A history of youth politics in Limpopo, 1967 – 2003

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Short Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of student and youth politics in the Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo Province) from the height of apartheid in 1967 through the first decade of the ANC's rule until 2003. It analyses three major trends over this period: the elite-led protest politics of the Black Consciousness era in the late 1960s and 1970s, the turn to mass-mobilized protest of the 1980s, and the consolidation of student and youth movements around the reconstituted ANC Youth League in 1990. It is primarily concerned with exploring the intersection of education and political protest in Limpopo, and the effect of mobilizing ideologies such as radical Christianity, Africanism, and non-racialism, on student and youth activists. It argues that across decades, organisations, and ideologies, this region has produced generations of influential young political leaders. It provides an institutional history of the University of the North and situates that university in a broader narrative of South African political history: from its contribution to the roots of Black Consciousness in student Christian movements, and the role of local university politics in influencing national protests, to the geography of the university itself as a place of political education (for students and nonstudent youth alike) and as a battleground between students and police. It considers the introduction of violence into student protests, the regional expansion of school and then youth politics beyond the crucible of the university, and the refashioning of social structures (like arbitrating in witchcraft accusations and domestic disputes) in homeland villages by politicized youth. It further contributes new insights into the formation and emergence of the ANC Youth League in the 1990s, and suggests that understanding student organisations and events during the 1970s and 1980s, in particular, sheds light on the shape of South African youth politics today.

Long Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of student and youth politics in the Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo Province) from the height of apartheid in 1967 through the first decade of the ANC's rule until 2003. It is concerned with locating South Africa's rural north within the anti-apartheid struggle, and redressing the heavily urban focus within scholarly work on South Africa's student and youth movements. It aims to analyse three major trends: the elite-led protest politics of the Black Consciousness era in the late 1960s and 1970s, the turn to mass-mobilized protest of the 1980s, and the consolidation of student and youth movements around the reconstituted ANC Youth League after unbanning in 1990. It is primarily concerned with exploring the intersection of education and political protest in Limpopo, and the effect of mobilizing ideologies such as radical Christianity, Africanism, and non-racialism, on student, and later youth, activists. Beyond its regional and national focus, the thesis contributes to the broader historiography of student political movements; it offers new insights to the literature on Black Consciousness, and to the emerging scholarship on the ANC Youth League in the 1990s.

The early part of the thesis considers the emergence of Africanist politics on the campus of the University of the North (commonly called Turfloop) in the late 1960s, after years of ostensible quiescence on black campuses. It examines the importance of this institution as a centre for protest politics and student mobilization well before the Soweto 1976 student uprisings. It thus modifies the historiography, which has focused on Soweto as the key moment in the emergence of student protest and Black Consciousness ideas. This section explores the importance of Christianity as a mobilizing force for student activists at Turfloop, the

university's growing profile as a site of protest, and its links to urban areas around Johannesburg in the 1970s. On-campus Christian groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s, most notably the University Christian Movement, played a critical role in laying the foundation for the emergence of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) in 1969. SASO reintroduced Africanism to protest politics after the banning of the Pan Africanist Congress in 1960. It developed the wide-ranging philosophy of Black Consciousness, which extended its influence beyond the sphere of student politics to a spectrum of other interest groups and youth organisations during the 1970s. Turfloop became increasingly important as a centre for student resistance and site of public protest, with major campus protests and expulsions attracting the attention of national press and security police to this peripheral university in the Northern Transvaal in 1972, 1974, 1976, 1977, and 1979.

Chapters two and three explore some of these events in detail. In 1972 Turfloop rose to national prominence when an education student, Abraham Tiro, made a controversial speech criticizing the hypocrisy of Bantu Education policies as enacted at the university. In response, the university administration expelled Tiro and the members of the Students' Representative Council who had invited him to speak, leading to class boycotts and sit-ins by the majority of the student body. Eventually the university expelled the entire student body, and closed for more than a month in order to diffuse the protests. But this backfired, as the Turfloop shutdown became a rallying point for solidarity protests on black university and college campuses across South Africa. The coordination and spread of these protests relied on the organisational capacity of SASO, and are discussed in detail in chapter two. I argue that 'the Tiro Incident' marked a pivotal moment in the organisation of student protests on campus at Turfloop and beyond, and that it represented a fundamental shift in the relationship between the students and administration at the University of the North.

This shift towards confrontational protest was more fully realized in the Viva-FRELIMO rally that was held on campus in 1974 and is one of the major focuses of chapter three. While the Tiro Incident had tested the old boundaries between students and university authorities in cases of conflict, the Viva-FRELIMO rally crossed those boundaries on both sides. It marked the introduction of violence to political conflict on campus, and brought a new entity into the relationship between students and university authorities: the South African state, in the form of the police. The rally, which violated a government ban on gatherings organized by SASO and its sister organisation the Black People's Convention (BPC), was broken up by the police. Force was used by police (with *sjamboks*, batons, and dogs) and by students (throwing rocks and bottles), while university authorities were first absent from and then passive in the conflict.

The rally at Turfloop, and a simultaneous one in Durban, resulted in the arrest of many participating students, and in the eventual trial of several SASO and BPC leaders in the terrorism trial of the SASO Nine. In chapter three I argue that, in addition to the introduction of violence and direct conflict with the state, the Viva-FRELIMO rally – and, importantly, its aftermath – marked the beginning of the pinnacle of Black Consciousness as a national movement. The trial of the SASO Nine and the simultaneous Snyman Commission of Inquiry provided platforms for student activists to expound on Black Consciousness philosophy and the political aims of SASO.

In addition to the role of Turfloop in influencing national politics, this project also seeks to understand critical links between the rural north and South Africa's major urban centres. A large minority of Turfloop's students hailed from the townships of the Witwatersrand and in

the aftermath of waves of expulsion from the university many former students moved back into Soweto's schools to become teachers. Abraham Tiro was perhaps the most high-profile of these, but in the years following his speech and the university's closure, and later expulsions of politicized students after the Viva-FRELIMO rally, a number of former Turfloop students became secondary school teachers and worked to propagate Black Consciousness ideology and political awareness in their students. Tracing these teachers and their influence on the school students of Soweto who went on to lead the protests of 1976 helps to contextualize the student uprising, and to understand the influence of campus politics at Turfloop on national events. It is a focus of chapter three. Rather than positing a center/periphery dichotomy, I argue that the flow of people and ideology between the townships on the Rand and the rural north is critical to understanding the development of protest politics in both places.

The middle part of the thesis considers the heights of SASO and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), followed by their precipitous decline under heavy state repression in the late 1970s. Chapter three argues that students – and increasingly black staff – at universities like Turfloop used the SASO Nine Trial and the Snyman Commission of Inquiry as pulpits to preach Black Consciousness ideology, and points to these overlapping moments in 1975 and 1976, alongside the Soweto students' uprising, as the pinnacle of the Black Consciousness Movement. Chapter four turns to the decline of this movement in late 1977, when Steve Biko was killed in police custody, and the state banned seventeen of the BCM's primary affiliates. It also considers the failed efforts of Black Consciousness structures to reconstitute themselves effectively in exile. I argue that the Black Consciousness Movement's alienation from its original base of mobilization – among students on campuses like Turfloop, and schools – as

well as structural facets that had enabled it to thrive above-ground (like mechanisms for affiliation and recruitment), contributed to its failure to thrive in exile and underground.

Chapter four also looks at the ostensible success of one of SASO's causes at the university level: Africanisation, which refers to the introduction of Africans into senior staffing positions and reforms to university regulations to ensure parity of pay and promotion across racial lines. At Turfloop Africanisation took its most pronounced step in January 1977, when Professor William Kgware became the first black rector of any university in South Africa. The triumph of Africanisation was short-lived, though; Kgware's administration did not introduce the radical changes to life at Turfloop that student and staff activists had imagined Africanisation would bring. In chapter four I argue that Kgware actually contributed to the decline of Black Consciousness on campus as his conservative administration gave rise to frustration with the unfulfilled expectation of Africanisation.

In the wake of this sidelining of Black Consciousness and its Africanist narrative, I explore the renewed focus on the multiracial Charterism of the African National Congress (ANC) that first emerged in the Congress of South African Students (COSAS). COSAS was rooted in the Northern Transvaal, in the youth clubs of its first president Ephraim Mogale, who was from the region. It brought not just a shift to Charterism, but also an increased regionalism to student politics. It marked the expansion of student activism in the Northern Transvaal beyond Turfloop and to the campuses of local schools throughout the region. In addition, the early 1980s brought the development of new universities in the region, expanding access to higher education beyond Turfloop. This increasing spread of student politics throughout the province coincided with the emergence of the United Democratic Front (UDF), in 1983. The UDF acted as an umbrella organisation under which local Charterist groups could organize

and affiliate. Though the regional expansion of student politics in the Northern Transvaal predated the UDF, it expanded greatly under its influence in the mid-1980s.

The new rise of Charterism and the UDF also brought with it conflict between its proponents and the remaining adherents of Black Consciousness philosophy. In the early and mid 1980s this tension erupted repeatedly into violent confrontations between students in Charterist groups like the Azanian Students' Organisation (AZASO) and Africanist groups like the Azanian Students' Movement (AZASM). In addition, rising levels of violence throughout the country were manifested in the Northern Transvaal homelands of Lebowa, Gazankulu, and Venda in mob-led witch-hunts. Often these were fueled by young men who were members of local youth congresses, which identified themselves with liberation movements like the ANC, and were sometimes (but not always) affiliated to the UDF. Coming to grips with this type of violence and its political roots is an important theme in the fifth chapter of the thesis, and makes a contribution to the historiographical debate about the relationship between culture and politics in South Africa.

The final empirical chapter of the thesis, chapter six, looks at the transformation in local student politics across the Northern Transvaal during the period leading up to and after the unbanning of the ANC and PAC in 1990. It first examines the transition of most of the youth congresses discussed in chapter five into branches of the new South African Youth Congress (SAYCO), which was formed in 1987. I argue that these congresses maintained a high degree of autonomy and local identity during this process. In turn, SAYCO personnel played a critical role in negotiating the structure of the new ANC Youth League over the period 1990-91, and I contend that understanding these roots casts new light on the shape of the ANC Youth League itself. By looking across the period of transition (1990-1994) and through the first nine years

of democracy in South Africa, this section of the thesis also seeks to understand the way that student and youth activists and organisations negotiated their place in the new state. As an organizing theme, the chapter considers the rise of controversial youth leaders like Peter Mokaba and Julius Malema, and what their successes indicate about the new shape of youth politics in Limpopo Province. It also addresses a remarkable lacuna in the literature, which has largely neglected the ANC Youth League after its unbanning.

As a whole, the thesis strives to provide a coherent narrative of the rising profile of youth and student leaders in South Africa's most northern province. It argues that across decades, organisations, and ideologies, this region has produced generations of influential young political leaders, and that facets of youth politics have shaped the politics of the region more broadly. It provides an institutional history of the University of the North and situates that university in a broader narrative of South African political history: from its contribution to the roots of Black Consciousness in Christian movements, and the role of local university politics in influencing national movements, to the geography of Turfloop itself as a place of political education (for students and nonstudent youth alike) and as a battleground between students and police. It further explores the expansion of student and youth politics in the region beyond the crucible of the university, and contributes new insights into the changes in organisation and ideology of youth politics of the 1980s and the emergence of the ANC Youth League in the 1990s.

Limpopo has sometimes been dismissed as part of the rural periphery, and the vanguard of popular protest is generally seen to be in the urban areas. To the extent that the more rural provinces have been considered important, the Eastern Cape is usually given pride of place. However, I argue that since the late 1960s Limpopo has produced and educated a stream of

highly influential student leaders who changed the shape of protest politics in South Africa. It was a major point of genesis and growth for movements of both Africanist and Charterist ideology throughout the latter years of apartheid. The rich historiography of South Africa has thus far largely disregarded the political contributions of its rural north, and this thesis aims to redress that omission.

Preface

A brief note on orthography: this thesis takes Limpopo Province as its unit of analysis and covers a geographic area that includes several linguistic traditions. In addition, over the period covered, changes in local and national government have resulted in renaming many of the towns and villages discussed. For the sake of clarity I have standardized my spellings of names and places. I have recorded the names of people as they have been given to me in interviews or recorded in archives, and for place names I have used current official spellings where names are still in use. When referring to places that have changed over time, I have tried to capture their contemporary usage at the time (so I use Pietersburg rather than Polokwane before the city changed names in 2002) and to use local spelling conventions (for example, the use of the village prefix Ga- in Sepedi, and Ha- in Tshivenda). For the sake of clarity I have sometimes simplified changes where they are not crucial to the analysis (the post-apartheid renamings from Northern Transvaal, to Northern Province, to Limpopo Province, for instance, are flattened into a brief discussion in the conclusion). I have endeavoured not to replace local terms with English translations, which sometimes obscures vernacular meanings, but I have offered English explanations alongside vernacular terms where helpful (for example, in chapter five I describe both the Sepedi *dingaka* and the Tshivenda *vhangome* as witchdoctors). I apologise for any errors or confusion caused along the way.

The following thesis is entirely my own work, except where otherwise indicated by quotation and citation. Any mistakes are my own.

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The academic direction of my supervisor Professor William Beinart has been invaluable, and I owe him a debt of gratitude for guiding me through this process. His patience and good humour have kept me on track in spite of my tendency to be distracted by other projects. Throughout the conception, researching, and writing of this thesis, his queries and suggestions have added clarity to my thoughts, and have immeasurably enriched the final product.

I must thank Professor Terence Ranger for his encouragement and intellectual stimulation, Florence Graham and Simon Stevens for their helpful comments on drafts, and Michael Athanson of the Bodleian Library for his valuable assistance with maps. My research relies on oral and written sources, and has been enabled and assisted by the help of many librarians and archivists, especially the staff at the University of the Witwatersrand Historical Papers Archive in Johannesburg, and the staff of Rhodes House Library in Oxford. Perhaps most importantly, my gratitude goes to the current and former student and youth activists who generously shared their time and memories with me, and who are listed in the bibliography; I hope I have done justice to their stories here.

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Abbreviations

AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
ASM	African Students' Movement
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
AZASM	Azanian Students' Movement
AZASO	Azanian Students' Organisation
BASA	Black Academic Staff Association (of the University of the North)
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BCMA	Black Consciousness Movement of Azania
BCMSA	Black Consciousness Movement of South Africa
BCP	Black Community Programmes
BPC	Black People's Convention
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CRIC	Community Resource Information Centre
FedSem	Federal Theological Seminary
FRELIMO	*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Mozambique Liberation Front)
GSC	General Students Council
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IUEF	International University Exchange Fund
MAYCO	Mankweng Youth Congress
MCA	Mankweng Civic Association
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
MK	*Umkhonto we Sizwe* (The Spear of the Nation)
NUM	National Union of Mine Workers
NEC	National Executive Council
NEUSA	National Education Union of South Africa
NGK	*Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (Dutch Reformed Church)

NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
NYO	National Youth Organisation (sometimes also abbreviated as Nayo)
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PEYCO	Port Elizabeth Youth Congress
RDA	*Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (African Democratic Assembly)
REC	Regional Executive Council
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAP	South African Police
SASM	South African Students' Movement
SASO	South African Students' Organisation
SANSCO	South African National Students' Congress
SASCO	South African Students' Congress
SAYCO	South African Youth Congress
SCA	Students' Christian Association
SCM	Students' Christian Movement
SEYO	Sekhukhune Youth Organisation
SOYO	Soweto Youth Organisation
SPA	Soweto Parents' Association
SRC	Students' Representative Council
SSRC	Soweto Students' Representative Council
TRAC	Transvaal Rural Action Committee
UCM	University Christian Movement
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNICON	University College of the North (uncommon abbreviation)
UNIN	University of the North (uncommon abbreviation)
UNISA	University of South Africa
WASA	Writers' Association of South Africa
ZCC	Zion Christian Church

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

This thesis is an exploration of student politics within the Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo Province) from the height of apartheid in 1967 through the first decade of the ANC's rule until 2003. It is concerned with locating South Africa's rural north in the anti-apartheid struggle, and redressing the heavily urban focus within scholarly work on South Africa's student and youth movements. It aims to analyse three major trends in this period: the elite-led protest politics of the Black Consciousness era, the turn to mass protest of the 1980s, and the consolidation of student and youth movements around the reconstituted ANC Youth League in 1990. It is primarily concerned with exploring the intersection of education and political protest in Limpopo, and the effects of mobilizing ideologies such as radical Christianity, Africanism, and non-racialism, on student activists.

Though recent work has shed light on Black Consciousness as both a movement and an ideology[1], and the study of student protests in South Africa has attracted almost continual attention since the eruption of Soweto in 1976[2], relatively little of this scholarly energy has

[1] D. Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets: Black Consciousness in South Africa, 1968 – 1977* (Athens, OH, 2010); I. Macqueen, 'Students, Apartheid and the Ecumenical Movement in South Africa, 1960 – 1975', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39(2) 2013, pp.446-463; and I. Macqueen, 'Re-Imagining South Africa: Black Consciousness, Radical Christianity and the New Left, 1967-1977' (University of Sussex, PhD, 2011).

[2] The study of the Soweto student uprising first received academic attention with the publication of B. Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash: The Soweto Revolt, Roots of a Revolution?* (London, 1979), and the subject of student politics has since been a focus for many authors including A. Egan, *The Politics of a South African Catholic Student Movement, 1960-1987* (Cape Town, 1991); N. Diseko, 'The Origins and Development of the South African Student's Movement (SASM): 1968–1976', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* Vol. 18(1) 1992, pp. 40-62; C. Glaser, 'We must infiltrate the tsotsis': School Politics and Youth Gangs in Soweto, 1968-1976', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.24(2) 1998, p.301-23, and *Bo-*

focused on the rural north. The vanguard of popular protest in South Africa is generally seen to be in its urban areas, and Limpopo has sometimes been dismissed as part of the rural periphery. To the extent that the more rural provinces have garnered historical attention, the Eastern Cape is usually given pride of place.[3] However, a key argument of this thesis is that since the late 1960s Limpopo has produced and educated a stream of highly influential student leaders who helped to change the shape of protest politics in South Africa. I trace the genesis of this mobilization to the University of the North (Turfloop), the black university college outside Pietersburg (today Polokwane) that was designated to educate the Bantustan elites of Lebowa, Venda, Gazankulu, and later Qwa Qwa. Turfloop acted as a hothouse where politically aware young people, many from the urban townships of the Witwatersrand, formed networks and associations within and across university lines that facilitated their participation in the struggle against apartheid. In turn, these networks and student activists served to politically conscientize not just fellow students, but also urban townships and communities surrounding the university itself. In the 1970s, Turfloop quickly became the centre of anti-apartheid activism in the Northern Transvaal, acting as a transit point for activists fleeing the country, and as a centre for political education for students, staff, and members of the broader community. Turfloop's role in the struggle has been addressed in scholarship only where it intersects with moments of national significance (like the Soweto

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Tsotsi : The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976 (Oxford, 2000); and S. Badat, *Black Student Politics: Higher Education and Apartheid from SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990* (Pretoria, 1999).

