square is the Traffic Square Tea Room established in 1932 at the street level of Somerset House, its dated and unassuming mid-Twentieth Century décor redolent of times past. Well-known national food franchises to have arrived include such brands as McDonalds, Nando's and Steers. For those with a taste for more "ethnic" cuisine, other names beckon: the Indian restaurant Gandhi's Kitchen, the German restaurant and coffee shop Zum Feksenkeler, and the African-styled Shivava Café. Nearby, financial service providers cluster around the Gandhi Mall: African Bank and Makulu Finance, facing onto the banking giant ABSA on the opposite side of the Square.

Taken together, the combination of names found on Gandhi Square reflects cross-currents of cultural and commercial exchange, contributing to the mixture and intersection of identities of a transnational site which is simultaneously local and global, African and cosmopolitan.

[35] The building now called Gandhi Mall was previously known as Stannic, by 1998, and before that as Vorenberg House during the 1950s (Heritage Resources Management 2006). The street level of the building was re-configured in 2005 with the construction of a shopping arcade from Gandhi Square through to Marshall Street.

Chapter 5

Private Management, Public Space

The experience of negotiating public space in central Johannesburg is not uncommonly clouded by generalised caution and anxiety, fears deriving from a sense of shared space as disorderly, dirty and sometimes crime-ridden. Against these perceptions, Gandhi Square offers a location which is relatively safe, orderly, clean and well-serviced. By securing and cleaning-up public space, property owners have restored the value of their holdings while at the same time reconstructing the image of the central city.

Improved security created a safe location for cultural property that may otherwise have been at risk. Provision of 24 hour security at Gandhi Square enabled the development by the City of the bronze Gandhi statue, the first such public artwork to be installed in Johannesburg in the post-apartheid period. This came at a time when metal statuary around the central city was notoriously vulnerable to theft and vandalism (Ancer 2003) [36]. In the face of the apparent disorder which had gripped central Johannesburg, the Gandhi Statue provided a symbol of confidence that security could be re-asserted.

Enhanced security is important not only for safeguarding public property, but above all for allaying fears around personal safety. In an environment of high crime and perceptions of crime, threats to public safety negate the principle of open access to public space. As the city entered a period of democratic transition after 1994, fears around public safety emerged as a major deterrent to

[36] Vandalised artworks included the Leaping Impala in the Oppenheimer Park and the Miners' Monument in Braamfontein. The heads and some of the legs of the Leaping Impala were cut off in 1999. Soon afterwards the leg of one of the Braamfontein Miners was severed. In September 2003, in the weeks leading up to the unveiling of the Gandhi Statue, a large sculpture outside the central library, Ernest Ullman's Family Group, was stolen and has since disappeared.

the reconstruction of public culture in central Johannesburg. Fear of crime meant that public spaces were not safe enough for people to participate in, and enjoy, public culture.

Seen in this context, the introduction of CJP guards at Gandhi Square and other sites around the city has allowed for more relaxed interaction and sociability. Insofar as it allows more widespread use and enjoyment of public space, heightened security can thus be seen as helping to create conditions for the extension and increased democratisation of the public realm.

The physical redesign of the site, moving from van der Bijl Square to Gandhi Square, has helped make the locality more inviting and hospitable to large numbers of people. For the architect and design team, the new layout and street furniture were conceived as a switch from dark and gloomy to bright and clean. Minimalist shade covers were introduced for bus passengers. Lean steel structures in the shape of inverted hooks replaced long, monotonous lines of bus shelters with extended roofs that had left much of the old Van der Bijl Square shrouded in perpetual shadow[37]. The changeover from dark and congested to clean and open-plan would not only improve the aesthetics of the area, but was also intended to deter vagrants and petty crime.

Explicit rules of appropriate behaviour are set by the CID, and posted on the Square, intended to instil a sense of order and confidence that the place is under attentive management, and non-threatening for responsible users (see signboard in Figure 21, p. 113). All users are subject to the "management guidelines" which prohibit: littering, noise pollution, soliciting and begging; loitering and vagrancy; unruly behaviour, drunkenness and use of drugs; and finally any

[37] The present mini-shelters have been criticised by users of Metrobus for offering little in the way of seating for waiting passengers, and insufficient protection from the elements. Seating for commuters is limited to what some have derided with the graphically descriptive term "bum bars".

behaviour which "defeats the principle intention of maintaining a pleasant environment for the city's users".

The guidelines are capped with the exhortation to users: "Help us make the Square an enjoyable experience". In this formulation, civic rights and entitlement to the use and enjoyment of public space are balanced by notions of civic responsibility. Norms of conduct and conformity project the values of cleanliness, security and good citizenship, couched in language of co-operative effort and civic partnership. These rules and practices of inclusion and exclusion contribute to the ordering of public space in ways which some may find restrictive, but which many users of the city find reasonable and appealing.