[3] For examples of the historical role of the Eastern Cape in South African politics and resistance, see W. Beinart and C. Bundy, (eds.) *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics & Popular Movements in the Transkei & Eastern Cape 1890-1930* (Berkeley, 1987); J. Peires, *The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People and the Days of their Independence* (Berkeley, 1982) and *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7* (Johannesburg, 1989); C. Crais, *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa: the Making of the Colonial Order in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865* (Cambridge, 1992); T. Gibbs, *Mandela's Kinsmen: Nationalist Elites & Apartheid's First Bantustan* (Oxford, 2014); and O. Murphy, 'Race, Violence, and Nation: African Nationalism and Popular Politics in South Africa, 1948-1970' (University of Oxford, DPhil, 2013).

uprising) and the history of Black Consciousness.[4] The single institutional history of the university deals with Turfloop's founding, its structure, and its transformation in the post-apartheid era. It is primarily concerned with Turfloop's educational and pedagogical development, and does not situate the university in a broader narrative of South African political history.[5]

Meanwhile, the reconstitution of the ANC Youth League after unbanning in 1990 has yet to be the subject of an in-depth scholarly study, and no one has written about its role in Limpopo specifically, though the region has been home to some of the Youth League's most significant leaders since its unbanning.[6] The period of the 1980s and the emergence of the UDF, in contrast, has been the subject of much historical attention, and some of this has focused on parts of the Northern Transvaal.[7] Peter Delius' *A Lion Amongst the Cattle* and Ineke van Kessel's *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams: The United Democratic Front and the Transformation of South Africa* each devote a section to the political situation in Sekhukhuneland during the 1980s, and give particular attention to the Sekhukhuneland Youth Revolt in 1986. I also examine these events in chapter five, and seek to contextualize them regionally by comparing the events of Sekhukhuneland with youth 'revolts' – violent usurping of traditional authority – in parts of both Venda and Gazankulu.

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[4] See D. Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets,* pp.148-9, 152-3; J. Brown, 'An Experiment in Confrontation: The Pro-Frelimo Rallies of 1974', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* Jan. 2012; C. Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto 1935 – 1976,* pp. 161-2.

[5] C. White, *From Despair to Hope: The Turfloop Experience* (Sovenga, South Africa, 1997).

[6] For the most complete discussion of the contemporary Youth League, see R. Botiveau, 'The ANC Youth League, or the Invention of a South African Youth Political Organisation' (*Les Nouveaux Cahiers de l'IFAS*, 2007) and C. Glaser, *A Jacana Pocket History: The ANC Youth League* (Johannesburg, 2012), Chapter 5 (The Youth League Reborn, 1990 – 2003) and Chapter 6 (The New Rebellion, 2004 – 2012). For a brief discussion of the ANC Youth League in Limpopo, see F. Forde, *An Inconvenient Youth: Julius Malema and the 'New' ANC*, (London, 2012) pp. 144-148.

[7] Peter Delius' *The Lion Amongst the Cattle* (Oxford, 1996) is a historical monograph on the area; Ineke van Kessel's *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams* (Charlottesville, VA, 2000) devotes a substantive case study to the role of the UDF in Sekhukhuneland (pp. 75-150).

Framework

This uneven local historiography in part inspired the regional focus of this dissertation. However, my interest in Limpopo is rooted earlier, in my masters project: In that dissertation I strove to historically contextualize an outbreak of violence against witches in the province's northeast in the early 1990s. I relied heavily on the work of anthropologists who had studied such outbreaks from an ethnographic perspective, but my project sought to do something rather different. I wanted to understand the way that dealing with witches had changed in two local villages over time, and to historically contextualize these particular incidents of violence against the backdrop of political violence more generally in South Africa in the early 1990s, a time of strife as the country approached the end of apartheid.

My findings were two-fold: I argued that changing measures in South African law over the previous century had constrained the space in which witchcraft could legally be addressed and curtailed. The result was to force the matter into an extrajudicial realm. While once there were proscribed, non-violent ways to deal with the malevolent influence of witches in villages, by the 1990s changes in the law had made such mechanisms illegal themselves, and untenable. In tandem with this, I argued that the violence that marked South Africa's urban townships in the late 1980s and early 1990s affected its rural villages as well. Though the young men of Venda who became leaders of the witch-hunts were physically far removed from their counterparts in urban townships, they articulated a narrative of political grievance that would have resonated in those urban areas, in parallel with accusations of witchcraft. They used language of 'collaborators' and 'sell outs', and sang freedom songs associated with the anti-apartheid struggle as they went to purge their villages of witches. This became a story of generational politics, of the roles of young men in their communities, and it has

played an important role in defining the scope of my doctoral thesis. For though this is a much broader, much larger project, it addresses many of the same themes that my masters did: the intergenerational politics of youth in their communities, the roles of belief and religion, as well as violence, as elements of political expression and the situation of rural, peripheral communities in a national narrative of struggle. In the process I have expanded my focus beyond the theme of witchcraft because it was less important in the regional and university politics explored here than at the rural village level of my masters analysis.

The transitory cohorts of students at Turfloop and the loose, socially linked networks of activists in organisations from SASO to AZASO that dominated political activism in the Northern Transvaal from the late 1960s to the mid 1980s were broader in scope and more diverse in their composition than the very local youth congresses of the late 1980s. This is one reason that witchcraft accusations did not gain traction as a political tool until the rapid expansion of politics and mobilization of local rural youth, which moved the roots of student organisations out of schools and into local communities. Understanding the historical context that resulted in this shift – from the national and regional to the local – is a key concern of chapters five and six.

As a regional study, it is important to say a word about the unit of analysis of this thesis: that is, Limpopo itself. The area that is the province of Limpopo today did not become a distinct political unit until 1994 when it ceased to be simply the northern area of the Transvaal and became the Northern Transvaal province. The region comprised small towns and white-owned farms alongside black reserves, whose people engaged in a mix of subsistence agricultural production and migrant labor to the urban areas in the south of the Transvaal. From the early 1970s, these areas were formalized as Bantustans: ostensibly self-governing,

ethnically defined black homelands. In the Northern Transvaal there were three of these – Venda, Lebowa, and Gazankulu - each for a separate ethnic-linguistic group, demonstrating the diversity of the region as a whole, which was populated by several minority ethnic groups. From 1973, when Venda was granted powers of self-rule (the last of the three to receive this), the Northern Transvaal was fragmented into non-contiguous tracts of land that were administered by at least four separate, independent governments: those of the three homelands, and the South African government over the remaining towns and farms (see Map 1 in Appendix A, p. 313).

Further complicating this picture, the homeland governments sometimes collaborated with or allowed the operation of the South African government in their territories, particularly with respect to activities of the police and South African Defence Force. For instance, joint operations between the Lebowa police and security branch police from the nearby white town of Pietersburg were common on campus at Turfloop during the 1970s and 80s. One result of this fragmentation is a history of complicated, divided, and sometimes overlapping administration.

In spite of this fragmentation, there was something particular about the northern part of the Transvaal that distinguished it from other regions, and this was acknowledged by liberation and other organisations. In 1986 the United Democratic Front was the first organisation to administer the Northern Transvaal as a separate region in its organisational structure, and others, including the South African Students' Organisation, acknowledged this difference informally even earlier, by grouping branches and institutions sub-regionally. In its rurality, poverty, and marginality the area shared traits with other regions – notably the Eastern Cape. Its proximity to the conurbation of the southern Transvaal meant that, though distinct in

many ways, links between the two – along which people and information travelled – were strong. For many students it became a place of education, as children were sent to family in villages for schooling and adults came to study at the University of the North (and later at the University of Venda). The confluence of these factors – poverty and marginality coupled with access to urban and educational centres – made the Northern Transvaal ripe for student activism.

With its focus on student and youth political activists and movements, this thesis is concerned with the intersection of education and politics. Magaziner has written about how the experience of Bantu Education inescapably politicized the experience of school and university for black South Africans.[8] More generally, from Paris and Mexico City in 1968 to Beijing in 1989, in the late twentieth century universities have been sites of the genesis and development of political ideology and forms of protest around the world.[9] Following a rich literature on university student activism in other parts of Africa[10], I aim to explore both the potential and the limits of student activism and its specific impact on political change in apartheid South Africa. Speaking of student protests in post-colonial Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda, William Hanna has argued that though students are often visible and frontline protesters in moments of national crisis, 'Africa's university students rarely exert critical political influence […].'[11] I counter that student activists at Turfloop did, in fact, exert

[8] Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, pp. 22-5.
[9] For a discussion of student leadership in the 1989 Democracy movement in China see, L. Lim, *The People's Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited* (Oxford, 2014), chp. 4 'Student'; for a comparison of the role of student activists in both Paris and Mexico City in 1968, see S. Stokes, 'Paris and Mexico City: 1968 Student Activism', (University of Oxford, DPhil, 2011).
[10] See W.J. Hanna, 'Student Universities, and Political Outcomes' (pp.1-22), and J.L. Cefkin, 'Rhodesian University Students in National Politics' (pp. 135-166) in W.J. Hanna, (ed). *University Students and African Politics* (New York, 1975); A. Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa* (London, 1978), especially chapter 10: 'Education and Political Change'; and J. Barkan, *An African Dilemma: University Students, Development and Politics in Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda* (Oxford, 1976).
[11] Hanna, *University Students and African Politics,* p. 18.

critical political influence at particular moments on the wider body politic in South Africa, first in their interactions with the university administration, and then with the state itself. They also contributed to changing the way that protests were organized and enacted, and they helped to develop political ideologies, like Black Consciousness and Black Theology, so that these spread widely in schools and in youth congresses. On occasion the protests they inspired did directly change state policy in the short term, such as the response to the 1976 Soweto riots and with the adoption of Africanisation at Turfloop in 1977. More generally they exerted a diffuse, but nevertheless important, political influence.

Another central consideration of this dissertation is the expansion of the politics of young people outside educational institutions. In chapters five and six I trace the spread of political activism in the Northern Transvaal beyond its roots at Turfloop. I compare the interrelated categories of students and youth, and argue that organisations like the youth congresses of the 1980s, whose membership straddled both categories, faced a struggle to maintain cohesion of political practice and ideology with their regional and national counterparts (like the UDF and the ANC). Tensions between student and youth identities were overcome by a shared 'generational consciousness'[12] and discontent with the political and social functions of older generations. Members of the youth congresses refashioned themselves as arbiters of social conflict from domestic disputes to witchcraft. To do so, they violently combatted some of the structures – chiefs and homeland officials – that had previously held such authority.

[12] C. Bundy, 'Street Sociology and Pavement Politics: Aspects of Youth and Student Resistance in Cape Town, 1985', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 13(3), 1987, pp. 303-30.

My conclusions draw on a literature of generational consciousness inside and beyond South Africa.[13] In her analysis of the concept of generation, Judith Burnett concludes, 'At its heart lies a concept of self and time which captures something of the essence of the human condition.'[14] She goes on to note that 'Cohorts are imagined by researchers and made by systems, generations are constituted by actors who become aware of their history.'[15] These assertions suggest that generation is a concept imbued with the agency of those who use it. Writing about the role of the UDF leading rebellion around South Africa in the 1980s, van Kessel has emphasized the role of agency among the actors over structural conditions in inciting resistance.[16] This was true among the young comrades I discuss in chapter five, who overlap with van Kessel's own work and whose generational consciousness at a particular moment in South Africa's history straddled the boundaries of students and youth, and repositioned them in the politics of their communities and the country as a whole.

Historiography

Student political activism on black campuses within South Africa is attracting burgeoning scholarly attention. Recent work by Daniel Magaziner on Black Consciousness, and older work by Saleem Badat on black student activists more broadly, has made strides in asserting the important role of black university students during the struggle against apartheid. But these are both histories of organisations: Magaziner looks at Black Consciousness as an

[13] Bundy, 'Street Sociology'; K. Mannheim, 'The Sociological Problem of Generations' in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1952); D. Durham, 'Empowering Youth: Making Youth Citizens in Botswana' in Cole, J. and D. Durham (eds.), *Generations and Globalization: Youth, Age, and Family in the New World Economy* (Bloomington, IN, 2007), pp. 102-31; J. Burnett, *Generations: The Time Machine in Theory and Practice* (Farnham, 2010); D. Cruise O'Brien, 'A Lost Generation? Youth Identity and State Decay in West Africa' in R. Werbner and T. Ranger (eds.), *Postcolonial Identities in Africa* (London, 1996), pp.55-74.
[14] Burnett, *Generations*, p. 2.
[15] Ibid., p. 3.
[16] I. van Kessel, *'Beyond Our Wildest Dreams': The United Democratic Front and the Transformation of South Africa* (Charlottesville, 2000), p. 49.

organisation and an ideological movement, while Badat chronicles the organisational development of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) that spawned Black Consciousness and the South African National Students' Congress (SANSCO). My thesis also considers the organisational history of groups like SASO, the Azanian Students' Organisation (SANSCO's predecessor) and the BCM, and like Magaziner it aims to tell a history of ideas – of their movement and mutation through student organisations over time – but it modifies the existing literature by weaving these themes into a history of place. It seeks to root this story in the Northern Transvaal and the specific networks that emerged first at Turfloop and then in the broader region.

Magaziner and Julian Brown have recently given the most extensive treatments of Turfloop in the historiography, though these are still comparatively narrow.[17] Magaziner considers the role of the university in the incubation of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) and development and propagation of Black Consciousness ideas, which I expand upon in chapters two and three. Brown's in-depth analysis of the changing role of confrontation in political protest, juxtaposes Viva-FRELIMO rallies in September 1974 at Turfloop and at a public site in Durban. In his social and political history of the youth gangs of Soweto, Clive Glaser spends two pages discussing the role of Turfloop students in Soweto schools before the 1976 uprisings.[18] In their narrative of the development and decline of Black Consciousness for *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* project, Mzamane, Maaba, and Biko briefly compare student activism during the 1960s and 70s at Fort Hare, Turfloop, and

[17] Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*; and J. Brown 'An Experiment in Confrontation: The Pro-Frelimo Rallies of 1974', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* Jan. 2012.
[18] C. Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto 1935 – 1976* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 161-2.

the universities of Zululand, the Western Cape, and Durban-Westville.[19] Earlier accounts of the development of SASO and the rise of black student politics at universities make passing mention of Turfloop's role in politicizing students.[20]

Rooting these organisational histories in local contexts is particularly important for the study of the role of Christianity as a mobilizing influence on the Black Consciousness Movement and students of the 1970s more broadly. Following Magaziner and Macqueen, I emphasize the importance of Christianity in the foundational ideals of SASO and its leaders, but using Turfloop as an example, I also argue for its critical role as a mobilizing force among ordinary students. The majority of Turfloop students were Christian, and the use of Christian symbolism and Black Theology enabled movements like SASO, the Black Consciousness Movement, the University Christian Movement (UCM) and the Students' Christian Movement (SCM) to relate politics to religion in innovative ways.

In spite of the increased focus on black campuses, the role of Turfloop in the struggle has not yet been adequately developed in analyses of activism. Magaziner and Macqueen's work on Black Consciousness ideology and organisation focus on structures and coordination of protest by members of the South African Student Organisation (SASO) at the national level, rather than on local and regional dynamics. To the extent that the local is considered, in his article on the role of ecumenical Christianity in student politics and the development of Black Consciousness, Macqueen neglects the University of the North entirely and argues that the

[19] M.V. Mzamane, B. Maaba, and N. Biko, 'The Black Consciousness Movement' in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa,* Vol. 2 (1970-1980) (Pretoria, 2006), pp. 99-159. pp. 106-10.
[20] See, for instance, G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa* (Berkeley, 1978), T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London, 1983), and A.W. Marx, *Lessons of Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990* (Oxford, 1992).

Christian roots of the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s were in the Eastern Cape.[21] In contrast, Brown's analysis of the 1974 Viva-FRELIMO rallies has identified Turfloop and its students as an important site of protest during the 1970s.[22] One aim of this dissertation is to follow Brown's work and further illuminate the role that Turfloop, its students, and staff played in facilitating the anti-apartheid struggle in the Northern Transvaal through an analysis of local politics and networks. It will also build on Macqueen's work and assert the importance of the university and its networks for the growth of Christian-rooted political activism among students.

This regional focus also situates my work in the rich historiography of rural politics in South Africa. Though urban areas have been the focus of most academic research on struggle politics, research on the contribution of South Africa's rural provinces has been done. The work of a cohort of scholars, including William Beinart, Colin Bundy, Jeff Peires and others[23] has shed light on the long tradition of political resistance in the Eastern Cape. Beinart and Bundy have pointed to the ways that peasants and migrants in the rural Transkei shaped and interacted with the political world around them, and 'the importance of struggle and resistance in the political culture that developed'.[24] Beinart has written about the emergence of new political forms of expression – and sometimes resistance - in Mpondoland in the late nineteenth century as rural society there was integrated into the 'larger capitalist economy' of the Cape Colony, and more recently about the relationship between local

[21] Macqueen, 'Students, Apartheid and the Ecumenical Movement'; particularly pp. 453-5.
[22] Brown, 'An Experiment in Confrontation'.
[23] In addition to these, see recent work by T. Gibbs (*Mandela's Kinsmen: Nationalist Elites and Apartheid's First Bantustan* (Oxford, 2014)) and O. Murphy 'Race, Violence, and Nation: African Nationalism and Popular Politics in South Africa, 1948-1970' (DPhil, Oxon, 2013).
[24] W. Beinart, and C. Bundy, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics and Popular Movements in the Transkei and Eastern Cape, 1890-1930* (London, 1987), p. 25.

grievances and broader nationalist narratives during the Mpondo Revolts of 1960.[25] Peires has contextualized the Xhosa Cattle Killings of 1856 against a backdrop of colonial discontent and millenarianism, linking Xhosa spirituality to forms of colonial resistance.[26] The Eastern Cape has also been home to many prominent South African political activists, and many biographers of such figures have pointed to its role in producing and fostering members of South Africa's major liberation movements.[27]

In so far as the Northern Transvaal is concerned, the work of Peter Delius and Ineke van Kessel is of critical importance; Delius has chronicled political life in Sekhukhuneland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and van Kessel has explored the role of youth politics in the same area during the 1980s as one section of her book which links the role of the United Democratic Front (UDF) nationally to locally specific case studies.[28] Delius' two volumes, *The Land Belongs to Us: the Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in the Nineteenth-century Transvaal*, and *A Lion Amongst the Cattle: Reconstruction and Resistance in the Northern Transvaal* are the most in-depth historical considerations of political culture in the region.[29] He compares the uprisings of the 1980s to earlier movements pioneered by migrant workers in the 1950s, making trans-generational links in the way that the people of Sekhukhuneland resisted incursions of the state into their lives. But he and van Kessel also note a shift from defensive rural struggles to more explicitly nationally oriented politics, and draw out the

[25] W. Beinart, *The Political Economy of Pondoland, 1860-1930* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 6-7, 155-9; W. Beinart, 'The Mpondo Revolt through the Eyes of Leonard Mdingi and Anderson Ganyile' in T. Kepe and L. Ntsebeza (eds), *Rural Resistance in South Africa: The Mpondo Revolts after Fifty Years* (Leiden, 2011).
[26] J. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7* (London, 1989), pp. 134-138.
[27] For examples, see C. Bundy, *Govan Mbeki: A Pocket Biography* (Johannesburg, 2013), T. Lodge, *Mandela: A Critical Life* (Oxford, 2006), Nelson Mandela's autobiography *A Long Walk to Freedom* (London, 1994), and Donald Wood's and Xolela Mangcu's biographies of Steve Biko, respectively, *Biko* (New York, 1978), and *Biko: A Biography* (New York, 2014).
[28] I. van Kessel, *'Beyond our wildest dreams'*.
[29] P. Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us: the Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in the Nineteenth-century Transvaal* (London, 1984) and Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle*.

intergenerational discord between parents and children, which was exacerbated by economic malaise and changes in education over the preceding decades. Building on the scholarship of Delius and van Kessel, in chapter five I compare the Sekhukhune youth uprisings to similar events elsewhere in the Northern Transvaal, and attempt to analyse the networks and ideological diffusion that influenced students at the time, giving a broader regional context to the events and situating my analysis on a regional plane between van Kessel's local and national links.

More generally, this thesis takes cues from Delius' work on migration between rural Sekhukhuneland and the urban centres of the Witwatersrand and van Kessel's focus on the role of religion and belief for UDF activists of the 1980s. Similarly, work on rural politics, and the 'politics of the periphery' outside South Africa has contributed to the conceptual framework of this thesis. The literature on resistance in rural Zimbabwe offers rich examples: Alexander, McGregor, and Ranger's work on the Shangani Reserve in Matabeleland has provided a helpful model for writing about political engagement and restistance in peripheral and academically neglected areas.[30] Ranger's *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe* on the role of peasants in Makoni District during Zimbabwe's liberation war has also reinforced the importance of contextualizing national movements against local concerns when writing a regionally rooted history.[31] Further afield, I have been influenced by Elizabeth Schmidt's discussion of the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA), a liberation movement in colonial Guinea. Though Guinean peasants in the 1950s and South African youth in rural reserves decades later may seem too different to offer productive academic comparisons, their shared physical

[30] J. Alexander, J. McGregor, and T. Ranger, *Violence & Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland* (Oxford, 2000).
[31] T. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe,* (Oxford, 1985).

marginality and ideological impact make Schmidt's analytical framework a valuable guide for my own. Schmidt's historicization of the way the RDA capitalized on local grievances, notably peasant resentment of and resistance to chiefly rule, has helped me to interrogate the directionality of influence on protests in Limpopo's rural areas, and to challenge a narrative of urban resistance imported to rural situations.[32] My findings suggest that these were critical questions to ask: Limpopo's political influence and production of political leaders, which I argue here are both greater than previous scholarship has credited, is a result of its rural marginality, but particularly in proximity to major urban centres. The very links between the cities and townships of the Rand, and the villages, schools, and universities of the rural north were the site of the production and development of new political ideas and leadership.

This body of literature, from Schmidt and Ranger outside South Africa, to Beinart, Bundy, and Peires inside it, is one of rural histories. But telling a similar rural history of Limpopo - as Alexander, McGregor, and Ranger do of the Shangani, or as Beinart does of Pondoland, for instance - is not the aim of this dissertation. Though local rural politics, including issues of chieftaincy and land tenure, figure in the analysis of my later chapters, this is a regional study and it is as much concerned with telling a history of linking institutions (like Turfloop) and organisations (like SASO and the UDF) operating in the region as it is with the more 'traditional' stuff of rural politics. Its conclusions suggest that the links between rural and urban areas, fostered and maintained by young activists and facilitated by those institutions and organisations, were of primary importance for the growth of national politics at the regional level.

[32] E. Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939-1958*. (Portsmouth, NH, 2005), particularly Chapter 4: Rural Revolt: Popular Resistance to the Colonial Chieftaincy, pp. 91-112.

Sources

The bulk of my research is based in archival sources and private papers. These comprise a wide array of types of sources, many written about activists by outside observers, from court records, police and government files and commission records, to newspaper clippings and photographs. In addition, the voices of activists themselves, and their organisations, are represented in documentation like constitutions, manifestoes, and memos, as well as personal correspondence.

The extensive collection of news articles compiled by the South African Institute for Race Relations (SAIRR) and deposited at the University of the Witwatersrand Historical Papers Archive has been an invaluable resource, giving me a near-comprehensive picture of Turfloop's profile in the national press from its founding in 1959 through the 1980s. This collection has assisted me greatly in constructing a chronological understanding of Turfloop's history in the face of the university's own lack of an institutional archive.[33] In addition, I have been lucky to find institutional documents like meeting minutes and memos from the Students Representative Council and the university administration in collections on both the University Christian Movement (UCM) and the South African Students Organisation (SASO).

However, for the period and topics under consideration, I found only fragmented archives generated by the government and by the movements. Consequently, the sources referenced here are an amalgam in both type and origin. Grappling with such a diverse body of material

[33] On several visits to the Turfloop campus I sought a university archive with the assistance of librarians and administrators, but the records from the period covered here seem to have been lost or destroyed. In the University Library I was given access to unpublished theses, and staff in the Public Relations department generously gave me a copy of C.White's *From Despair to Hope*, the only institutional history, which was published by the university press and is currently out of print.

presents analytical challenges; some, like authorial intent, audience reception and circulation, are common considerations for any historian using textual evidence. The lack of a sustained sequential archive, of the kind used for earlier studies of rural protest, has sometimes made it difficult to examine particular events in detail or to get a sense of how the government viewed student protest, and how they may have intervened behind the scenes. Where events in the Northern Transvaal attracted or intersected with major national attention, like the 1975-6 trial of the SASO Nine for terrorism, overlapping resources from comprehensive trial transcripts, interviews, commissions of inquiry, and press reports make it possible to construct a very full and multi-layered historical picture. But for less high-profile events, like the 1980 trial of Ephraim Mogale and Thabo Makunyane for disseminating banned political material, I have had to rely on fewer sources (scant reporting, a few examples of evidence brought at the trial, and interviews) to piece together a much sketchier understanding of the event.

However, the diversity of my sources also helps me to see student movements from a number of different vantage points. The coincidences and divergences among these documents when discussing the same ideas or events are revealing in themselves. The case of the Viva-FRELIMO rallies in 1974, which precipitated the trial of the SASO Nine, is one example. Reports in the press, in the trial transcripts, and recollections from Turfloop activists in my interviews diverge on the role of the SRC in organizing that rally. Government reports and the arguments of the prosecution at the time reveal that they perceived the SRC simply to have been a vehicle for SASO, while in trial testimony and contemporary reports student activists make a clear and conscious effort to separate the two organizations. Decades later in interviews, many of the same student activists acknowledge the overlapping and complimentary roles played by SASO and the SRC, but they articulate a symbiotic, rather

than controlling, relationship between the two. Their various perspectives on the role of the SRC, and of the local SASO committee, have contributed to my analysis of the relationship between these two organisations at the time. The scope of archival work that I have conducted, across South Africa and in the United Kingdom, has allowed me to triangulate my findings (a list of all archives consulted can be found in the Bibliography).

Another important source of research material that has further allowed me to form and test my conclusions has been engaging in oral history through interviews. It is a privilege of working on such recent history that many of the people who participated in the movements described in these pages are still living, and some were generous enough to share their time and stories with me to give a fuller picture of the scope and span of youth and student politics in Limpopo during the late twentieth century. In the course of this research I did twenty-five interviews with twenty separate informants. These ranged from relatively brief (less than a full hour) to quite lengthy (several hours), and took me from rural villages of Limpopo to the wealthy suburbs of Gauteng. I spoke mostly, though not exclusively, to current and former activists, some multiple times. In particular, Harry Nengwekhulu and Maurice Nchabeleng were generous enough to speak to me about their student activities several times over the course of this project, enabling me to test hypotheses and ask follow-up questions as I developed my analysis. The Nchabeleng family also provided introductions to other activists and to community events in Apel and GaNkoane. The use of such interviews raises epistemological and ethical concerns that archival evidence does not: questions of the validity of memory after prolonged periods, of what information is conveyed to a researcher, and of how the dynamic between the interviewer and the interviewed shapes what is said. My interviews were guided by my questions, but did not follow any set survey as it was my hope that my informants would guide the direction of the discussion to what they felt was most

important to remember from their time as an activist. It was inevitable that what they chose to emphasize was also informed by their current situations and positions, and I have tried to be cognizant of competing narratives when recording and analyzing these sources. For example, it is possible that interviewing political leaders – even of very small and local groups – has led my project to emphasize the role of ideas and ideology in political mobilization, which, had I spoken to more movement members at the grassroots, might have been less prominent.

Though the common thread in the experience of all my informants is that they were involved in student or youth political groups, they have now gone on to do all manner of work. The majority are employed in government (locally, regionally, and even nationally), but others work with NGOs, minority political parties, interfaith groups, and as teachers and administrators. As I interviewed political leaders, and mostly those who had been at university or were enrolled in secondary schools, all my informants were from relatively educated backgrounds, and all are in professional positions now. My method of recruitment was primarily referral from other informants, friends, and acquaintances; over nine months of fieldwork I was very lucky to often be referred to people who had been deeply involved in political activism during their student days. The greatest source of these referrals was from those I was already interviewing. I made an effort to speak to everyone to whom I was referred (though logistically that was not possible); the inclusion of material from their interviews in this dissertation has depended significantly on which organisations they worked with as students and the degree to which I privileged some organisations over others in my analysis.

Chapter Outlines

The early part of the thesis considers the emergence of Africanist politics on the campus of the University of the North (Turfloop) in the late 1960s, after years of ostensible quiescence on black campuses. Chapter two examines the importance of this institution as a centre for protest politics and student mobilization well before the Soweto 1976 student uprisings. It thus modifies the historiography, which has focused on Soweto as the key moment in the emergence of student protest and Black Consciousness ideas. This chapter also explores the importance of Christianity as a mobilizing force for student activists at Turfloop, the university's growing profile as a site of protest, and its links to urban areas around Johannesburg in the 1970s. On-campus Christian groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s played critical roles in laying the foundation for the emergence of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) in 1969, which reintroduced Africanism to above-ground protest politics after the banning of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1960. Originally promoted by Anton Lembede, an ANC Youth League leader in the 1940s, Africanism was an African nationalist ideology for the South African context; it prioritized African self-reliance and psychological as well as political liberation from white domination. It became the uni-racial ideology of the PAC after that organisation (and many of Lembede's fellow Youth Leaguers) split from the ANC in 1959. Though Lembede and his inheritors envisioned an Africanist-led mass mobilization of black South Africans, it was adopted and adapted by university students at places like Turfloop in the late 1960s. This was arguably appropriate, because, as Gail Gerhart contends, 'However much Lembede or any of his contemporaries may have identified their own idealistic aspirations with the inchoate strivings of the masses, the fact remained that nationalist doctrine was still fundamentally an intellectual

contrivance.'[34] Students at institutions like Turfloop – hopelessly under-resourced and hampered by government interference in academic life – were fertile ground for such 'intellectual contrivances' to take root. In its adaptation of Africanist ideas, SASO also developed the wide-ranging philosophy of Black Consciousness, which extended its influence beyond the sphere of student politics to a spectrum of other interest groups and youth organisations during the 1970s. Turfloop became increasingly important as a centre for student resistance and site of public protest, with major campus protests and expulsions attracting the attention of national press and security police to this peripheral university in the Northern Transvaal in 1972, 1974, 1976, 1977 and 1979. These events are discussed in chapter two, three, and four.

The moment that Turfloop's student activism first began to garner national attention came in early 1972 when Abraham Tiro, an education student, gave a graduation speech that was highly critical of the policies - and hypocrisy - of Bantu Education. Tiro's speech and its aftermath, which rocketed Turfloop to national prominence and sparked solidarity protests at universities across South Africa, are a key focus of chapter two. The 'Tiro Incident' exemplified Turfloop's role as a leading centre of activism, and the escalating confrontation that had marked the relationship between the student body, its Student Representative Council, and the university administration since the late 1960s.

That relationship was fundamentally altered during the Viva-FRELIMO rally held on campus in September 1974 to celebrate the end of colonial rule in Mozambique. It marked the first violent confrontation between Turfloop students and police, and fundamentally changed the role of the university as an arbiter between its students and the state. An analysis of this

[34] G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, p. 231.

rally, and what it reveals about the relationships between university structures at Turfloop and SASO on both a local and a national scale, is an important section of chapter three.

Relatedly, this chapter seeks to illuminate critical links between the rural north and South Africa's major urban centres. A large minority of Turfloop's students hailed from the townships of the Witwatersrand and in the aftermath of waves of expulsion from the university many former students – including Abraham Tiro – moved back into Soweto's schools to become teachers. Tracing these teachers and their influence on the school students of Soweto who went on to lead the protests of 1976 helps to contextualize those events, and to understand the influence of campus politics at Turfloop on national events; this is one of the focuses of chapter three. Rather than positing a center/periphery dichotomy here, I argue that the multi-directional flow of people and ideology between the townships on the Rand and the rural north is critical to understanding the development of protest politics in both places.

The middle part of the thesis considers the heights of SASO and the Black Consciousness Movement, followed by their precipitous decline under heavy state repression in the later 1970s. Chapter three also analyses the trial of the so-called SASO Nine in 1975 and 1976, and I argue that this period marks the height of the Black Consciousness Movement. The nine defendants and key witnesses, including SASO's founder Steve Biko, used the platform of the political trial to articulate their ideology to the widest audience that Black Consciousness had yet received. The Soweto Uprising of 1976 and its immediate aftermath marked the tail end of this period of prominence. In the wake of the uprisings, harsh government repression banned most organisations associated with Black Consciousness and

forced the movement into a broadly unsuccessful period in exile. This shift from pinnacle to decline is one focus of chapter four.

Alongside the decline of the Black Consciousness Movement, chapter four explores the process of Africanisation at Turfloop. Long a *cause célèbre* of SASO and other Black Consciousness proponents on campus, Africanisation was Bantu Education policy taken to its logical conclusion, or so activists like Tiro argued. It was the process of replacing white with black leadership and authority at the university. In 1977 this goal was finally realized with the promotion of Professor William Kgware to the role of rector. Kgware's appointment did not result in the political shift within the university's administration that student and staff activists had anticipated, though. The failure of his administration, which was marked by conflict and often-aborted negotiation, to realize the ideals of Africanisation as conceived by SASO is juxtaposed against the national decline of Black Consciousness in chapter four.

In the wake of this sidelining of Black Consciousness and its Africanist narrative, I explore the renewed focus on the multiracial Charterism of the African National Congress (ANC) that first emerged in the Congress of South African Students (COSAS). COSAS was founded in the Northern Transvaal, and brought not just a shift to Charterism, but also an increased regionalism to student politics. The founding of COSAS and, more broadly, the regional expansion of student politics to the village level is a major focus of chapter five. It marked the expansion of student activism in the Northern Transvaal beyond Turfloop and to the campuses of local schools throughout the region. Though Turfloop had been the regional centre of protest during the 1970s, by the early 1980s this centre had fragmented. The unprecedented localization of student politics created nodes of political activity throughout the region, based in secondary schools and youth congresses. In addition, the early 1980s

brought the development of new universities in the region, expanding access to higher education beyond Turfloop. But Turfloop remained an important touch-point for young activists, who relied on family and friends at the university for political education, materials, and even sanctuary while on the run from police. This increasing spread of student politics throughout the province coincided with the emergence of the United Democratic Front (UDF), in 1983. The UDF acted as an umbrella organisation under which local Charterist groups could organize and affiliate. Though the regional expansion of student politics in the Northern Transvaal predated the UDF, it expanded greatly under its influence in the mid-1980s.

The new rise of Charterism and the UDF also brought with it conflict between its proponents and the remaining adherents of Black Consciousness philosophy. In the early and mid 1980s this tension erupted repeatedly into violent confrontations between students in Charterist groups like the Azanian Students' Organisation (AZASO) and Africanist groups like the Azanian Students' Movement (AZASM). In addition, rising levels of violence throughout the country were manifested in the Northern Transvaal homelands of Lebowa, Gazankulu, and Venda in mob-led witch-hunts. Often young men who were members of local UDF-affiliated youth groups fueled these. Coming to grips with this type of violence and its political roots is an important theme in the fifth chapter of the thesis, and makes a contribution to the growing historiography about the relationship between violence and politics in South Africa during the 1980s, particularly including work by Belinda Bozzoli and Ineke van Kessel.[35]

[35] See B. Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid* (Edinburgh, 2004), for an analysis of protest and revolt in Alexandra township, and van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*, for comparisons of resistance between Sekhukhuneland, the West Rand, and the Cape Flats.