Security guards are highly visible but offer low-key policing, designed to make security measures palatable, with an emphasis on diplomacy rather than heavy-handed tactics. Echoing the CID training themes and codes of conduct, the security supervisor speaks of the need for delicacy and restraint:

> "In life you can't be a hundred percent strict. There are some rules that violate human rights, so you have to use some discretion. We are not a law enforcement agency – if we encounter problems, that when we contact JMPD or SAPS [Johannesburg Municipal Police or the South African police Service] to come and assist us"[38] (Interview with Cosmos Ndlovu).

Management rules apply not only to the mass of users who come to the site on foot. Restrictions on vehicles and their drivers are in fact enforced more strictly than in the case of pedestrians. With the exception of buses, the Square is out of bounds for vehicles. Nobody is permitted to drive through the site, nor may

[38] Interview with Cosmos Ndlovu, Operations Supervisor for the Central Improvement District.

vehicles mount or park on the Square[39], these measures being intended to promote unhindered access as part of a walkable, safe-feeling environment.

Gandhi Square affords priority to pedestrians and bus commuters over private cars, while accommodating public transport at the centre of the site. Commuters from across the Johannesburg who come and go from the bus terminus are heavy users of the site[40]. In a shift away from the car-led planning which has long predominated in Johannesburg, the development of Gandhi Square emphasised the importance of planning for public transportation, and of raising its status.

Gandhi Square is a link to other areas of the city, both private and public.
As a mass transportation hub catering for the needs of non-car owners who are in the great majority among the city's residents, the site has a key role for connecting residents to the basic pillars for social inclusion. Public transport increases the mobility of large sections of the population, including low-income families, youth, women and the elderly. For those who might otherwise be not mobile, public transport underpins economic participation and inclusion in the mainstream of urban life. Transportation is the vital connector bringing social supports within reach, in the form of access to job opportunities, to government facilities and social services, to shops, to schools, and to libraries, museums and other cultural infrastructure. In other words, public transportation is socially integrationist, crucial not only for mobility, but also for participation in the public sphere.

[39] While cars are off-limits above ground, a large underground parking facility is located beneath Gandhi Square, running most of the length of the site.

[40] Despite the dominance of minivan taxis, buses remain a significant transport mode used by up to a quarter of commuters entering the inner city every day. By 1999, 790 000 commuters entered the inner city every day by means of buses (24%), rail (24%), taxis (40%) and private vehicles (27%) (Tomlinson 1999, p. 1659).

In order to free up pedestrian space, use by the buses which had historically dominated the site had to be reduced. Previously, Van der Bijl Square had served as a holding area for buses[41], but from 1999 it was agreed with the City Council that these buses would be relocated to a holding area some distance away. Henceforth the redeveloped Square would only provide a bus stop service, with buses picking up passengers and swiftly moving on, instead of massing on the site (Giesen 2000). The Square is no longer a holding facility for buses, but functions as a pick-up and drop-off point for passengers. Under the terms of the lease with the City, the municipal bus company Metrobus may not have a bus stand on Gandhi Square for more than 10 minutes.

Where previously much of the Square was filled by rows of empty buses, the bus company is now able to pass more buses through the area, allowing it to service more routes and more commuters[42]. Bus drivers have however complained about inconvenience to themselves caused by the new design. "In the old days we could manoeuvre more easily", a driver told the *Sunday Independent* soon after the site was reconfigured (Simmonds 1999). Some of the inconvenience to bus drivers stems from the circle in the centre of the Square. However, according to Olitzki, this feature was developed with safety in mind:

> *"The circle was purposely created to force drivers to reduce speed. You know, the Square is a peoples' place – so it was for their safety"* (quoted in Govendner 2002, p. 90).

[41] Some 60% of buses that used Van der Bijl Square in the 1990s did so not to collect passengers but on a 'holding only basis'

[42] Approximately 80 000 commuters pass through Gandhi Square each day, according to the Metrobus company.

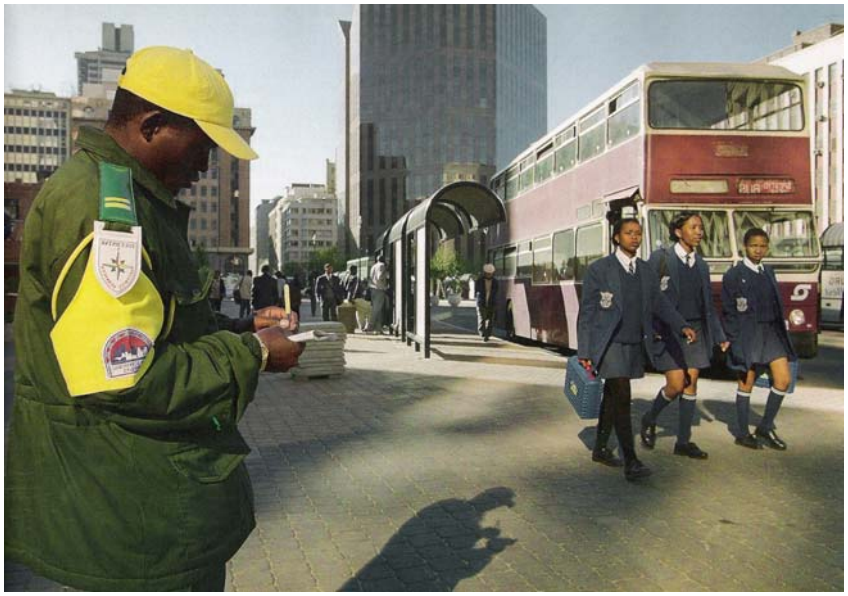


Figure 20: Schoolgirls and a security guard on Gandhi Square.