The final chapter of the thesis looks at the transformation in local student politics across the Northern Transvaal from the late 1980s through the period after the unbanning of the ANC and PAC in 1990. It considers the consolidation of disparate youth congresses under the umbrella of the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) in 1987, and the ways that this unification allowed a wide measure of autonomy among SAYCO branches that was replicated in the structure of the ANC Youth League. After unbanning, most existing youth and student groups and all SAYCO branches were incorporated into the newly re-launched ANC Youth League (ANCYL). The processes of reforming and incorporating these individual groups into larger bodies - first SAYCO and then the Youth League - are a key focus of the chapter, and I argue that forming each from a core of already independent groups resulted in a particularly fractious, fragmented body politic in both SAYCO and then the ANCYL.

By looking across the period of transition (1990-1994) and through the first decade of democracy in South Africa, this chapter of the thesis also seeks to understand the way that student groups and activists negotiated their place in the new state. As an organizing theme, it considers the rise of controversial youth leaders like Peter Mokaba and Julius Malema, and what their successes indicate about the new shape of youth politics in Limpopo Province. It also addresses a remarkable lacuna in the literature, which has largely neglected the ANC Youth League after its unbanning.

In chapter seven I use an epilogue focused on the Polokwane conference of 2007, four years after the end of the scope of my analysis, to draw some conclusions about the themes that the thesis has explored. Most prominent among these are the issues of marginality and centrality, of the intersecting roles of students and youth in political engagement, of the ideologies they

deploy and how they are mobilized, and of the unique place of the institutions and political actors of Limpopo amidst all these. In particular, I consider who is remembered and who is forgotten (and why) in provincial politics, tracing figures from each of the key periods the thesis has analysed.

As a whole, the thesis strives to provide a coherent narrative of the rising profile of youth and student leaders in South Africa's most northern province. It also makes a significant contribution in analyzing the roots of Black Consciousness in Christian movements, and in an isolated university where campus politics were of central concern to its protagonists. It contributes new insights into the changes in organisation and ideology of youth politics of the 1980s and is an addition to the scant literature on the re-emergence of the ANC Youth League in the 1990s.

Chapter 2:

Christian Politics and Political Christianity at the University of the North (1967 – 1974)

Introduction

1968 has often been seen as the pivotal year for student protests globally. From Paris to Mexico City, students embarked on protests that took them into direct and violent conflict with the state. That same year in South Africa, however, student politics took a surprising – and to some, reactionary – turn; in apparent accordance with the apartheid ideology of the South African government, black South African university students broke ranks with their liberal white counterparts and formed their own racially exclusive student organisation. The racialized split between the mixed (but predominantly white) National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and the black South African Students' Organisation (SASO), is one of the key issues discussed in this chapter, as I explore the local context and causes of the break at the University of the North. It came nearly a decade after the official segregation of South Africa's universities, and the founding of ethnically exclusive 'University Colleges' for black, Indian, and coloured students.

On the cusp of the founding of SASO, the University College of the North, or Turfloop, in the rural Northern Transvaal, became an important centre for politically active black students. The university was less than a decade old, and had been situated on a farm miles from the nearest town. It incubated the new organisation and contributed to the development of what would become SASO's core ideology, Black Consciousness, and the related idea of Black Theology. Like SASO itself, these ideologies focused on an affirmation of what it was to be

black in South Africa, and aimed to promote a positive reclamation of black identity. In the case of Black Theology, the scope of this was explicitly religious, and, at Turfloop and elsewhere, SASO benefited from and worked with on-campus Christian groups to achieve deeper ideological diffusion and mobilization. Its strongest links were to the ecumenical and multi-racial University Christian Movement; the movements enjoyed a period of close collaboration until the 1972 dissolution of the UCM. This also marked an important moment in which SASO and its allies abandoned attempts to employ multi-racialism as a strategy for political change.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Turfloop became a site for integrating many levels of protest; this was fostered by the closely intertwined roles of Black Consciousness and Black Theology in SASO itself, and through politicized Christianity in student organisations like the University Christian Movement and the Students' Christian Movement. I build on the work of Daniel Magaziner, whose history of the Black Consciousness Movement emphasizes the close religious links and influences amongst its leadership and ideologues, by considering the influence of these ideas on its rank and file at one of SASO's strongholds: Turfloop. Christianity preceded politics as an influence for most students at Turfloop, but the marriage of these two things in ideas like Black Theology gave SASO an unparalleled degree of influence at Turfloop and on campuses like it. It was the cumulative effect of all these pieces that gave activists at Turfloop currency, and the scope to mobilize protests.

This chapter seeks to explore the process by which Turfloop went from sleepy farm to 'the hottest place in South Africa'[36] and a critical organizing point for student protests by analyzing the role of particular groups in affecting mobilization on the local and national

[36] Ishmael Mkhabela quoted in Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, p. 150.

levels. I will argue here that the University of the North, in spite of its geographical isolation and academic limits, was a crucible of student political activism with roots in the late 1960s. The major vehicles for politicization were on-campus groups like SASO, and Christian affiliates like the University Christian Movement (UCM) and the Students' Christian Movement (SCM). I will further contend that the rhetoric of student and staff leaders at Turfloop successfully melded Black Consciousness ideology and anti-apartheid politics with a particular brand of Christian evangelism, and that it was this amalgamation of ideas that gave the movement currency and scope for mobilization.

Founding the University College of the North

In 1959, the apartheid government extended the power and scope of its earlier Bantu Education Act (1953) by passing the Extension of University Education Act and the University College of Fort Hare Transfer Act. These two pieces of legislation served to extend the policies of separate development to South Africa's universities and created five 'university colleges' (or, pejoratively, 'bush colleges'). These were segregated by race and ethnic group, and conceived to be institutions where African, Indian, and Coloured students could separately pursue higher education. In the northern Transvaal, the University College of the North at Turfloop (later simply the University of the North) was, according to its founding act, designed to educate students from the Sotho, Tswana, Tsonga, and Venda 'national units'[37]. In this sense it was from the start more ethnically diverse than its fellow black universities, which were required only to admit students of a single ethnic background: the University College of Zululand at Ngoye was for Zulus, the University College of Fort

[37] J.G.E. Wolfson, *Turmoil at Turfloop: A Summary of the Reports of the Snyman and Jackson Commissions of Inquiry into the University of the North* (Johannesburg, 1976), p. 5.

Hare was for Xhosas, the University College of Durban-Westville (previously Salisbury Island) was for Indians, and the University College of the Western Cape was for coloureds.

Located 30 kilometres southeast of the largest regional town of Pietersburg, and later subsumed within the southern portion of the Lebowa Bantustan, sleepy Turfloop was, in many ways, an unlikely setting for political activism and protest. The campus of the University of the North was erected on a local farm (called Turfloop, which gave the university its enduring nickname), well away from the white town of Pietersburg, and remotely located from the busy African township of Seshego, which is situated on Pietersburg's northwest side, in the opposite direction from Turfloop. Rural farming areas and open veld bounded the university on its northern, eastern, and southern edges. The small township of Mankweng flanked the campus on the west, and provided shops, services, and housing for black staff and some students. This choice of location was no accident on the part of early University planners and administrators. Like Ngoye, in Zululand, which was developed at the same time and under similar circumstances, these 'bush colleges' were designed to be remote, and to focus students' energy and attentions on the local areas and homelands they inhabited. Courses were designed to produce graduates who would build the Bantustan 'homelands' that apartheid envisioned. A 1958 Commission, established to comment on the final Extension of University Education Act recommended the following:

> Each [University College] should serve an ethnic group, enriching it both spiritually and materially, as well as promoting the broader interests of South Africa. Each should be entrusted with the task of developing all aspects of the culture, technological development and the promotion of the general progress and welfare of the ethnic group concerned. Each should guide the ethnic group towards greater responsibility, knowledge, self-sufficiency and self-development. Each should develop the individual to the fullest extent imbuing him with pride, self-respect, and the ideal of service to the community. Each should encourage its students to play an active part and

> train them in all facets of life of their group. The students should be the pioneers in the whole process of civilizing the ethnic group concerned.[38]

The University Colleges, then, were not only physically isolated from South Africa's urban centres, and ideologically focused on building black communities outside South Africa proper; they were designed to produce graduates who would support and embody apartheid's policies.

At its founding, the University College of the North was a tiny institution with only 87 students but it grew quickly and by the end of the decade its enrolment had increased more than seven fold.[39]

Table 1: Estimated Turfloop enrolment figures, 1960-1979
(by gender where data available)

Year	Number of Students
1960	87 (84 male, 3 female)
1961	
1962	
1963	242 (201 male, 41 female)
1964	
1965	243
1966	460 (365 male, 95 female)
1967	538 (424 male, 114 female)
1968	611 (480 male, 131 female)
1969	630
1970	
1971	
1972	
1973	
1974	1200+
1975	
1976	
1977	1902
1978	
1979	2174
1980	~3000

*Data from C. White (1997), UNIN Rector's Reports, and press reports

[38] Main Report of The Commission of Enquiry on the Separate University Education Bill, 1958. pp. 14-15 (Quoted in White, *From Despair to Hope*, p. 74).
[39] 'Turfloop: Growing the University of the North', *Star,* 16 May 1968. [WHP AD1912/258.16]

Students were drawn from a wide geographical swathe of South Africa. Uniquely among the university colleges Turfloop drew its student body, as mentioned above, from four ethnic groups: the Tswana, the Sotho, the Venda, and the Tsonga or Shangaan. Students came from the Western, Northern, and Eastern Transvaal, as well as from the Orange Free State, and from five different homelands: Lebowa itself, Venda to the north, Gazankulu to the east, Bophuthatswana to the west, and eventually Qwa Qwa to the south. A significant portion of students also came from the country's urban townships – mostly from those surrounding Johannesburg and Pretoria. In his institutional history, Chris White has demonstrated that, while during the early 1960s numbers of rural and urban students remained relatively balanced (with slightly higher rural numbers), from 1968 the balance shifted and during the 1970s and 1980s there was a 'constant increase in students from urban areas'.[40] Given such varied backgrounds, Turfloop students comprised a much more diverse group than had been envisioned by the framers of the Separate University Education Bill, and their affiliations were often divided between urban townships and rural homelands. Many of those who came out of township schools had family connections to rural areas, and some who were raised by nuclear families in places like Soweto were sent away to extended family in villages for primary or secondary schooling. Even from its inception, the constituents of the Turfloop student body bore little resemblance to the 'pioneers', with singular affiliations to homelands, that the University Colleges were trying to shape.

In the early years of its formation, Turfloop's staff also gave the lie to the premise of an African university for Africans: white academic staff outnumbered black by approximately three to one, and all senior positions were occupied by white academics and administrators. Turfloop's white staff had long been drawn from a particularly conservative section of

[40] White, *From Despair to Hope*, p. 83.

Afrikaner society, and many, especially the most senior, were linked to the secretive Afrikaner group, the *Broederbond*.[41] In his institutional history of Turfloop, Christopher White has argued that the *Broederbond* exerted powerful control over various aspects of campus life through the 1960s and 1970s: 'The Broederbond in turn continued to maintain its influence on [The University] Council, and not only on Council's decisions; it exerted its authority even in seemingly insignificant internal financial matters [including catering contracts and investments].'[42] This lack of autonomy and black leadership was to become a theme in protests on campus throughout the first two decades of the university's existence.

A 1969 *Rand Daily Mail* editorial articulated another important problem with the premise of all the University Colleges:

> [The African University Colleges] ha[ve] the difficult task of trying to educate people without arousing their expectations; of opening their eyes and minds to the world and yet trying to ensure that they still know their place and will be content with second class status. […] Events at Fort Hare and Turfloop have shown that you cannot open minds and control them at the same time.[43]

Indeed, as the *Rand Daily Mail* quote alludes, the reality of life and politics at Turfloop were to be very different from those imagined by the Commission of Enquiry in 1958, and its students, uniquely diverse in their composition as a student body, bore little resemblance to those 'pioneers of the civilizing process' that the Commission described. In spite of the conscious effort to tailor students at Turfloop and its fellow black universities into model apartheid citizens, by the early 1970s Turfloop had defied these roots and become a crucible

[41] Van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*, p.96; White, *From Despair to Hope*, p. 115, 142; and M. Nkomo *et al*. (eds). *Within the Realm of Possibility: From Disadvantage to Development at the University of Fort Hare and the University of the North* (Cape Town, 2006), p.25.
[42] White, *From Despair to Hope*, p. 142.
[43] 'Different 'Freedom'' in *The Rand Daily Mail,* 26 May 1969. [WHP AD1912/258.16]

for the student political activism that came to characterize that decade of South African history.

The University Christian Movement

In spite of its isolation, Turfloop was no stranger to national student politics as early as the late 1960s, and student engagement with on-campus politics began even earlier. At the time of its founding in 1960, Turfloop's Rector EF Potgieter instituted a system of prefects, called primarii and secundii, to represent and administer the student body.[44] These primarii were responsible for patrolling the hostels and monitoring visitors on campus. This system, whereby some students were given powers of monitoring and punishment over others, quickly produced an outcry amongst the small student body (enrolment was 87 in 1960). In response to student discontent, the Rector permitted the creation of an elected Student Representative Council; in June of 1960 a mass meeting was convened and a committee to draft the new SRC's constitution was elected. In early 1961, Turfloop's first SRC was elected with Gessler Nkondo as its president.[45] (Nkondo would go on to become a prominent and outspoken faculty member at the university during the tumultuous years of the early 1970s.) The SRC inherited the primarii's role of representing the needs of the student body to the University Rector and Senate, but not those of monitoring and enforcement. In this capacity the role of primarii continued for more than two decades, serving essentially as paid prefects. From its inception, as it was born in response to what was perceived as an unfair and undemocratic system, the SRC worked to advocate for student concerns that were expressed on campus – the quality of food served in the canteen was a perennial issue – and increasingly for ways that the Turfloop student body intersected with the outside world. In

[44] White, *From Despair to Hope*, p. 90; Nkomo *et al*., *Within the Realm of Possibility*, p. 69.
[45] Nkomo *et al*., *Within the Realm of Possibility*, p. 69.

an early example, the 1961 SRC intervened on behalf of one of their number, Sports Chair Cornelius Motumi, who was expelled for inviting the soccer team from the University of the Witwatersrand to Turfloop without prior permission.[46] After SRC intervention the expulsion was repealed, but Motumi's experience set the tone by which many subsequent SRCs would abide: they sought to make and maintain linkages outside Turfloop, and this sometimes brought them into conflict with the university administration.

This pattern was replicated in 1968, when the SRC led a push to formally affiliate with NUSAS, South Africa's multiracial national union of students. The University Senate, reinforcing the tendency of the administration to prevent external contact with its student body, eventually banned the move.[47] Despite this, some other national student groups were allowed to be active on campus. From its inception in 1967, the University Christian Movement (UCM) was a powerful organisation on a campus where Christianity was a major mobilizing force. In a 1972 interview with the *Pretoria News*, Professor William Kgware noted that at Turfloop 'there were more religious societies than any other students' organisations.'[48] In part this was because non-religious, more overtly political organisations were banned (as was the case with NUSAS), but it also indicates the importance of Christianity both for Turfloop administrators, who permitted religious activism while they actively worked to prevent political activism, and for the students themselves, who participated in these religious groups.

[46] Nkomo *et al*., *Within the Realm of Possibility*, p. 69.
[47] 'Students on Tightrope: Quiet but 'restive' at Turfloop', *Star,* 14 September 1968. [WHP AD1912/258.16]
[48] 'Black schools have lost church quality', *Pretoria News*, 22 May 1972. [WHP AD1912/258.16]

Though it arrived quickly on campus at Turfloop and fellow 'bush' colleges, UCM was founded by a cohort of white chaplains and launched at Rhodes University. One of its founders and its first president, Basil Moore was the Methodist chaplain at Rhodes in 1966 when, with the national Catholic students' chaplain Father Colin Collins, he developed the idea to 'form a new non-racial and radically ecumenical student Christian body'.[49] In each of these facets the UCM introduced a new form of student society on South Africa's campus; until its launch major Christian student groups had been both sectarian and racial in their divisions. At its founding, the UCM was supported by five 'mainstream' churches: the Methodists, the Catholics, the Anglicans, the Presbyterians, and the United Congregational Church. This coalition was fostered by founders Moore and Collins who were active in the student organisations of their own denominations, and also owed a debt to their concerted outreach to other churches in order to make UCM as ecumenical as possible. The new organisation received tacit support and sometimes contributions of funds and space from the coalition of churches behind it, but as it became increasingly radical in its politics it also sometimes came into conflict with them. In particular, its relationship with the Catholic Church came under strain as early as 1969. In spite of the fact that UCM's General Secretary at the time, Father Colin B. Collins, was a Catholic priest, many local and national church leaders viewed the movement with mistrust and suspicion of its political motives. Reverend Clemens van Hoeck, the Bishop of Pietersburg at the time, sent Father Collins a letter in March of 1969, banning the UCM from affiliating with Catholic students at Turfloop, and from using the church's nearby property, St. Benedict's Mission in Magoebaskloof, for 'any meeting or for any other activity of the C.U.M. [sic].'[50]

[49] Author's correspondence with Rev. Basil Moore, 14 August 2012.
[50] Letter from Clemens van Hoeck, Abbot Bishop of Pietersburg, to Father Colin B. Collins. Pietersburg, 7 March 1969. [WHP AD1126/G2]

Though its genesis was in white institutions and leaders, the UCM quickly embraced its non-racialist ideology at all levels of the organisation. In addition to white leaders like Moore and Collins, prominent black student activists became involved. In 1968, three of its five regional directors were African, and by 1969 it had elected its first African president, Mr Justice Moloto. He held the post for two years and was succeeded by an African woman, Mrs I. Direko, though Moloto stayed on in the role of General Secretary during her administration. These demographics were reflected in the composition of UCM's student body, as well, which Basil Moore attributes to its success on campuses like Turfloop:

> SRCs [of African-only institutions] could no longer be affiliated to NUSAS and they also banned the student wings of the ANC and the PAC. Thus there was no forum where black students could meet to discuss issues relevant to them. Thus they turned to the UCM and so sent delegates to the 1968 UCM conference in Stutterheim. This resulted in the UCM becoming almost instantly a black-majority organisation.[51]

The UCM's ideological scope also reached beyond that of many of its fellow Christian groups and went firmly into the realm of political action. Moore notes that for the delegates at that first conference, 'Certainly political issues were of far greater significance to the participants than the ecumenical issues.'[52] The organizers worked to link these two strands: its ethos was one of an active approach to Christianity, encouraging members to participate in 'projects like work-camps, literacy campaigns and similar projects aimed at alleviating the seriousness of conditions that come as a result of poverty and general deprivation.'[53] For the UCM the link between this general deprivation and apartheid policies was stark. After returning from a UCM trip to the United States, Turfloop student Bob Kgware, son of William, wrote disappointedly to the national chairperson Basil Moore of the racial segregation he encountered abroad:

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[51] Author's correspondence with Rev. Basil Moore, 14 August 2012.
[52] Ibid.
[53] SASO Memo, 3 November 1970. [WHP AD1126/J]

> [A]t the great free "Process '67" in the stimulating Black Power caucuses no white man dared to go there. Even outside the caucuses, you would be fortunate to discuss the "Black Power" movement in the presence of both Blacks and Whites. Either the Blacks would be unwilling to enter such a discussion, […] or the Whites would also not enter conversation with the same openness or vivaciousness shown in other fields or subjects.
> One then wonders what […] effective interaction exists between those whites who are helping the blacks in their struggle, and the blacks themselves? One wonders whether that "I know what's good for you" element would not prevail? So much for this. Just like home.[54]

The entire Kgware family were active participants in the UCM branch at Turfloop, often to their own detriment, as it brought them into conflict with the university administration on more than one occasion. The conflict arising between membership of the UCM and his role as a senior faculty member caused Professor Kgware to formally withdraw from the UCM in 1968[55], although much of his family remained active in the organisation – and in anti-apartheid politics - for long after that. His wife Winifred continued to act as a coordinator for the Turfloop UCM in the early 1970s when it was banned by university authorities and driven off-campus into Mankweng Township for its meetings. She eventually became the first president of the Black People's Convention (BPC), an offshoot of SASO and the Black Consciousness Movement that sought to mobilize people outside the student community. Their daughter Manana Kgware was very active in campus politics at Turfloop: she was a member of the UCM, of the Students Representative Council, and a founding member of the SASO branch at Turfloop. She remained active in that organisation even after leaving Turfloop and moving to the Orange Free State to work as a teacher. Her brother Bob had been a prominent member of the UCM nationally, and was one of only three in the South African delegation that was sent to the UCM's conference in the United States.

[54] Letter from Bob Kgware to Basil Moore. 7 April 1968. [WHP AD1126/F]
[55] Minutes of the Executive Meeting held in Johannesburg from September 27-29 (1968). [WHP AD1126/A3]

In contrast to the rest of his family, Professor Kgware continued to struggle with his role as a senior faculty member at Turfloop and his family's activism against apartheid oppression. The resignation of his UCM membership, to prevent conflict with the university administration, was the first in a series of such compromises, which, nearly a decade later, helped him to become Turfloop's first black rector.

A year after Professor Kgware's own resignation, UCM was formally banned from campus at Turfloop (and also Fort Hare, the University of the Western Cape, and the University of Zululand) in the winter of 1969.[56] However, UCM drew the suspicion and ire of university authorities well before its banning: in October 1968, Manana Kgware, sister to Bob, wrote to UCM Executive member James Moulder in Johannesburg with the news that 'a list of dangerous students' had been drawn up by the university administration, and that it included her brother Bob and several other UCM members among the twenty listed. Surprisingly, Manana herself was not among these. In her own words: 'The most interesting thing is that I am not included, the reason of course is only one, being in the SRC executive, it is dangerous to take me to task. [The Rector] is aware that this SRC has the backing of the student body […].'[57]

In light of the later development of student politics at Turfloop, the assertion by Manana Kgware of the SRC as a safe place, or a refuge from the university authorities is remarkable. This marks a particular and fleeting moment in the life of student politics at the university: less than four years after Kgware's letter, an inflammatory graduation speech by Abraham Tiro was to lead to his own permanent expulsion from the university, as well as to the

[56] Letter from Fr. Colin Collins to Barney Pityana, 25 August 1969. [WHP AD1126/G2]
[57] Letter from Manana Kgware to James Moulder, 4 October 1968. [WHP AD1126/F]

expulsions of all members of the SRC responsible for inviting him to speak. By this stage, association with the SRC was no longer a place of refuge; rather it located students on the frontlines of the political struggle on campus. A primary factor in this shift was the presence on campus of the South African Students' Organisation, which formed at Turfloop in 1969. SASO's arrival at Turfloop was a pivotal moment for mass-mobilization in student politics. This new organisation had close links to the older UCM; many of its founding members, including Steve Biko and Barney Pityana, had been UCM members themselves. Some of the initial plans for SASO were laid out at the 1968 UCM Conference in Stutterheim.[58] And at Turfloop some of the key UCM leaders transitioned into roles with SASO, Manana Kgware among them. But SASO's mobilization approach was broader than that employed by UCM. Whereas individual students made the decision (or not) to join UCM, SASO organized its affiliation through SRCs, so that by virtue of its mandate from the students an SRC could affiliate the entire student body to SASO.[59] SASO thus brought political activism into the mainstream of life at Turfloop. While the UCM remained firmly on the radical side of most campus organisations, SASO successfully situated itself and its politics at the centre of campus life. Its ability to do so owed a debt to the earlier mobilization and structure of the Turfloop branch of the UCM. Though the UCM was officially banned on campus by the time SASO was inaugurated in 1969, both groups shared overlapping ideology and leadership while Turfloop's UCM branch continued to remain active from its new base outside campus.[60] For the period of their co-existence (1969-1972) the two organisations

[58] Interview with Harry Nengwekhulu by author (a), 19 October 2011.
[59] Interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe by author, 27 September 2011.
[60] Notably, although the Turfloop branch moved off-campus after its 1969 banning by Acting Rector Professor Engelbrecht, it still faced challenges operating and holding meetings in Mankweng Township. On 1 June 1969 ten white students from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg were arrested at the Anglican Church in Mankweng while attending a religious service and UCM meeting. ('University Christian Movement Information for the Churches' undated memo, c. 1969. [WHP AD1126/A]); Affidavits of not-guilty declaration from: Charles Murcott, Robin Benger, Anthony Bowers, Jill Bannatyne, Ann

worked in close cooperation on projects that joined anti-apartheid politics with Christian activism.

For UCM, the culmination of the ethic of practising Christianity in active opposition to apartheid and racist policies was the development of the Black Theology programme. It formally adopted this approach in 1971 with the explicit support of SASO, which later assumed responsibility for the project after the dissolution of UCM in 1972.[61] This programme was undertaken in an attempt to combat the perceived use of religion as a tool by the apartheid regime for the oppression of the majority of South Africans. Like Black Consciousness, with which it is closely associated, it was directed within the black community itself to combat the effects of oppression experienced through existing theologies.

The development of a Black Theology programme in 1971, in conjunction with SASO's new philosophy of Black Consciousness, was not an accident of timing. Louise Kretzschmar notes their 'interdependence and mutual influence'[62], and SASO declared the role of black theologians and black ministers to be 'intrinsically interwoven in the surge towards Black Consciousness and liberation.'[63] Though a project, and later a movement, in its own right, Black Theology owed much of its thinking to the philosophies of Black Consciousness, which was informed by the writings of men like Stokely Carmichael and the American Black Power Movement. Critics, ranging from the South African government to one disaffected SASO member, Themba Sono (who is discussed later in this chapter) even accused SASO of importing its philosophy of Black Consciousness wholesale from American blacks, pointing

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Ohlssen, Charles Simkins, Richard Schaerer, Jennifer Rodda, Renfrew Christie, and Antoinette Halberstadt, all dated 5 June 1969. [WHP AD1126/G5].

[61] SASO Newsletter, August 1971. 'The Commission on Black Theology'. [WHP AD1126/J]

[62] L. Kretzschmar, *The Voice of Black Theology in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1986), p. 60.

[63] SASO Newsletter, August 1971. 'The Commission on Black Theology'. [WHP AD1126/J]

to commonalities in both ideology and phrasing. In his analysis of the influence of US Black Power on South African Black Consciousness, Daniel Magaziner acknowledges their point:

> Indeed, once one is familiar with the sources of SASO thought [including Carmichael and others], the writings can read like an endless succession of purloined phrases, ideas ripped from one context and (often inappropriately) applied to another. But it was not so simple as the government and other observers inferred. Activists copied, but they also translated; they read words from one context and wrote them into their own.[64]

Black Theology also had roots across the Atlantic, most particularly in the work of black American theologian James Cone. Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969) and *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970) became seminal works for the founders of the Black Consciousness Movement and Black Theology in South Africa. During their trip to the United States in 1967, Basil Moore and Bob Kgware were exposed to 'early writings of the influential American black theologian, James Cone, notably *Black Theology and Black Power*' and later met Cone himself.[65] In addition, his article 'Toward a Black Theology', published in a 1970 edition of the African American magazine *Ebony*, was photocopied and distributed in its entirety to delegates at the SASO 1971 General Students Council in spite of the fact that *Ebony* was a banned publication in South Africa at the time.[66] Cone's Black Theology posits Christianity as 'a religion of protest'[67] and he rails against the status quo in America that has, with the tacit and often open support of churchmen and women, colluded in the oppression of American blacks. Christ, he determines, was a far more revolutionary figure:

> Jesus had little toleration for the middle- or upper class religious snob whose attitude attempted to usurp the sovereignty of God and destroy the dignity of

[64] Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, p. 48.
[65] Moore, 'Learning from Black Theology', pp. 1-2; Though Moore asserts that he and Bob Kgware were exposed to *Black Theology and Black Power* on their 1967 trip, the text was not published until 1969. However, they did meet Cone on their visit to the United States, and it is certainly possible that they were exposed to early versions of his thesis on black theology during their interactions.
[66] T. Sono, *Reflections on the Origins of Black Consciousness in South Africa* (Pretoria, 1993), pp. 48-9.
[67] J. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York, 1969), p. 37.

> the poor. The Kingdom [of God] is for the poor and not the rich because the former has nothing to expect from the world while the latter's entire existence is grounded in his commitment to worldly things.[68]

Cone cautions against allowing this perception of the Kingdom of God to be 'merely an eschatological longing for an escape to a transcendent reality'[69], and argues that 'When black people begin to hear Jesus' message as contemporaneous with their life situation they will quickly recognize what Jürgen Moltmann calls "the political hermeneutics of the gospel".'[70] Moltmann contends that the Christian gospel, when properly interpreted, offers a 'categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is a being who labors and is heavily laden.'[71] To support his arguments Cone relies heavily on biblical quotes directly from the gospels, wherever possible drawing these from Jesus himself: 'The last shall be first and the first last.' (Matthew 20:16) and 'The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the good news preached to them.' (Luke 7:26) 'This is not pious talk,' Cone says, 'and one does not need a seminary degree to interpret the message. It is a message about the ghetto, and all other injustices done in the name of democracy and religion to further the social, political, and economic interests of the oppressor. In Christ, God enters human affairs and takes sides with the oppressed.'[72]

Cone's Black Theology did not advocate a passive waiting for God to 'take sides with the oppressed', though. He called for revolution in black America, which he described as 'a radical black encounter with the structure of white racism, with the full intention of destroying its menacing power.'[73] Such a revolution necessarily grappled with the issue of

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[68] Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, p. 36.
[69] Ibid., p. 37.
[70] Ibid., p. 37.
[71] Jürgen Moltmann quoted in Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, p. 37.
[72] Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, p. 36.
[73] Ibid., p. 136.

violence. Cone acknowledged the difficulties of addressing this from a theological viewpoint: the Jesus presented in the New Testament explicitly denounces violence and advocates forgiveness. But Cone cautions against too literalist a reading of such biblical passages: 'We cannot solve ethical questions of the twentieth century by looking at what Jesus did in the first. Our choices are not the same as his.'[74] In the context of race in twentieth century America he declares,

> It is this fact that most whites seem to overlook – the fact that violence already exists. The Christian does not decide between violence and non-violence, evil and good. He decides between the less and the greater evil. He must ponder whether revolutionary violence is less or more deplorable than the violence perpetuated by the system. There are no absolute rules which can decide the answer with certainty. […] But if the system is evil, then revolutionary violence is both justified and necessary.[75]

Writing in the late 1960s, at the heights of the American civil rights movement, Cone declared that incremental political gains were not enough: 'It does not matter how many gains are made in civil rights. Progress is irrelevant. The face of the black revolutionary will always be there as long as white people persist in defining the boundary of black being.' In this he called for a shift in the way black people understood and defined themselves, something that both Black Theology and Black Consciousness in South Africa embraced.

For Cone a true realization of Christian faith, then, was not patiently awaiting a heavenly afterlife, but rather it was the highly politicized pursuit of justice and freedom for the oppressed in *this* world. This call-to-arms of the faithful spoke directly to the student leaders of the fledging Black Consciousness and Black Theology movements in South Africa. Many were Christian believers themselves and had been raised in the churches, but were frustrated with the delayed justice that was promised in a heavenly reward. Cone's Black Theology,

[74] Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, p. 139.
[75] Ibid., p. 143.

with its political appeals against injustice, revolutionary language, and heavy reliance on the New Testament gospels, became a cornerstone of their own version of Black Theology for the South African situation. SASO leadership even invited Cone to speak at one of their annual General Student Councils and, though he was denied a visa and unable to come, his interpretation of Black Theology was a central point of discussion at the Council.[76]

The coinciding of Black Theology and Black Consciousness, and the appeal of the highly political theology of men like Cone and Moltmann, are indicative of the close relationship between politics and religion in both the UCM and SASO's ideology. 'Black Theology,' Daniel Magaziner writes, 'was a deeply politicized enterprise. […] Black Theologians were South Africans, they were blacks, and they were political. Yet they were also Christians, concerned with the scripture, biblical precedent, and the implication of Christ's universal message of love in lived lives.'[77]

In 1971 UCM executive member (and SASO member) Stanley Ntwasa led a Commission on Black Theology, which was initiated to evaluate the future and role of Black Theology as a project within the UCM. It concluded that 'Theology as taught in schools conducted by the various education departments was aimed at brainwashing pupils. The commission also found that religious instruction was being used as a part of the propaganda machinery.'[78] The commission indicted white churches for supporting the status quo and furthering oppression by proposing token fixes like 'interracial fraternization as a solution to the problems of this country, whereas [the churches] are fully aware that the basic problem is that of land distribution, economic deprivation and consequently the disinheritance of the Black

[76] Author's interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a).
[77] Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets,* p. 106.
[78] SASO Newsletter, August 1971. 'The Commission on Black Theology'. [WHP AD1126/J]

people.'[79] In support of the work of the commission, the SASO General Students Council (GSC) passed a resolution declaring,

> Black Theology assents its validity and sees its existence in the words of Christ, who in declaring His mission said: "He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour." [Luke 4:18-19] Black Theology, therefore, understands Christ's liberation not only from circumstances of internal bondage but also a liberation from circumstances of external enslavement.[80]

Such language makes it clear that Black Theology as an undertaking of both UCM and SASO had overtly political motives; its goal was to use Christianity to affect psychological and political change in South Africa, and its emphasis on black self-reliance aligned it with Africanism.

Black Theology itself did not mark a major theological shift for UCM, however. As defined in a 1970 paper by Basil Moore, the organisation was committed to a politicized theology that was greatly informed by social circumstances. Moore declared outright that 'accepting the inferiority of black people is a social evil and hazard, a vitally important means of encouraging social change would be to counter the current South African trend in the education of blacks by infusing them with a sense of pride and dignity.'[81] Later that year the development of Black Consciousness ideology, and then Black Theology in 1971, fitted neatly into this framework. Black Theology also found direct biblical roots for political action in the South African context, as the quote above from the gospel of Luke, about Christ liberating captives and setting the downtrodden free, indicates.