(Photograph by Lori Waselchuk 1999)



Figure 21: Signboard with rules of conduct on Gandhi Square

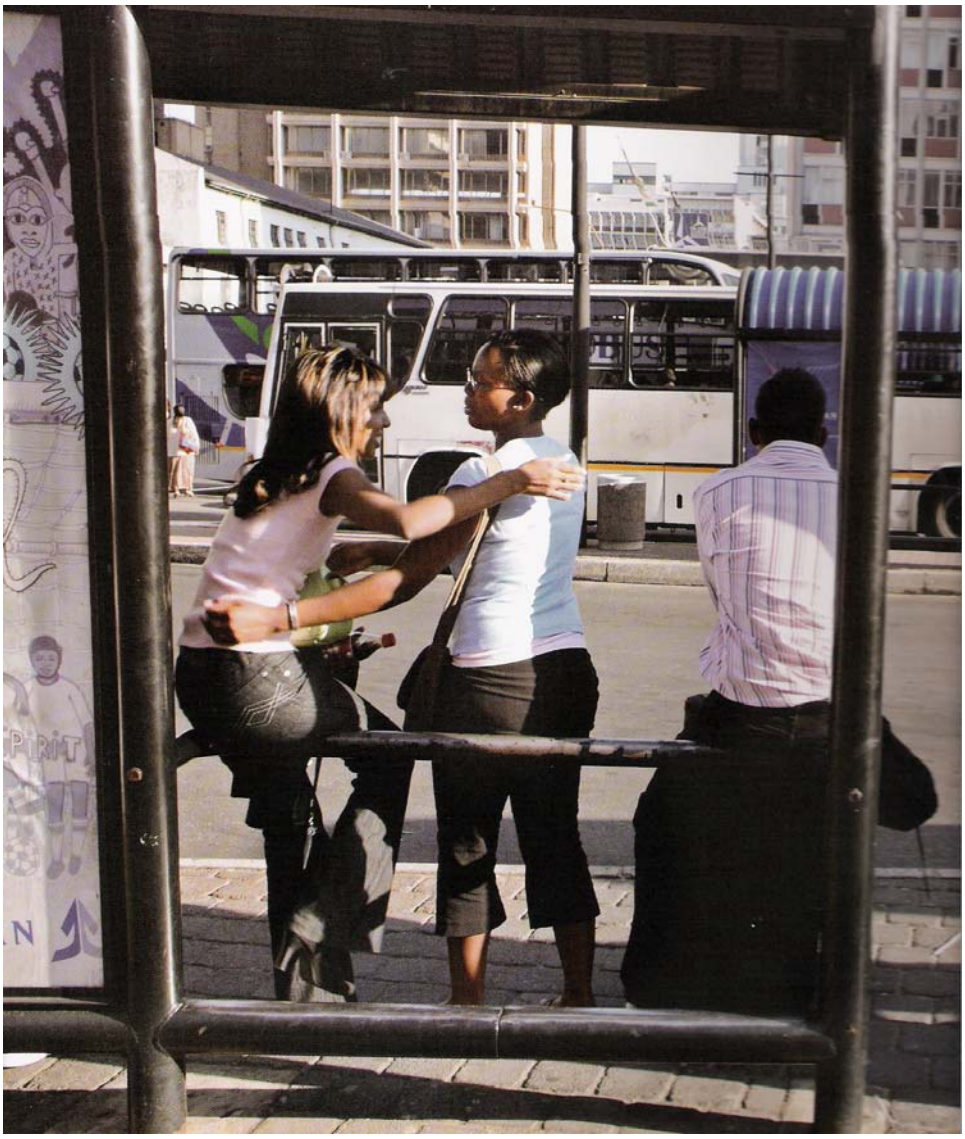


Figure 22: Sociability on Gandhi Square. The presence of security guards has allayed fears of personal safety, so helping to create conditions for more relaxed interaction. (Photograph by Jurgen Schadeberg 2007)



Figure 23: Wooden benches attached to the base of the statue make it people-friendly. Here memorialisation combines with functionality to make a well-used place of respite.

(Photograph by Jurgen Schadeberg 2007)

The shift from Van der Bijl Square to Gandhi Square ushered in a trend in central Johannesburg towards increased walkability, connectivity and openness in urban planning. A new emphasis on walkability and accessibility can be seen in adjacent developments following on from Gandhi Square and radiating outwards from that site. Gandhi Square was in this sense a catalyst for a wider urban transformation stretching beyond the site itself. The combined effect of these allied initiatives has been to build a pedestrianised spine running east-west across an extended area of the central city (see map in Figure 1, page 36). To the east of the Square, pedestrianised walkways on Fox Street dating from 2001-2002, link the two blocks from Eloff Street leading to the Carlton Centre. Over to the west, Gandhi Square connects up with the pedestrianised Main Street Mining Mall[43], developed between 2003 and 2006.