[79] SASO Newsletter, August 1971. 'The Commission on Black Theology'. [WHP AD1126/J]
[80] Ibid.
[81] B. Moore, 'A 1970 Theological Point of View of the UCM' (unpublished, 1970), p. 6. [WHP AD1126/A]

Further articulating the connection between Christ and South African blacks, and also incorporating a strain of self-reliance that had echoes of Black Consciousness, Victor Mafungo wrote,

> Christ's oppression and his true relationship to his fellow oppressed was the missing link [in white-dominated Christian discourse]. Christ's position makes him relevant to inhabitants of the Third World. He had a message for them and it is up to them to find and decipher it. No one will do this for them. And this is what Black Theology attempts to do.[82]

The UCM from its inception had been an ecumenical organisation, and as such had difficulty forming a more concrete theological basis beyond its commitment to social change, as embodied in Black Theology and discussed above. Indeed, in its own words, 'At its inception the UCM studiously avoided basing itself on a statement or confession of faith which would be restrictive or exclusive. [Rather it] focusses [sic] attention almost entirely on what members of the organisation will attempt to do.'[83] This is yet another example of the UCM's deep roots in the pursuit of social justice, almost to the exclusion of any denominational doctrine or theology. By 1970 the challenges of this, arguably radical, approach had become clear to some leaders of the movement: Basil Moore wrote

> [T]he UCM style of mission may be described as a shared search for meaning through new experiences which contain a real potential for change. As such it is likely to be regarded as a threat by those who understand themselves to be the sole guardians of sacred truth or the preserve of the social status quo, but then Christ himself died on a political cross at the instigation of the "church" authorities, for neither could tolerate the idea of change inherent in the concept of "redemption".[84]

Its ecumenism across many churches with primary affiliation to none, and its unwavering commitment to fundamental change in the practice of South African Christianity, finally contributed to the dissolution of the UCM in 1972. In the motion for that dissolution, the

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[82] V. Mafungo, 'Black Theology: a re-assessment of the Christ' in SASO Newsletter, September 1971. Vol. 1(4), p. 7. [WHP AD1126/J]
[83] B. Moore, 'A 1970 Theological Viewpoint of the UCM', p. 1. [WHP AD1126/A]
[84] Ibid., p. 7. (Emphasis original)

executive noted three primary barriers to the group's continued operation: i) withdrawal of support by three of the five founding churches of the UCM; ii) increasing state pressure against the organisation, including harassment by Special Branch police and the banning of several UCM leaders; and iii) a new advocacy of 'black/white polarization' among its mixed leadership, in contravention of the multiracial foundations of the UCM itself.[85]

The first of these, the withdrawal of church support, was a significant but not sudden factor. The disintegration of support by the founding churches began well before the UCM's final dissolution. Among these five, the Roman Catholic Church had a tense relationship with the UCM from as early as 1969, as mentioned earlier in the conflict between Father Collins and the Bishop of Pietersburg. Continued tensions between the UCM and a growing segment of the Catholic Church, most particularly those bishops of areas with universities in them[86], finally led Father Collins to resign from the priesthood in early 1970. This decision placed him firmly on the side of the politicized religion and push for social justice espoused by the UCM; his affiliation with its doctrine of social change led to a formal break with the more conservative structures of the Catholic Church in the Northern Transvaal, and South Africa more broadly. Steve Biko, founder of SASO and member of UCM, congratulated him on this move.[87] Collins' decision was recognized by activists like Biko as a political triumph, but also as a mark of the hardening lines between religion and politics. Organisations like the UCM, and people like Collins, who blurred the scope of each were to face a great deal of pressure in the coming years. Following Collins' break with the Catholic Church, and increasing pressure by the state security apparatus on the UCM, by the time of dissolution in

[85] Motion of Dissolution of the U.C.M. 1 April 1972. [WHP AD1126/A1]
[86] Letter from Fr. Colin B. Collins to Rev. Clemens van Hoeck, Bishop of Pietersburg. 24 March 1969. [WHP AD1126/G2]
[87] Letter to Colin Collins from Steve Biko, Undated, c. March 1970. [WHP AD1126/F]

1972, 'the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches [had] finally withdrawn their support from the U.C.M. […] and the Anglican [Church had] recently begun to question the wisdom of their support, leaving only the United Congregational Church of the original five founding churches of the U.C.M.'[88]

Authorities outside the founding churches extended this isolation, as well. As has been noted above, by August 1969 the UCM was banned by university administrators from operating on four of the University College campuses, including Turfloop.[89] The security police had begun to take a close interest in the activities of the movement, as well. Correspondence between Father Collins and Father D. Medard van de Rostijne indicates that Special Branch paid visits to the UCM headquarters in Johannesburg and to St. Benedict's Mission outside Tzaneen after some UCM students were temporarily housed there.[90] This pressure eventually resulted in the government banning three members of the UCM executive, 'Mr. Justice Moloto (past President and General Secretary), Dr. Basil Moore (first President and former Acting Gen. Secretary) and Sabelo [Stanley] Ntwasa (Director of Black Theology)'[91] in the spring of 1972.

The dissolution of the movement was undertaken in the midst of these isolating pressures. It was initiated by the multiracial executive committee, including Colin Collins and then General Secretary Chris Mokoditoa. This group resolved that, in spite of the multiracial founding ethos of the University Christian Movement,

[88] Motion of Dissolution of the U.C.M. 1 April 1972. [WHP AD1126/A1]
[89] Letter to Barney Pityana from Colin Collins. 25 August 1969. [WHP AD1126/G2]
[90] Letter to D. Medard van de Rostijne from Colin Collins, 3 June 1969. And Letter to Colin Collins from D. Medard van de Rostijne, 1 July 1969. [WHP AD1126/F]
[91] Motion of Dissolution of the U.C.M. 1 April 1972. [WHP AD1126/A1]

> While we have pleaded for communication and sharing between the different groups, and repeatedly asserted that because freedom cannot be sectional, freedom in South Africa entails a society free from racism, our own projects show that we no longer believe that multi-racialism is a viable strategy to bring about change.[92]

The remaining projects they referenced included a Literacy outreach programme in rural areas, a White Consciousness Project, and Black Theology.[93] The last was UCM's most enduring legacy.

The dissolution of the UCM also marks an important moment in which SASO and its allies abandoned attempts to employ multi-racialism as a strategy for political change. To some degree, since the development of Black Consciousness as an ideology in 1970, and even since SASO's formation in 1968, which was predicated on breaking with multi-racial groups like NUSAS, the writing had been on the wall. But it was the self-dismantling of the UCM, which had been founded on multi-racial principles, its own advocacy of 'black/white polarization'[94] and its clear abandonment of the strategy of multi-racialism, that solidified this trend. After the dissolution of UCM, SASO's links to multi-racial groups were effectively severed, and it moved into an ideology that bore more similarity to the Africanism of the Pan African Congress (PAC) than any other liberation movement in South Africa. SASO and Black Consciousness modified the Africanism of the PAC in important ways, however: it shared some influences from African nationalists and philosophers like Frantz Fanon, but it also drew on ideologies expressed by black Americans like Stokely Carmichael and James Cone, as discussed above. In addition, it broadened the vision of Africanism, addressing a more encompassing audience of 'blacks' rather than Africans, or Bantus as apartheid had categorized them. While the PAC conceived of Africans only as black

[92] Motion of Dissolution of the U.C.M. 1 April 1972. [WHP AD1126/A1]
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

Africans, and particularly those within South Africa's ethnic groups, Black Consciousness defined black as something much broader: it included Indians and coloureds, and all those who were oppressed by the apartheid state. It largely excluded whites, however. Though SASO had white sympathizers – many of the activists who had been involved in the UCM, for instance – they were explicitly excluded from membership because they did not experience the oppression that the state meted out based on race. Black Consciousness itself was an ideology rather than an organisation; it had no card-carrying members, but it targeted everyone who had been psychologically subjected to the doctrines of racial superiority and inferiority on which apartheid was built. Still, even in its broader conception of who 'counted', the Black Consciousness Movement with its emphasis on self-reliance and psychological liberation adopted and advanced the cause of Africanism as it had been identified in earlier decades. Anton Lembede, the father of South African Africanism and former member of the ANC Youth League, wrote in 1946,

> Moral degeneration [among Africans] is assuming alarming dimensions [and] manifests itself in such abnormal and pathological phenomena as loss of self confidence, inferiority complex, a feeling of frustration, the worship and idolization of white men, foreign leaders and ideologies. All these symptoms of a pathological state of mind.[95]

Twenty-six years later, Lembede's inheritors had managed not only to rally an important segment of the black population around these ideas of psychological liberation, but, as demonstrated by the UCM leadership, they had persuaded a (albeit very small) segment of the white population for the need as well.

After the UCM dissolved, Black Theology became a primary project of SASO, and the UCM donated office furniture and supplies, as well as its remaining funds, to its fellow student

[95] A. Lembede, 'Policy of the Congress Youth League,' *Inkundla ya Bantu*, May 1946, in G. M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, p. 58.

organisation.[96] Until the end, these two groups were closely linked ideologically, with many points of intersection in shared projects and members, but UCM's ecumenism, multi-racialism, and more limited mobilization strategy resulted in its own dissolution, while SASO went on to become the most significant mobilizing force in student politics at Turfloop of the 1970s.

The South African Students' Organisation

The South African Students' Organisation (or SASO) was founded in December of 1968 at the University of Natal – Black Section.[97] Its birth was the result of dissatisfaction among some black students about the ability of the existing national student organisation, NUSAS (the National Union of South African Students), to represent the interests of a black constituency. Harry Nengwekhulu, a Turfloop student and founding member of SASO, describes discontent among black students in NUSAS over issues like language and flags of delegates, but points to a particular tipping point at a 1968 NUSAS Conference:

> [T]he idea came initially from the conference of NUSAS at Rhodes University. Big problem again with that – normally at those conferences NUSAS would say "We must fight apartheid; we must sleep in the white areas." We [black delegates] were doing that at very great risk of being arrested. When we went to Rhodes we said, "No, this time we're all going to sleep at the [African] location." […] And it became a major issue, because why should we have [the] risk of being arrested by going to sleep in a white area, and you [white delegates] are not willing to? If you are fighting the system, you must come and sleep with us.[98]

Contention over this and similar issues which persistently divided black NUSAS members from white led finally to the 1968 formation of SASO. Writings of its founders and early

[96] Letter to Barney Pityana from Chris Mokoditoa. 6 November 1972. [WHP AD1126/J]
[97] S. Biko, *I Write What I Like* (Oxford 1988), p. 2.
[98] Author's interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a).

leaders detail the key aims of the organisation, which focus on the needs, aspirations, identity, and morale of non-white students on South Africa's campuses.[99]

As Clive Nettleton, a former NUSAS vice-president, wrote about the founding of SASO at the time:

> […] the essence of the matter is that NUSAS was founded on White initiative, is financed by White money, and reflects the opinions of the majority of its members who are White. The policies and practices of the National Union are not acceptable to many Black students.[100]

Few of NUSAS' members approached the founding of a 'rival' student organisation with such equanimity as Nettleton did, however. There was much internal debate and contention over the fact that SASO, an organisation founded specifically for the needs of 'non-white' students, flouted the non-racial policies that NUSAS itself supported. However, Nettleton's analysis is apt; in spite of its non-racial ideology, NUSAS was predominantly an organ of white activism, liberal though its politics were. In an effort to distance themselves from white liberals and, more importantly, to build a forum through which black students could identify and engage politically, SASO set itself up as 'the custodian of non-white interests'[101]. They did so unapologetically, leading a crusade for psychological liberation among South African blacks that eventually developed into the Black Consciousness Movement.

At Turfloop, SASO had a somewhat variable beginning. Its inaugural national conference was held there in July of 1969, and it was then and there that Steve Biko was elected the organisation's first president. Under the leadership of Harry Nengwekhulu and Petrus Machaka, the Turfloop SRC elected to use its own funds to support the conference, which

[99] Biko, *I Write What I Like,* p. 4.
[100] C. Nettleton, 'Racial Cleavage on the Student Left' in H.W. Van der Merwe and D. Welsh (eds.), *Student Perspectives on South Africa* (Cape Town, 1972), p. 134.
[101] Biko, *I Write What I Like,* p. 6.

brought them into conflict with the university registrar who was concerned about SASO's ability to repay the money.[102] But the SRC was entitled to spend its student dues as it saw fit, in support of various student organisations. From the outset, it made a commitment to support SASO not just politically, but financially as well. But no sooner had SASO rooted itself at the University of the North than it began to encounter resistance from the university administration, similar to that faced at that time by the UCM. As mentioned above, students at Turfloop had been disallowed from affiliating with NUSAS in 1968 after a protracted battle between university officials and the SRC. In fact, two former rectors at the time were 'encouraging students to "shake off the yoke of NUSAS" and to establish their own … organisation.'[103] According to Harry Nengwekhulu, Professor Engelbrecht, who was a professor of philosophy and the acting rector in early 1969, cautioned his students, 'Don't allow yourself to be used by NUSAS; you are not instruments.'[104] SASO's on-campus leaders like Nengwekhulu used this to their advantage. They garnered the tacit permission of Engelbrecht and the university administration to operate on campus:

> [Engelbrecht] never came out in support, or opposed. He allowed it to operate because we [argued that through our own organisation we would not be "used"]. But also because we were attacking the liberal involvement in the struggle for liberation – liberals had always been the greatest enemy of the nationalist government.[105]

The formation of SASO, then, presented a conflict for the university administration: on the one hand, the formation of an all-black student organisation, to supplant the older non-racial national union, aligned neatly with the ideals of separate development, which underlay the founding of the University itself. It also marked a point of intersection - surprisingly, perhaps - between the politics of SASO and the vast majority of white university staff in its

[102] Author's interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a).
[103] Wolfson, *Turmoil at Turfloop*, p. 12.
[104] Author's interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a).
[105] Ibid.

anti-white liberal (and by extension, anti-NUSAS) stance. Until this point at the University of the North the administration had taken a cautious approach to student political activism. When students were dissatisfied with the primarius system of representation, as discussed earlier, the administration permitted the establishment of an SRC. The UCM was allowed to operate on campus for nearly a year after officials expressed overt suspicion towards it, and in fact, Turfloop was the last of the black universities to ban the UCM on its campus.[106] Another example is the case of Manana Kgware, who considered herself 'protected' from punishment for UCM activism by her involvement in the SRC. Though university authorities would clamp down on politics when deemed necessary (as eventually happened to UCM), in early 1969 they had demonstrated a 'wait and see' philosophy to student groups on campus.

During this period of relative laxity on the part of the university administration, SASO built a strong presence on campus at Turfloop and at other black campuses throughout South Africa. They did so by a process of holding frequent and regular branch meetings, local formation schools, executive meetings, and annual General Students Councils (GSCs).[107] Branch meetings, on the smallest and most local scale, built up SASO's organisational capacity on individual campuses. Though in its own words SASO's reception after its launch in 1969 was 'mixed' nationally,

> Unicon [Turfloop], long a supporter of SASO even whilst "in utero" did not find any difficulty in arriving at an overwhelming majority decision to affiliate to SASO. Not only was the support verbal, but nationally too SASO in the initially [sic] stages has depended to a great extent on donation and loans made available by the UNICON SRC.[108]

[106] Letter from Colin Collins to Rev. R. Selby-Taylor, 23 April 1969. [WHP AD1126/G2]
[107] SASO meeting minutes, c. 1969-1976. [WHP AD1126/J, A2176/4]
[108] Minutes of the SASO Executive Meeting. 3-5 December 1969, University of Natal, pp. 1-2. [WHP AD1126/J]

Turfloop, then, was an early bastion of SASO support both politically and monetarily. Affiliation was arranged en-masse through the SRC rather than on an individual membership basis (an important change from the mobilizing mechanisms of earlier groups like the UCM), and as the above quote indicates, the Turfloop student body overwhelmingly supported it. As has been mentioned, Turfloop was the site of SASO's inaugural congress, and many 'formation schools' went on to be held in surrounding locations (like the Kratzenstein Lutheran Mission Station, northeast of Turfloop), attracting Turfloop students and others from local and regional areas. These were essentially workshops geared at deepening political education for existing SASO members, and extending it to new ones. Such formation schools formed the next tier of SASO's organisation: they allowed prominent local student activists to liaise with one another on a scale above the very local (that of the campus or the township) and acted as an important mechanism for publicizing SASO to new groups and members. These were run by local activists and frequently attended by national leaders to ensure that SASO ideology was taught as widely and cohesively as possible. In order to increase its reach and impact, SASO also began to publish and disseminate a monthly newsletter in 1970. In this, organisational leaders would write topical articles about current projects (reports on Black Theology featured prominently in early editions[109]) as well as publicize campus news reports.

Campus and national leaders corresponded regularly by letter and telegraph, as well as traveling and convening at the local and regional formation schools, which acted as workshops to inform and prepare SASO members for activism. This frequent correspondence and a few highly mobile individuals (including a role of Traveling General Secretary) allowed SASO to be quickly responsive on a national scale to issues that arose on

[109] SASO newsletters Vol.1(3) (August 1971) and Vol.1(4) (September 1971). [WHP AD1126/J]

local campuses. The leadership also convened several times a year for National Executive Council meetings, and annually for a General Students Council meeting, the latter of which included delegates from all active SASO chapters. In order to create even broader solidarity amongst members, SASO also held annual Intervarsity days during the winter holidays. As described by Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, a Turfloop SRC member and president (1971, 1974), and the national president of SASO in 1974,

> We would then choose a campus where all the black universities would converge. We would play sports, intervarsity sporting, all kinds of things – compete with each other, but again making sure the solidarity remains. So we had very formidable solidarity over the years, because students used to meet all the time – every year at intervarsity functions. And they were run by SASO, to make sure the students mix and they know each other, and the leaders of SASO would address the students.[110]

In its early years, then, SASO effectively established networks of student activists throughout South Africa, and it built an especially strong branch at Turfloop. It was able to do so largely thanks to the university administration's initially ambivalent response to its founding: SASO's ostensible adherence to many of the University's own founding principles of separation earned it some room to operate at Turfloop in the very early 1970s. However, as it became evident that SASO's politics were as radical as the UCM's had ever been, and as its leaders began to articulate an ideology of Black Consciousness that drew heavily on the writings of men like Stokely Carmichael and the American Black Power movement, rather than on the separatism of apartheid, the new organisation increasingly gave the administration cause for concern. The first manifestation of this concern came in early 1972, when in February the rector took steps to censor an SRC publication that contained SASO material in it. Rector Boshoff prevented the distribution of this 'Student Diary' until two articles, the SASO Policy Manifesto and a Declaration of Student Rights, had been removed. This caused the student body to call for his resignation, and to defend their right to print and

[110] Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, Germiston, 27 September 2011.

distribute the materials. An SRC Resolution declared 'that since the university administration recognizes their affiliation to SASO, their distribution of the SASO policy manifesto and other literature cannot be restricted.'[111] In an open letter to all students and staff, Boshoff expressed his feeling that 'the two articles are of a controversial nature, and a diary is no place for controversial articles'.[112] He did not, however, consider the SRC's failure to request his permission before printing the diary 'in a very serious light', and decided that the university would bear the cost of reprinting. This incident marked the Turfloop administration's first overt step against SASO on campus, but it did not hold the student body or even the SRC responsible for SASO's message; very shortly this would no longer be the case.

As the example of the inclusion of SASO documents in a general student diary indicates, by 1972 SASO was deeply enmeshed in the fabric of student politics at Turfloop. It had built upon the work of the campus branch of the UCM and made effective use of affiliating with the entire student body through the SRC, rather than recruiting individuals. Their tiered levels of meetings – structured from the local to the national –encouraged cohesion within and between local branches.

Perhaps most importantly, the Turfloop SRC itself was a bastion of SASO politics. In 1970-71 it was led by Onkgopotse Abraham Tiro, a SASO activist and later a member of the SASO national executive. Under Tiro's administration the SRC led the Turfloop student body in protest over the university's proposed academic autonomy from the University of South Africa (UNISA), which had been responsible for setting the curriculum and granting degrees

[111] 'Rector must resign -students', *Rand Daily Mail* 4 March 1972. [WHP AD1912/239]
[112] Memo from JL Boshoff to All Members of Staff and All Students of the University of the North, 'The Student Diary: Deletion of Articles' [SANA BAO X109/6/4(42)]

at Turfloop since its founding in 1959. In January of 1970, that link was severed as Turfloop ceased to be the University College of the North and became the University of the North.

This change of name and ostensible autonomy changed relatively little in the governing structure of Turfloop; though UNISA no longer conferred the degrees of its graduates, the new university was autonomous in name only. The University of the North Act No. 47 of 1969 (section 14) reaffirmed the control of the Minister of Bantu Education over appointments to and decisions made by the University Senate and Council, its two governing bodies. In addition, the university 'required ministerial approval to borrow any money or to receive any money, or property by way of donation, or bequest.'[113] The veneer of independence was thin at best; though the university was not beholden to UNISA's standards any longer, it was still clearly under the jurisdiction of the Department of Bantu Education and subject to the apartheid-style ethnic segregation of its founding, which had been reaffirmed by the University of the North Act No. 47 of 1969.[114]

In September 1970, when invited to take part in celebrations for this independence and the investiture of the university's first chancellor[115], students boycotted the celebrations in protest. The alleged autonomy, they contended, was a farce: 'another calculated move by the Government to drive the Non-white students into a life of isolation, despair and perpetual frustration.'[116] Independence from UNISA was considered 'premature', and designed not to

[113] Quoted in White *From Despair to Hope*, p. 122.
[114] The relevant clause in the University of the North Act (No. 47 of 1969), subsection three, reads: 'The University shall serve the North-Sotho, South-Sotho, Tsonga, Tswana and Venda nationals units referred to in section 2(1) of the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, 1959 (Act No. 46 of 1959).' Reprinted in G.M. Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony* (Johannesburg, 1976), p. 4.
[115] The first Chancellor of the University of the North was Dr W.W.M. Eiselen, who was Commissioner-General of the Northern Sotho before the creation of Lebowa as a self-governing Bantustan in 1972.
[116] Telegraph to the President of the UCM from A.R. Tiro, President of the SRC of the University of the North, 30 September 1970, Sovenga. [WHP AD1126/F]

liberate the university but to further isolate it from its peers in South Africa. To this end, the SRC resolved

> That if independence has to be true to its meaning, such independence should also relate not only to academic independence of this College [but also to independence] from Government control, because we hold the following to be true: […] University autonomy means and implies "the right of a university to decide for itself, on academic grounds, who shall teach, and what shall be taught, and who shall be admitted to study." And these conditions can certainly not hold in terms of Act No. 47 of 1969.[117]

As a result of these resolutions, the entire student body boycotted the celebrations. Though the boycotts were resolved without expulsions or similar punishments, they indicate the increasing activism that was brewing on campus as the ties between the SRC and SASO grew. In 1972 the SRC presidency was taken over by Tiro's deputy, Aubrey Mokoena. Their outspoken politics were to bring the tensions that had been brewing between SASO, the SRC, and the administration to a head in the fall of 1972.

The Tiro Incident

On the 29th of April 1972, the University of the North graduated its third class as a fully autonomous university, and Abraham Tiro, the former Student Representative Council president who had led the campaign against autonomy from UNISA, spoke as the elected speaker for the graduating class. Tiro had been a prominent student leader on campus since his arrival in the late 1960s, and was a member of the SRC and of the South African Students' Organisation. He was president of the SRC that led the boycotts of the celebrations of university autonomy. At the time of his selection as speaker he had completed his bachelors degree in education, and was working towards his post-graduate diploma in

[117] Telegraph to the President of the UCM from A.R. Tiro, President of the SRC of the University of the North, 30 September 1970, Sovenga. [WHP AD1126/F]

education.[118] By this time Tiro was already very politically engaged. His activism had early roots: he had been exposed to political protest at the age of twelve, when, in 1957, his local primary school in the village of Dinokana, near the Botswana border, was closed as thousands of local women protested the introduction of pass laws. This led to a frequently interrupted education in a series of schools in the Western Transvaal and Soweto. By the time he completed matric at Barolong High School in Mafikeng, he was already a student leader, and was elected to speak at the leavers' party. 'According to [Barolong] Principal Lekalake, 'Tiro's speech about the conditions the pupils were subjected to was so influential that dramatic changes were made immediately in the make-up of the school's administration.'[119] This gift for transformative oratory was to become his hallmark at Turfloop and beyond.

Tiro's invitation to speak at the 1972 graduation was issued at the behest of the sitting Student Representative Council, then under the leadership of Aubrey Mokoena (who had been Tiro's VP the previous year). The role of such speakers was traditionally to support the university and its policies. According to one student who was present, 'Speakers at graduation were always custodians of the ideology of the time.'[120] Bearing witness to this, Mokgama Matlala, the chief minister of the Lebowa Bantustan who also spoke that day, gave a speech advocating the policies of Bantu Education.[121] Tiro, however, did not conform to this tradition. His speech was a damning oration of Bantu Education and the broader discriminatory policies of apartheid, particularly its manifestations at Turfloop. Tiro's

[118] Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe.
[119] A. Heffernan, 'Black Consciousness' Lost Leader: Abraham Tiro, the University of the North, and the Seeds of South Africa's Student Movement in the 1970s', *Journal of Southern African Studies* (forthcoming).
[120] Reuel Khoza, quoted in A. Butler, *Cyril Ramaphosa* (Oxford, 2008), p. 48.
[121] Ibid., p. 48.

speech married the structural injustices of Bantu Education, and indeed apartheid itself, with the local realities faced by students at Turfloop, and it was laced with the hypocrisy he saw there. He criticized apartheid on its own terms, beginning with a quote from South African Prime Minister John Vorster: 'Addressing an ASB congress in June last year Mr Vorster said: 'No black man has landed in trouble for fighting for what is legally his.' Although I don't know how far true this is, I make this statement my launch pad.' Tiro went on to critique the failures of apartheid in its manifestation at Turfloop: the fact that an ostensibly black university was run by white administrators and staffed predominantly by white faculty; that, absurdly, its bookshop was only open to whites; that it awarded university contracts (specifically for the supply of meat) to a white administrator rather than a local black supplier; and that vacation jobs on campus were allocated to white students 'when there are [Turfloop] students who could not get their results due to outstanding fees'.[122] He decried the indignities that parents of the graduates were forced to undergo, being kept outside the hall while white dignitaries sat in the front rows; he called for a black university to have black leadership, and to allocate jobs and contracts for its functioning within the black community. 'The system is failing,' Tiro declared. 'It is failing because even those who recommended it strongly, as the only solution to racial problems in South Africa, fail to adhere to the letter and spirit of the policy.'[123] Though his critique was deeply political, and enmeshed in local grievances, it was also framed by Christian values: he opened the speech quoting an American lay preacher on the centrality and importance of the truth, and he closed it on a ringing note of warning to university and apartheid authorities, with evangelical echoes of Martin Luther King Jr., saying, 'In conclusion Mr Chancellor I say: Let the Lord be praised, for the day shall come, when all men shall be free to breathe the air of freedom and when that

[122] G.M. Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony: the Dilemma of a Black University in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1976), p. 91.
[123] Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony*, p. 92.

day shall come, no man, no matter how many tanks he has, will reverse the course of events. God bless you all!'[124]

The aftermath of this speech was in some ways predictable, and in others extraordinary. Horrified at this abuse of the platform he had been given, the Rector and Advisory Council of the University of the North expelled Tiro. The University Senate, all members of which were white, concurred. In response, following a mixed meeting of both black and white staff, the black academic staff of the university walked out in protest, students at Turfloop boycotted lectures, and the national committee of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) began to mobilize. Tiro's expulsion set off protests of solidarity, not only at Turfloop, but also elsewhere around South Africa at other black universities and colleges. Though the University of the North authorities were conscientious in insisting that Tiro was the only culprit to be blamed, this was a clear miscalculation. They failed to realize that his words had had an electrifying and galvanizing effect; and, as one author has noted, they discounted the 'thunderous applause' his speech received that day.[125] Percy Mokwele, a young black lecturer in Education who was present recalled, 'When Tiro addressed the graduation ceremony we were there in the hall. And during his talk students cheered, cheered and accepted what he was saying. And some black members of staff – especially the younger ones - also cheered.'[126]

Indeed, the expulsion of Tiro marked a turning point, not just for the students of Turfloop, but for the staff as well. Until 1972 academic staff at the university had co-existed in a joint Staff Association, the *Dosentvereniging* or Lecturers' Union, which was responsible for

[124] Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony*, p. 93.
[125] Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, p. 150.
[126] Author's interview with Percy Mokwele, Turfloop, 20 September 2011.

academic management and making recommendations to the Rector and University Senate. Though social activities and living quarters remained firmly separated by race under the ethos of apartheid, academic and administrative matters were undertaken and debated by this joint body.[127] In an emergency meeting after the 1972 graduation ceremony (mentioned above), this union faced the question of whether to support or condemn the university administration's decision to expel Tiro. As remembered by Percy Mokwele, it was a fraught discussion:

> During the discussions of what Tiro said, there was great tension in the meeting place […]. The chairman was, of course, white and he wanted the staff association to condemn what Tiro said. But the black members of staff said nothing to him – they wouldn't agree. They didn't support that motion of condemning what he [Tiro] said and that the university [was] doing well by expelling him. It was great tension. And eventually when, because white members were in the majority[128], when they voted they won that motion of condemning Tiro and supporting the administration for expelling him, the black members of staff marched out, led by the most senior black member of staff: Professor Kgware, who was the most senior.[129]

This walkout was the fissure that led to a fundamental and lasting division between black and white staff at Turfloop for many years. It precipitated the formation of the Black Academic Staff Association (BASA), and by default a white academic staff association of the old *Dosentvereniging*. In the mid-1970s BASA became a vehicle for black staff to express their political support and solidarity with student causes. As tensions heightened at Turfloop the polarization between the white administration and staff, and the black staff and students became entrenched.

[127] Author's interview with Percy Mokwele; 'Turfloop: Growing University of the North', *The Star* 16 May 1968. [WHP AD1912/258.16]
[128] In 1972 white academic staff outnumbered black at Turfloop by approximately three to one.
[129] Author's interview with Percy Mokwele.

Before the formation of BASA, racial politics were already a facet of life at Turfloop, as has been discussed with regard to the UCM and SASO earlier in this chapter. By the time Tiro stood at the graduation podium in April 1972, the university authorities were highly suspicious of SASO. This was evidenced by Rector J.L. Boshoff's censoring the two SASO documents for distribution on campus in March 1972. That incident was indicative of the disintegration of the tacit consent with which the university administration had previously treated SASO's emergence in student politics, but as I have argued above it was a moderated response and no disciplinary action was taken against students. In a dramatic turn to more aggressive punitive measures, the administration banned SASO from campus in the aftermath of the 'Tiro incident'.

Aggressive action marked the general approach of the University of the North administration to Tiro's speech, and it was to become a hallmark of the relationship between the university and its students throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In reaction to Tiro's expulsion, students organized a boycott of lectures in protest 'until such time that Mr. Tiro be readmitted or tried before a tribunal'.[130] In response to this, the university administration summarily expelled *all* students from Turfloop and required each to apply for readmission. This heavy-handed tactic allowed administrators to pick and choose whom to readmit, with some knowledge of which student leaders played especially influential and political roles. In the end, the entire SRC and 'other additional influential members of the student community' were denied readmission for a period of at least two years. [131]

[130] SASO Memo from Rubin Phillip, 24 May 1972. [WHP A2176/3]
[131] Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe.

Banning SASO on campus proved as ineffective as banning the UCM before it. These two organisations and their political platforms had already made an impact on the Turfloop student body. After the expulsion of Tiro and so many other student leaders in 1972, other students proved willing and able to step into their shoes. Whereas once anti-apartheid politics had been the province of a radical minority, now, according to student leaders from disparate groups, the majority of the student body supported them.[132] Thanks to SASO's bulk-affiliation method through the SRC, and to its frequent and widespread meetings and formation schools, most were conscientized to the political situation. But another significant factor in the mobilization of students lay at the feet of the university administration itself: their strict punishment of Tiro, and the extreme reaction of expelling all students, served to galvanize not just the students and staff of Turfloop, but also their fellows at black universities across the country. The formation of the Black Academic Staff Association has already been mentioned. For the students' part, boycotts and protests on campus became frequent, almost routine. In the winter of 1972 students at Turfloop were out of lectures almost as much as they were in. Following a declared 1 June return-to-classes, protests resumed within days.[133]

It is worth noting that the depth of conscientization varied; not all students became core SASO activists, and many (though by no means all) left their activism behind after university and went into administrative jobs sometimes in the very structures against which they had protested. But in the context of the very local and specific concerns of life at Turfloop - the overreach of the university authorities, and the effective mobilization by groups on campus

[132] Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe; Author's interview with Sydney Seolanyanne, Parktown, Johannesburg, 24 November 2011.
[133] For a comprehensive breakdown of student protest and university response at Turfloop from 1969 to 1979, see Table 3.1 in Appendix B, p. 313.

like SASO and the SRC - students protested in huge numbers with stay-aways, boycotts, and walkouts.

The impact of these protests was felt well beyond Turfloop's walls. On May 13, 1972, in the week following the mass expulsion at the University of the North, forty delegates adopted what became known as 'The Alice Declaration' at a SASO Formation School being held at the Federal Theological Seminary (FedSem) in Alice, Eastern Cape. Forty SASO delegates from black institutions and universities attended the Formation School, with the majority likely coming from FedSem itself and the nearby University of Fort Hare. The Alice Declaration, referring to incidents of unrest throughout the country, took particular notice of

> 'The oppressive atmosphere in the Black Institutions of Higher Learning as demonstrated by the expulsion of the TURFLOOP STUDENT BODY', and resolved that 'all Black Students force the Institutions/Universities to close down by boycotting all lectures. [And additionally] That the date when a simultaneous boycott of all classes be with effect from June 1st when it is expected that ALL TURFLOOP STUDENTS will be returning to Universities.'[134]

The Alice Declaration was taken up by students at the Universities of Fort Hare, the Western Cape, Zululand, and Durban-Westville. Turfloop's reach had extended far beyond the small farm in the Northern Transvaal, thanks in large part to the organisational capacity of SASO.

Quick responsiveness and the ability to mobilize their highly politicized base were two of SASO's great organisational advantages, both of which were displayed in its response to the expulsion of Tiro and the Turfloop student body following the 1972 graduation controversy. However, sometimes these mechanisms enabled such quick responses that the SASO executive was unable to control them. The Alice Declaration was one such instance. As it was initiated at a formation school by ordinary delegates with no electoral mandate, and not

[134] SASO, 'A Fact Paper: The Student Crisis', 1972, p. 1. (emphasis original) [WHP A2176/6.20]

by the SASO executive, or indeed by representatives of the relevant SRCs, it caused some controversy. At a special meeting in June 1972 of SRC presidents, the SASO Executive Committee, and campus representatives of SASO, the adoption and publication of the Alice Declaration the previous month 'came under serious discussion'. Concern was raised because 'this decision was published in the Sunday press even before the SRCs were consulted'. This had arguably allowed university officials to 'pre-arm' themselves, and perhaps had intimidated students before 'the students [had] planned themselves'.[135] Though these and other significant concerns were raised over the timing and manner of the Alice Declaration, the leadership also recognized 'that students actually responded to the ALICE call when they protested in June and fully aligned themselves with student resentment of authoritarian universities throughout the country.'[136] The SASO mechanisms for mobilization, then, were highly effective, although difficult to harness.

The university administration was not without leverage in the face of such student protests, however. In order to be readmitted, it required students to sign statements agreeing that '(1) Mr. A. R. Tiro will not be readmitted, (2) The Students Representative Council has been suspended, and (3) The Constitution of the SRC has been suspended including the committees and also the Local Committee of SASO'.[137] Over the course of the winter holidays most students eventually signed these declarations in order to return to the university, which caused contention in activist circles. At the 1972 SASO General Students Council meeting some of these students who were in attendance were accused of 'tactily [sic] accept[ing] that SASO be suspended on campus'. Turfloop's expelled SRC president, Aubrey

[135] Minutes from the Meeting of SRC Presidents (Constituted in Johannesburg on 31st May, 1972), SASO Executive Committee, and representatives of SASO on campuses. 17 June 1972. p. 1. [WHP A2176/4.2]
[136] Ibid., p. 1.
[137] SASO, 'A Fact Paper: The Student Crisis', 1972, p. 3. [WHP A2176/6.20]

Mokoena, brought a motion demanding that these students be requested to leave the conference.[138] Though the motion was withdrawn before a vote was held, it is indicative of the division that university authorities were able to foster by so qualifying the re-admittance of each individual student. In spite of this disagreement and the fact that most students at Turfloop did eventually return to lectures with their demands unmet, the mass-action in response to Tiro's expulsion marked a turning point in protest and politics at the University of the North, and was to shape the face of protest at the university for the next two decades.

The 1972 General Students Council meeting, at which Aubrey Mokoena lobbied for the expulsion of some Turfloop students, also marked a fraught moment in SASO's own politics. In addition to Mokoena and other SASO stalwarts decrying the collaboration of students who had returned to classes at the University of the North, a bigger scandal was brewing in the SASO executive itself between those favouring boycotts and isolation and those who were more concerned to work within the framework demanded by the University authorities: Themba Sono had been elected as the third SASO president the preceding year. A former Turfloop student, Sono came from outside the original core of SASO leadership. Harry Nengwekhulu and Barney Pityana, then SASO's national organizers, had brought him to the attention of the executive as a presidential possibility. Even though Sono was selected and tacitly approved as candidate by the SASO executive he turned out to be an unpredictable leader. Looking back, Harry Nengwekhulu suggests that he was an unknown quantity:

> [I]n SASO we never really had democratic elections. We had democratic elections but they didn't exist, because we [the members of the executive] vetted – and we made sure that we know [who the candidate(s) would be]. […] So Sono was a surprise candidate, something that had never happened.[139]

[138] Minutes of the Proceedings of the 3rd General Students Council of the South African Students' Organisation. St. Peter's Seminary, Hammanskraal, 2-9 July, 1972. [WHP A2176/5.2]
[139] Author's interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a).