Gandhi Square is managed as a special area forming part of an extensive Central Improvement District[44], governed by a board of directors responsible for the Improvement District as a whole. The Central Improvement District covers an area generally bounded by Rissik, Marshall, Commissioner, Von Brandis, Pritchard, Von Weilligh, Jeppe and Delvers Streets (see Figure 24). Much of the area is dominated by large office buildings including the Sanlam Centre, Carlton Centre, Kine Centre, etc., with mixed retail at ground level. Gandhi Square represents the only public open space within this heavily-used area.

[43] The Main Street development was initially envisioned by Gerald Olitzki, involving the pedestrianisation of six city blocks between Gandhi Square and the Anglo American Precinct upgrade at the street's west end. The basic idea was adopted by property owners on Main Street, who added the concept of following a mining theme, linked to the predominance of mining houses in this section of town. The Main Street Mining Mall lies at the core of the South Western Improvement District (SWID). Although set up as separate legal entities, the Central Improvement District and the South Western Improvement District have increasingly merged to create an extended east-west strip across the central city. The combined area of the Central and South Western Improvement Districts has its fulcrum on Rissik Street, at the meeting point of Gandhi Square and the Main Street Mining Mall.

[44] In 1994 the Central Improvement District was initiated by the Central Johannesburg Partnership (CJP) as the first City Improvement District in Johannesburg, starting out as a voluntary CID (i.e. not yet legislated)



Figure 24: Map of the Central Improvement District, Johannesburg.

Many CIDs function primarily as commercial areas, and this is certainly a strong feature at Gandhi Square with its many restaurants and retail businesses close to street level. Gandhi Square is however not simply a business node but rather a hybrid space combining public and private elements, commercial activity and public service provision. The fact that a mass public transport facility operates from the heart of the Square has important implications for shaping the popular character of the site and for broadening social inclusion.

The adaptation at Gandhi Square of the CID model to a mass transport facility can be seen as part of the growing diversification of applications to which the CID concept is being turned. In its initial worldwide expansion, the development of Improvement Districts was generally confined to commercial, industrial and mixed-use areas where property owners can afford to lay out funds for extra services. Increasingly however, the concept of BIDs and CIDs is being adapted

to other applications as well, as part of the emergence of a more diversified second generation of Improvement Districts. In recent years, variations on the CID pattern have appeared as experiments in parts of Johannesburg which are not regarded as predominantly commercial. Examples of newly-emerging variant CIDs include the Newtown Cultural Precinct, and the Legae la Rona[45] established in a residential section of Berea, a high-density, low-income neighbourhood of the inner city.

In the case of Newtown, a voluntary CID for the Newtown Cultural Precinct was launched in 2006. The Newtown Cultural District (NID) is not only about "safe and clean" – it aims to be a unique Improvement District which is also a cultural precinct[46]. Most of the property within the Newtown Cultural Precinct is currently owned by the City of Johannesburg, and occupied by subsidised cultural tenants, such as the Market Theatre, the Bassline Music Venue and the Dance Factory. The NID is also unique in that it relies on public sector funding, whereas other CIDs are generally funded through commercial property levies. Much of the NID funding is channelled through a City agency, namely the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA), although voluntary levies are paid by both cultural and commercial tenants. For the future, the JDA plans to shift the running cost of the Newtown Improvement District to commercial interests moving into the cultural precinct, so shifting towards a larger role for private investment. But, as in the case of Gandhi Square, the Newtown Improvement District will - to some degree - be subject to different economic and cultural logics from those operating in wholly commercial settings.

[45] The Legae La Rona is the first wholly residential CID in Johannesburg. It became a legislated CID in 2007, meaning that all residents have to pay CID levies. Contributions are set at affordable levels for people with low disposable incomes (the current levy is R 26.00 per flat). Community members have become hands-on in operating the CID, themselves forming the security and cleaning components of "Safe and Clean" initiatives (Personal communication from Ashley Holman, C.I.D. Establishment Project Leader, January 2008).

[46] Personal communication from Kate Shand, Marketing Manager for the Newtown Cultural District, January 2008.

The privately-run management system applied at Gandhi Square has succeeded on a number of levels. Property owners with interests around the Square have benefited from increased property values and higher rentals. Gerald Olitzki, who has over time acquired several buildings in the vicinity - including Bram Fischer House and all six buildings along the southern edge of the Square - has been a major beneficiary. Previously decaying structures, some of them occupied by squatters, have been transformed into prestige office space, all fully let. By 2005 the building Umoya, for example, had 3 000 metres of A-Grade offices, all leased. Prior to the upgrading of Gandhi Square, this building housed large numbers of squatters living in conditions of devastation, with open fires on the floor and loose wiring hanging from the walls (Davie 2005).

Privatised management of Gandhi Square has reclaimed the area for owners and tenants of buildings surrounding the site, for shoppers, for workers and residents in the vicinity, and for the many people who use the site daily. The principle of free access is however not without important caveats and qualifications around norms of accepted behaviour. In particular, the operation of the Square is calculated to exclude various others seen as threatening to bring disorder, notably street hawkers, beggars and homeless people.

Hawkers are excluded on the grounds of defending the visual order, and that of protecting the commercial interests of formal businesses. Yet, in the face of widespread unemployment, informal trading is an important source of livelihood for Johannesburg's urban poor. On the other hand, from an urban management perspective, there is an argument to be made for keeping some areas clear of hawkers who ply their trade on a great many of the central city's congested pavements.

Rules excluding today's hawkers from trading on a central Johannesburg public space dedicated to Gandhi are laced with unintended historical irony. In his role

as a lawyer, Gandhi defended many people brought to trial at this site for hawking illegally; and later as leader of the passive resistance, he urged his followers to take to trading on the streets nearby as a deliberate act of defiance. Harsh suppression of street vendors by the authorities meant that hawking was among the most common offences for which Indians were imprisoned. Gandhi called on street sellers to avoid taking out hawkers' licences, and to court arrest by trading without them[47] (*Indian Opinion* 8 January 1910 reproduced in *CWMG* vol. 10, p. 123).

Currently, private security guards combine with the local authority to keep Gandhi Square clear of hawkers. Under the terms of the lease agreement between the City Council and the Van der Bijl Square Consortium, Gandhi Square was designated a no-trading zone for hawkers. This means that private security guards of the CJP have the legal authority to ask hawkers to move on, without having to call in the Johannesburg Metro Police (JMPD). In practice though, order to act against hawking, security guards at Gandhi Square have on occasion enlisted assistance from Metro Police officers empowered to deal with infringements of municipal by-laws. The Operations Supervisor for Gandhi Square describes the procedure followed to keep the site clear of hawkers:

> *"Hawkers used to come to the Square to trade. We explained to them about the by-laws and the perceptions of the shop-keepers. Before that we called in JMPD so that we work together and they provide the by-laws to explain to the people. Some of the hawkers are difficult, but in the end they accept"* (Interview with Cosmos Ndlovu).

[47] Gandhi's stratagem to flood the streets with hawkers was not limited to professional hawkers. He encouraged others like shop-keepers, school teachers, book-keepers, clerks and professional men to switch to hawking fruit and vegetables. Hawking was, Gandhi argued, an extension of the manual work of agricultural production which he esteemed most highly, and together the two should be counted "*the highest methods of earning one's livelihood*" (*CWMG*, vol. 10, p. 128-130).

The advance of privatised management of public spaces raises questions of 'whose' public space: who has ownership rights over it, those who use it or those who have custodial rights over it?

Privatised improvement areas have been criticized for heavy-handed social control, elevating corporate interests and excluding the poor. Improvement Districts under private management in many countries around the world tend to encourage more affluent consumers, Mitchell argues, while unwanted elements (read: the urban poor) tend to be filtered out.

In his book *The Right to the City* (2003), Don Mitchell decries the ways in which rights to public space have increasingly been curtailed by powerful private interests driving Business Improvement Districts in cities across the United States. Using techniques of commodification, regulation and control by private police forces under their direction, these dominant groups have been able to capture public space for their own ends.

Through this process of privatising public space, free expression and use of public amenities has been rolled back, while vulnerable and marginalised groups find themselves excluded. Social controls are seen most forcibly in the exclusion of 'undesirables', typically identified with such individuals and groups as homeless people, loitering youth, criminals and drug abusers. A discourse of "public order" is mobilised in an effort to legitimise exclusions of those sections of the public branded as inappropriate. Thus, controls are justified by the need to ensure that public space remains public, rather than allowing it to be overrun by those deemed anti-social or deviant. From Mitchell's perspective, prerogatives for shaping public space have been usurped by private interests posing as the inheritors of the public interest. By deterring those who threaten the social order, public space is reserved for unhindered use by social elites, represented as the respectable public.

Turning to Johannesburg, criticisms have been voiced of exclusionary practices in central city spaces under CID management (Peyroux 2005, p. 13). The pedestrianised Main Street Mining Mall has been criticised as a sanitised corporate zone, designed and managed for higher income groups. Peyroux also cites the example of excessive controls exercised by security guards at the Carlton Centre. Based on personal experience, she reports that visitors are not permitted to stand for more than two minutes looking over the central balustrade[48]. Once spotted, anyone lingering too long is asked to keep moving by a security guard.

"Safe and Clean" is a theme much-touted in CID publicity materials, accompanied by the need to curb anti-social behaviour and tame an unruly urban environment. The management at Gandhi Square and other CIDs present themselves as guardians of 'mainstream' values of order, respectability and cleanliness. Exclusionary discourse does not refer to categories of wealth or colour, but centres around the idea of crime, dirt and disorder as signifiers of threat and decay.

An early and widely held criticism of Improvement Districts is that they take over activities and functions which should be the responsibility and preserve of government. As articulated by Janet Rothenberg Pack (1992), BIDs form "private governments" providing "quasi-public services" which can contribute to increasing social inequality. The fact that government cedes some authority over public space to a private agency that is not elected, nor seen to be publicly accountable, is a continuing cause for unease. Much criticism of Improvement Districts revolves around the issue public accountability (Houstoun 2003, p. 147-

[48] In January 2008 the present writer set out to test and possibly replicate Peyroux's experience of 2005 by standing at the Carlton Centre balustrade, only to be asked within one minute of my arrival to move along by a guard.

148). Private boards directing Improvement Districts have, it is argued, become too powerful, taking over local authority functions without sufficient government oversight or public accountability.

Set against these charges, advocates of Improvement Districts contend that their administrations are not based on supplanting government, but are instead enacted by a mutually agreed devolution and sharing of powers between public and private agents. In terms of service delivery, Improvement Districts are meant not to replace municipal services, but rather to *supplement* them – so raising these locations "above the ordinary". Local authorities, these advocates insist, continue to be responsible for rendering baseline municipal services in Improvement Districts.

Improvement Districts are indeed led by private sector interests and operate with relative independence from government. But it is important to note that these structures are enabled by government and authorised through legislation that defines their purpose, rules of governance, functions and limits. The legal basis for the existence of Improvement Districts is derived from government, and they are enabled through the delegation of certain state functions. In Johannesburg CIDs are governed by provincial legislation in the form of the City Improvement District Act of 1997. The boards of CIDs are controlled by property owners who are responsible for paying the CID levy. In terms of the City Improvement District Act, a majority of directors on the Board of a CID are required to be property owners. Each CID must be approved by the local authority, which has the right to appoint a representative to its board of directors.

Typically, the board of directors for the CID is controlled by business leaders, with the role played by the sole City representative often being limited to a support and liaison function. The representative for the City administration on the Board of the Central Improvement District comments:

> "The meeting is dominated by business interests and my role maybe has become that I'm effectively a liaison officer. So if there's anything that involves City intervention, its: "Are you able to get a meeting set up with the Metro Police Chief? Can you liaise with the Mayor's Office? And would you follow it up with this or that person? Which I'm obviously able to do. On very few occasions have I been able to influence the policy kind of debates. And quite frankly, I think that's the only role that the business people on the Board see the public representative as having. I know that some of my other colleagues who sit on the boards [of CIDs] don't say anything from beginning to end, because there is no question asked of the City" (Interview with Granville Shenker).

Private sway over public space can have far-reaching consequences, not only for civil liberties in general, but more particularly for cultural expression and public culture. Through taking control of public space, business elites can gain the means to influence the re-shaping of public culture. Zukin (1995, p. 32) highlights the potential dangers of privatization of public space – together with a lack of public accountability - for the narrowing of public culture:

> *"The disadvantage of creating public space in this way is that it owes so much to private sector elites, both individual philanthropists and big corporations. This is especially the case for centrally located public spaces, the ones with the most potential for raising property values and with the greatest claim to be symbolic spaces for the city as a whole. Handing such spaces over to corporate executives and private investors means giving them carte blanche to remake public culture. It marks the erosion of public space in terms of its two basic principles: public stewardship and open access".*

Zukin's cautions notwithstanding, in the case of Gandhi Square the public authorities have not abrogated responsibility for shaping public culture. Rather, the transformation of the site was indeed developed through public-private partnership. Economic revitalization efforts at Gandhi Square have been driven by the self-interest of place entrepreneurs with interests tied to the local economy. But for the City's heritage authorities, such private sector initiatives offered opportunities to re-image the urban landscape. In the process, renewal

initiatives have come to be shaped by images reflecting presences from a diverse past. Far from allowing 'carte blanche' to private interests organized through the Van der Bijl Square Consortium, City authorities exercised an important say over the heritage content of the site. Setting aside the "Renaissance Square" proposal put forward by the Consortium, the City had a decisive say over the re-naming and re-imaging of the Square.

As Paddison and Sharpe (2003, p. 8) astutely observe, if there is a single critique to be made against the recent debates on public space it is their 'totalising' nature. Doomsayers proclaiming the extinction of public space overlook its variation and complexities on the ground. In practice, the operation of Gandhi Square tends to blur the binary opposition of the public and the private. Neither of these categories is pure, in some sense they co-exist and the distinctions do not remain stable. These complexities call for a more sensitive and nuanced approach, abandoning simple distinctions between the public and private spheres, in order to re-conceptualise the intersection of these areas of life.

Zukin (1995) points to the fuzziness and permeability of the lines between what is viewed as public and private[49]. The issue of public perception and choice becomes crucial, since ultimately the public (or different publics) decide what they find desirable as shared space. In this view, private investment and initiative is no longer simply viewed one-dimensionally as the enemy of public space. Rather, we need to recognise the complex mix and legitimacy of different interests, ranging across private Improvement Districts, public authorities and the public at large, contending over the management, control and use of public resources.

[49] This strand of Zukin's thought around the inter-connectedness of the private and public realms is carefully traced in a perceptive reading by Coheen (1998).

People experience Gandhi Square in different ways, while using the site for their own purposes. The Square attracts and accommodates a great diversity of people, not unlike "the varieties of humanity" depicted on the *Cosmopolitan Johannesburg* billboard canvas. George Bizos observes the passing crowds on Gandhi Square:

> *"I do a certain amount of window gazing, and every day you get three or four groups of probably tourists – they are either internal or external tourists - gathering in a small group around the statue. They have benches there and you see people of all hues and colours resting and looking at the statue"* (Bizos Interview).

Bizos however remarks that the inner city is not an altogether diverse place, and the Square cannot be separated from the inner city. Many white suburbanites continue to avoid the inner city, which they perceive as overwhelmingly black, dangerous and disorderly. Yet, whites working in the city centre use buses on Gandhi Square. Bizos continues:

> *"These are people who take buses to the suburbs and some of them to the dormitory towns to the east and west of the centre of the city. So you see white people, particularly women, because they are the ones who work in the banks, catching the bus there. So to that extent there is integration. Also restaurants and take-away places are mushrooming on the Square and you see black and white people buying their sandwiches or their take-aways. Restaurants like Nandos and Capellos are frequented by all races … But the centre of the city has not become an integrated city centre"* (*ibid.*).

Use of the Square varies for different groups of people for a multiplicity of purposes. The diverse publics to which the site caters include commuters who board and disembark from the buses, both adults and schoolchildren, shop-keepers and office workers inhabit the surrounding buildings, as well as the many thousands of people who frequent the businesses there, or simply pass through the site each day.

Businesses in the vicinity cover a wide range of activity, drawing their staff from all corners of Johannesburg and surrounding areas, so bringing fresh layers of diversity to the site. Gerald Olizki sees a trend of large companies returning to the central city, fuelling a demand for high grade office space and retail around Gandhi Square. Those returning to or setting up divisions in the central city include financial institutions, information technology companies and attorneys. It is a reflection of the new South Africa, he says, that companies are now drawing staff not only from the affluent northern suburbs, but from comparatively modest southern areas like Soweto, Alberton and surrounds. "Businesses want a broader spectrum from which to draw staff," Olitski comments (quoted in Davie 2005).

A multiplicity of user groups create meaningful public space by using Gandhi Square for their own purposes. We need therefore to credit the role of human agency in everyday life by which these people bring their own needs and practices to public space, sometimes removed from those of management. Public culture is not simply imposed from above by planners and investors, but is rather socially constructed by public interaction. As stated by Zukin (1995, p. 11), we need to consider the impact of everyday practices:

> *"I also see public culture as socially constructed on the micro-level. It is produced by many social encounters that make up daily life in the streets, shops and parks – the spaces where we experience public life in cities. The right to be in these spaces, to use them in certain ways, to invest them with a sense of ourselves and our communities – to claim them as ours and to be claimed in turn by them – make up a constantly changing public culture".*

From this bottom-up perspective, Gandhi Square is contested terrain, not simply the site of officially sanctioned, programmed and regulated behaviour. Official efforts to impress order and control over public space do not go unchallenged by the actions of ordinary people using the site in ways that are unplanned and

unintended, frequently suppressed, but never completely eliminated. We need thus to take stock not only of management rules and regulations but also to consider popular actions of non-compliance. In this way, the "double-life" of the site is revealed, consisting not only of conduct which is approved, but also of unauthorised practices which are discouraged but often tolerated.

Oppositional practices challenging the official order on Gandhi Square have been led by large crowds of high school learners who meet at the site. These include thousands of school children from the inner city and from historically disadvantaged townships. Writing in the *Sunday World* (5 September 2005), Don Makatile describes the scene as learners arrive on the Square:

> *"As the time ticks by, the numbers swell, the badges and uniforms declaring the wearers to be from Hyde Park High, Vine College, Vector High, Jeppe Boys, Astra College, Matric Centre, Queens High, Newgate College – and so on".*

Gandhi Square provides a place for youth subcultures to gather, as well as a convenient transport link. Typically, the great majority abide by the rules of conduct set for the site. The 'unruly' behaviour of youth groups can however be alarming to others, seen as discrepant and threatening. Under the headline "Great Soul Shame," Makatile's article in the *Sunday World* goes on to decry wide-spread 'decadent' behaviour on the Square, with lurid accounts of under-age drinking, romantic dalliances and other youthful misconduct. In reality, drunken and disorderly behaviour has typically been limited to a minority of youth on the Square. But a combination of factors contribute to the high visibility of youth who stand out as disruptive and deviant: the massing of school learners; the open design and clear lines of sight; and a general environment of respectability and conformity.

Since 2005, security guards have tried to bring drunken youth to order, and chivvy them onto waiting buses. But the main thrust from the CID management

in seeking to address the problem, has been to close off the liquor supply to under-18-year-olds emanating from the *City Liquor* bottle store operating from the High Court Building on Joubert Street. This led to the owner of the building being approached by Olitzki on behalf of the CID, with the request that the bottle store be made to stop serving under-age youth. Pressure applied on the bottle-store has helped to stem the flow of liquor to youth on the Square, although some have engaged adult surrogates to buy liquor on their behalf.

Infractions of the management guidelines by intoxicated teenagers have been a source of long-running friction and contention with security guards at the site. The ascetic Mahatma would doubtless have added his disapproval of youthful ill-discipline on the Square. Be that as it may, Gandhi Square is far removed from the vision of highly-restrictive corporatised space policed by draconian security armies.

Conclusion

> *"This city was built by people who by and large came from elsewhere (uitlanders[50]) – whether from overseas or from other regions of South Africa and Southern Africa … Johannesburg has the potential to become the equivalent of New York on an African scale – a place of sedimentation of the world's cultures and the richness carried by each of them. But the city must first conceive of itself in this way, and make this its project".*
>
> (Achille Mbembe 2007, p. 168)

Gandhi Square emerged as a fledgling cultural project of the post-apartheid City administration of Johannesburg, giving new expression to the diverse, cosmopolitan identity of the site. Heritage construction on Gandhi Square has sought to expose and be responsive to difference. Focusing on the contribution of Gandhi and the Indian Satyagraha movement, the heritage displays give public visibility and status to stories and identities which had hitherto been neglected in the dominant urban history and culture.

Recent heritage practice at Gandhi Square has been concerned with celebrating cultural diversity, while extending the public sphere to incorporate a broader range of representation. Gandhi Square affirms the right of Indians and other minorities to inscribe their histories on the cityscape, and for other citizens to join in celebrating that plurality. Seen in dialogue with other sites and stories, Gandhi Square points towards a diverse and inclusive heritage practice, one that lends hope to a shared public culture.

The re-making of Gandhi Square married private sector capital investment with a heritage vision that responded positively to the diversity of the post-apartheid city. From a business perspective, the redevelopment of Gandhi Square has created a marketable identity for the central city and raised investor confidence.

[50] In Afrikaans, the term "uitlanders" refers to foreigners or aliens.

Yet, place-making at Gandhi Square has not only been good for business, but has coalesced with the post-apartheid urban visions of the City administration for the physical and symbolic re-integration of public space. The re-developed Square has created an important point of contact between black and white, and between rich and poor. Gandhi Square offers a safe and congenial public space for a large cross-section of the citizenry of Johannesburg emerging from a segregationalist past towards a (hopefully) integrated future. Far from diminishing public space, the form of private management practised at the site has resulted in the extension of the public realm.

Gandhi Square presents a racially open and culturally heterogeneous site used by mixed populations who converge at the site for different purposes. More than a site accommodating contained diversity and difference, it is also potentially a site of interaction and encounter. Users bring with them not only a diversity of values and social practices, but also the possibilities for shared experience, intersection of interests, social mingling and greater mutual understanding. Whether and to what extent spatial proximity and fleeting interaction will give rise to more enduring connections remains however a moot point.

The production of symbols and cultural meaning at Gandhi Square provides an important arena for moulding public opinion and re-shaping social identity. By promoting ideas of cultural exchange and respect for diversity, the heritage offering at Gandhi Square seeks to foster a sense of greater inclusion and social connectedness in a city that learns to value difference. How effective are these public expressions of solidarity and inclusion in building social cohesion and a sense of wider community? That is a matter of conjecture, but they do offer a strong official signal for what directions the public culture of Johannesburg might take.

Values of social inclusion embedded in the heritage presentation on the Square – cosmopolitanism, multiple identities, tolerance, and respect for civic rights and dignity – have been broadly incorporated in the cultural policies of the City of Johannesburg. The goal of building greater social inclusion through re-forming public culture and heritage is however beset by complications which need to be acknowledged. How is such inclusion is to be to be sought in practice, and how are such efforts to be measured? Two general and inter-connected factors underlie the difficulty. First, the contribution made by heritage projects is by their nature often symbolic and intangible; and secondly, following on from this, there are inevitably methodological challenges in evaluating the impact of such interventions.

In the case of heritage interventions meant to build social cohesion in the post-apartheid city, other vexing questions have to do with the contested nature of South African history and of new social identities emerging from a divided past. In a highly diverse and multi-cultural society struggling to find a shared sense of history and identity, claims that heritage can contribute to, if not create, social integration, should not be over-stated. Despite the removal of statutory discrimination, the difficulties of forging a unified identity are further compounded by entrenched and continuing socio-economic inequality in Johannesburg.

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List of Persons Interviewed

George Bizos, Head of the Constitutional Litigation Unit, Legal Resources Centre.

Clr. M.S. (Mohammed Saeed) Cachalia, member of the Johannesburg City Council and founding member of the Gandhi Centenary Council.

Cosmos Ndlovu, Operations Supervisor for the Central Improvement District.

Gerald Olitzki, sole proprietor of Olizki Property Holdings (OPH), and the representative for Gandhi Square on the Central Improvement District.

Granville Shenker, City Council representative on the Board of Directors for the Central Improvement District.