A surprise candidate was, it transpired, not something SASO knew how to handle. Soon suspicions of Sono had been raised: he was nowhere to be found when the other members of the SASO executive wanted him to represent the organisation at the funeral of a colleague from the South African Institute of Race Relations, and the SASO secretary reported that he wouldn't let her transcribe his speech notes in the lead-up to the General Students Council.[140] Rumours had begun to germinate that he might be informing to the police. But the real surprise that Sono presented was when he gave the presidential address at the 1972 General Students Council: rather than conforming to the standard SASO position on non-cooperation with 'The System' as the apparatuses of the apartheid state were called, he called for SASO to work through organisations within the Bantustans to further their programme of Black Consciousness and the elevation of black South Africans. It was a highly controversial speech that resulted in immediate calls for Sono's removal from the presidency and expulsion from SASO itself. Steve Biko, watching from the audience, drafted a motion that Sono's speech be struck from the record, to prevent it being reported in the press and associating SASO with any form of collaboration.[141] Following the speech, Biko's motion to suppress its contents, and a further motion calling for Sono's expulsion, were passed. Shortly thereafter Sono left South Africa to pursue further education in the United States. The allegations of collaboration increased as his former SASO colleagues speculated about the speed and apparent ease with which he received a passport to make the trip.[142]

Speaking obliquely about the incident a year later with an interviewer in New York, Sono argued again for the revolutionary potential inherent in the Bantustan system:

[140] Author's interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a).
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.

> Bantustan leaders … are currently using the land and independence issues as rallying points. These people have a *de jure* and perhaps a *de facto* power over eight million rural Africans … A political struggle that ignores the land question is doomed. […] What is important is not whether Matanzima will get more land, but this factor could be used to generate a deeper conflict with Pretoria …[143]

Of this interview Sono says, 'I was repeating the position I had argued before [the] SASO 3rd GSC the previous year.'[144] Sono, then, contends that he advocated cooperation with the Bantustans specifically to thwart the apartheid state, while those in the audience at the 1972 GSC heard only a protagonist of collaboration. This might have been an unfair critique of Sono, and indeed of Bantustans; at the time that Sono held the SASO presidency Bantustan leaders like Mangosuthu Buthelezi in KwaZulu and Cedric Phatudi in Lebowa were engaging to some degree with broader anti-apartheid forces. Beinart has argued they could be highly critical of the South African government, and even investigated the idea of forming a unified black South African state at a 1973 meeting.[145] But SASO had drawn a clear line on Bantustans and their leaders, even as some of those leaders began to articulate increasingly anti-apartheid politics. Even this was perceived as a boon to the South African state. Of the new rhetoric being used by Buthelezi and others, Biko wrote, 'Bantustan leaders are subconsciously siding and abetting in the total subjugation of the black people of this country. By making the kind of militant noise they are now making they have managed to confuse the blacks sufficiently to believe that something great is about to happen.'[146] He further blamed the white press for propagating this message:

> Also, by widely publicising the pronouncements of the Bantustan leaders and attaching extremely liberal connotations to these pronouncements, the white press has confused the outside world to think that in South Africa not only is

[143] Quoted in Sono, *Origins of Black Consciousness*, p. 126.
[144] Ibid., p. 126.
[145] W. Beinart, 'Beyond "Homelands": Some Ideas about the History of African Rural Areas in South Africa', *South African Historical Journal,* 64(1), pp. 5-21, p. 11.
[146] Biko, *I Write What I Like*, p. 85.

> there freedom of speech but that the Bantustan leaders are actively plotting for the ousting of the white government without the government taking any action. Thus for white South Africa it is extremely important to have a man like Buthelezi speaking and sounding the way he is doing.[147]

From the SASO perspective, cooperation in any form was interpreted as collaboration; no scope for changing apartheid from within its own structures – like Bantustans – existed. In the same General Students Council where Sono had given his controversial speech, a motion was brought that described Bantustans as 'nothing else but toy-telephones presumably meant to cheat black people into believing that they had communication-links with Pretoria,' and resolved 'to call upon the leaders of Bantustans to forthwith withdraw from this system effort to preserve their own dignity and to demonstrate with the struggle of the black people.'[148] The motion was carried unanimously, 'with acclaim'.

The incident surrounding Sono's speech, and the starkly different perspectives on each side even decades later, indicates the highly charged atmosphere in SASO during the early 1970s, and the seriousness with which any threat of collaboration was dealt. Sono, the first presidential candidate who had not been tightly vetted by the founders of SASO, had used language that sent up alarms within the organisation that he might be a collaborator with the apartheid State and the core of the SASO executive moved swiftly to protect the organisation from this perceived taint. Ideological purity about the doctrine of non-cooperation was paramount for SASO, and this exacting measure sometimes took its toll: on those students who accepted university restrictions and returned to classes after the Tiro protests, and even at the very highest reaches of the organisation.

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[147] Biko, *I Write What I Like*, p. 85.
[148] Minutes of the Proceedings of the 3rd General Students Council of the South African Students' Organisation, St. Peter's Seminary, Hammanskraal, 2 – 9 July 1972. [WHP A2176/5.2]

The Students' Christian Movement

As has been noted, Christianity played a critical role in student politics at Turfloop as they were mobilized by both the UCM and SASO. The Black Theology of James Cone that many students had embraced demanded political activism from its adherents, and Abraham Tiro's pivotal speech had been peppered with evangelical, as well as political, language. The convergence of these two important strands in the student body gradually crystallized in another on-campus Christian group, the Students' Christian Movement (or SCM). The SCM had been founded as an offshoot of the South African Students' Christian Association (SCA). The SCA was an all-white apolitical, evangelical body, and after a national tour in or around late 1964, its founder Graham Mackintosh decided that black, Indian, and Coloured campuses and high schools also had need of such an ecumenical Christian organisation, and he set up branches of the SCA for each of South Africa's four racial groups.[149] These became independent, autonomous movements in January of 1965, and in 1966 the Bantu Section of the SCA adopted the new name of the Students' Christian Movement of South Africa.[150] In contrast to the UCM, the SCA and the SCM were always racially segregated, and their theology emphasized Christian ecumenism rather than Black Theology. The SCA drew its membership from a cross-section of Christian groups with strong roots in the 'mainstream' Protestant Churches (particularly Methodists, Lutherans, and Anglicans). The SCM also incorporated members from Pentecostal churches, like the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), and from some African Initiated Churches, like the populous Zion Christian Church (ZCC), with its headquarters very near Turfloop.[151] In its ecumenism, it was very much like its successful predecessor at Turfloop, the UCM, but arguably wider in its reach as UCM

[149] Butler, *Cyril Ramaphosa,* p. 51.
[150] Correspondence between J.J. Viljoen and Rev. B.H.M. Brown announcing the formation of the SCM, 18 August 1966. [WHP AC623/3.6]
[151] Author's interview with Sydney Seolonyanne.

membership had always been heavily concentrated among the five mainstream churches that offered it support.[152] However, during the period of their co-existence, the theology of the Turfloop branch of SCM was more conservative than that of UCM and its members were less politically active. At the top levels of the organisation initially this was by design: in the words of founder Graham Mackintosh in a 1968 letter to former SCA travelling secretary Ruth Schoch, 'SCM is quite rightly not prepared to touch UCM with a barge pole and we are the only people who can give them the help they need to establish a Biblical witness on the campusses [sic] and to counter the UCM's excessively political slant.'[153]

In addition to its apolitical bent, in another contrast to the UCM, which was the product of university students, chaplains, and staff, the SCM was most deeply rooted in secondary schools throughout South Africa. Though Mackintosh had established branches both on university campuses and at schools, it was in the latter environment that SCM particularly thrived. In Soweto it was one of many important Christian student groupings that linked students from key secondary schools like Sekano Ntoane, Morris Isaacson, and Naledi.[154] Elsewhere, as with Mphaphuli High School in Sibasa, Venda, it was the largest student organisation at the school, and attendance at its meetings was compulsory in the late 1960s.[155] Branches at schools engaged in prayer meetings and bible study, but also in film and games meetings, and evangelical outreach to nearby communities. Initially these activities were explicitly Christian in focus: films were ordered from SCM-approved Christian providers, quiz nights consisted of opposing teams answering timed questions on

[152] These were the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Catholic Church, and the United Congregational Church.
[153] Letter from Graham Mackintosh to Ruth Schoch, 26 December 1968. [WHP AC623/3.6]
[154] Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi,* p. 162.
[155] Butler, *Cyril Ramaphosa,* p. 29.

biblical passages in front of an audience, and members were encouraged to bring in records and share music, but 'Preferably Christian choral or vocal works should be presented'.[156]

In this assortment of events, bible study was given pride of place: 'Without hesitation it may be stated that Bible Study is and should be the most important aspect of the practical work of every branch.' A guide outlined important passages and things to emphasize in this work; in contrast to the UCM's exegetical development of passages like Luke 4:18, which focuses on Christ's coming to grant freedom to prisoners and the oppressed, the SCM took a much more literal approach to their interrogation of the text. The bible study guide deals with different biblical passages than the UCM did (and SCM generally dealt with the bible in much greater specifics than the UCM), but where common themes can be identified, the two groups diverged in their interpretations: where the UCM advocated a Christian struggle against the evil of apartheid and racial segregation with overt political action, when SCM addressed the issue of battle, in regard to a passage in Judges 7: 1-25 in which Israelis fought the Midianites, the lesson to be taken away was that the contemporary battles of SCM members were 'too great for us. Unless we realise our helplessness in the face of the powers of Satan, we will never win the battle against him'.[157] The weapons to be used in such battles were identified always as spiritual weapons, never political ones. In another passage from the guide, SCM members are advised to 'Be angry and sin not. Anger is required, we must be angry about sin and injustice. But we must not be angry just to satisfy our own needs.'[158] The overall tone of SCM's theology emphasized the doctrine of individual salvation and responsibility, rather than the collective interventionist Christianity of the UCM. In its early

[156] Handbook for the Students' Christian Movement of South Africa, May 1970. [WHP AC623/3.6]
[157] 'Outlines for Group Bible Study', Students' Christian Movement of South Africa, undated c. early 1970s, p. 2. [WHP AC623/3.6]
[158] Ibid., p. 2.

days, SCM clearly identified the struggles its members faced as against sin and Satan, not the injustices of the South African state.

As SCM existed in schools and on campuses that were becoming increasingly politically aware, however, and as its members were exposed to the Black Theology being propagated by the UCM and SASO, this absence from politics began to slowly dissolve. In Soweto in the early 1970s some members began to jettison their apolitical stance and to engage with SASO and its affiliates.[159] Its growth at the university level owed a great deal to those roots; at Turfloop, many students who had been members while at school, continued to be actively engaged in the organisation.

These adherents were not initially enough to give the group credibility at Turfloop as the campus became increasingly politicized and tensions heightened. Though as an established group the SCM predated the UCM, by the late 1960s the increasing politicization on campus had made the conservative SCM something of a pariah among the bulk of Turfloop students. As Daniel Magaziner has put it, the SCM was 'supplanted' on campus by the emergence of the UCM.[160] It was increasingly ostracized on campus by students for its apolitical 'emphasis on the gospel of individual salvation'.[161] In 1970 and 1971 those students who were SCM members were forced to meet secretly in lecture halls, or in the fields outside campus.[162] The organisation was widely considered a 'sell-out' by politicized students in the very early 1970s, and was contrasted to the politically active and radical UCM, much as it had been contrasted by Mackintosh, although from a different perspective.

[159] Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi*, p. 162.
[160] Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, p. 158.
[161] Butler, *Cyril Ramaphosa*, p. 50.
[162] Ibid., p. 51.

The tide began to turn for the SCM with the arrival of a new class of students in 1972. Like those before them, many among this class had been actively involved in the SCM at the school level; among these were the devoutly religious Frank Chikane and Cyril Ramaphosa. Ramaphosa particularly was well known for his evangelical work during secondary school in Sibasa, Venda, as well as his personal charisma and leadership capabilities. Chikane had played an important role as mediator in conflicts – sometimes violent ones - between Christian and other, increasingly political, students at his high school in Orlando, Soweto.[163] By the time they both arrived at Turfloop in 1972, the situation for politically active Christians on campus was in flux; the UCM had been banned on campus and was also in the process of dissolving itself, as SASO assumed responsibility for programmes like Black Theology. Confronted with a radical and disintegrating UCM and a broadly reviled SCM, '[r]ather than adopting the purist position of supporting UCM and turning his back on SCM, Ramaphosa moved with great speed to […] reform the more conservative movement's branch.'[164] Given that Ramaphosa's arrival on campus coincided with the last few months of the UCM's existence before dissolution, this proved to be a prescient choice. But beyond pragmatism, Ramaphosa's loyalty to the SCM, and that of many of his peers in their first year at Turfloop, including Frank Chikane, Ishmael Mkhabela, and Lybon Mabasa, was rooted deeply. All had been involved in the organisation's branches at their secondary schools in Soweto, and, in Ramaphosa's case, Venda. Their approach to the SCM was markedly different to the organisation's profile on campus and incorporated a new focus on evangelical activism in local communities. Men like Ramaphosa and Chikane brought this activism with them from their school days and were instrumental in spreading it to other Turfloop SCM

[163] Butler, *Cyril Ramaphosa*, p. 50.
[164] Ibid., p. 51.

members: this cohort arrived at Turfloop in early 1972, just months before Abraham Tiro's pivotal speech, and at a moment when a space was opening in the political arena on campus. In the aftermath of Tiro's rousing (and explicitly Christian) speech and the mass expulsions, and with the UCM and SASO both now banned on campus, some SCM members also began to move away from a singular emphasis on salvation and the organisation began to attract more politically active members.

But this shift within the group was gradual and, in some senses, incomplete. As contemporary SCM member and leader Sydney Seolonyanne put it, the SCM on campus encompassed students of radically different political views:

> You see within SCM you also had people who were very conservative, who were fundamentals; [people] who believed that Christianity and politics, we have to separate them, and who'd say, "SCM, we are here to serve and to serve God." And you would also have those who say "You know the life we live here in South Africa, it affects you regardless – if you're black it affects you, regardless if you're a black fundamentalist or an ordinary Christian believer." So you will have that.[165]

The early 1970s saw a shift in power between these factions - from the more fundamentalist, conservative base to a more politically active engagement pioneered by SCM's new leaders at Turfloop. SCM's theology began to incorporate contemporary issues and to address injustices faced daily by blacks in South Africa. According to Ishmael Mkhabela,

> We [the leaders of the SCM at Turfloop] were not just people who believed in fellowship and reflection. We consciously made it a point that we should visit surrounding villages, be exposed to what is happening in those villages, and talk about what, as students, we could contribute in improving the situation. […] We also consciously confronted the situation that we need to make our people, the students, raise their awareness.[166]

Ramaphosa particularly worked to restructure the SCM at Turfloop, and in so doing, he wrote politics into it. 'He produced a new constitution, and his fellow members were obliged to

[165] Author's interview with Sydney Seolonyanne.
[166] Author's interview with Ishmael Mkhabela, Parktown, Johannesburg, 21 October 2011.

debate its contents endlessly. In this constitution, [Ramaphosa] inserted a "doctrinal basis" section that explicitly repudiated racism and the unjust system of apartheid.'[167] The structure of this new constitution and the process of forming it brought the SCM and its members at Turfloop more firmly into the arena of political action, while their intense program of social activism brought them into close contact with the needs and problems of local communities. Sydney Seolonyanne articulates the shift this way:

> [W]hen I arrived [in 1970, the campus profile of SCM] was not as influential on student life as two years later, when these other youngsters: Ishmael, Lybon, Cyril, came. So earlier on it was - when I was there before they came – it was a bit… mild. But it became very strong and influential; let's say from '72 onwards.[168]

This political awakening of the SCM was fortuitous in its timing for anti-apartheid activists at Turfloop. By 1972 both the UCM and SASO were banned on campus, and the UCM was only months away from its own dissolution. While SASO remained a powerful force off-campus, by 1974 the SCM became the most significant group that was still unbanned and politically active within the campus walls. Though less closely associated with SASO than the UCM had been, the SCM and SASO also had a working relationship and overlapping membership – in 1974 Ramaphosa became the chairman of the off-campus branch of SASO in addition to his leadership of SCM.

By the time of the publication of the Snyman Commission Report into campus unrest in 1975[169], the SCM, though still more conservative than the UCM had been, was increasingly recognized as a radical student organisation, having absorbed some of the UCM's members on campus and adopted a modified version of its Black Theology. According to the report:

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[167] Butler, *Cyril Ramaphosa,* p. 51.
[168] Author's interview with Sydney Seolonyanne.
[169] The Snyman Commission and Report are discussed more fully in chapters three (pp. 135-9) and four (pp. 145-53) respectively.

> During May 1973 the first signs of the political orientation of [the Students' Christian Movement] began to manifest themselves when an SCM poster appeared on the students' notice board on the campus. On the poster Christ was referred to as the "Popular leader of a liberation movement". This poster was prepared by the Chairman of the local SASO branch [Cyril Ramaphosa] and the witness Frank Chikane [the campus chairman of the SCM] referred to above. This was followed by symposia with topics such as Christianity and the Political, Cultural, and Social Problems of our Time, Religion in a Black Society and Black Theology.[170]

The SCM's increased political profile did not end at Turfloop's gates, either. By the mid 1970s, the Students' Christian Movement's increased politicization had filtered out of universities, and back into schools where it had already been a substantial organizing presence for Christian students. But while in the late 1960s, when Chikane, Mkhabela, Mabasa, and Ramaphosa were schoolboys and adherents of SCM, the organisation was still primarily and almost singularly focused on religious salvation, by the early 1970s Ramaphosa's 'reforms' to the Turfloop branch of SCM had permeated well beyond the university itself. It had become widely politically active, cooperating with SASO activists in schools, and in many cases embracing Black Theology. Important student leaders of the Soweto 1976 student riots, including Tsietsi Mashinini, were members of SCM.[171]

There are direct links between this rising politicization of SCM in schools and the Turfloop Christian student activists. As Magaziner has noted, 'At SCM meetings [in secondary schools], members listened to veterans of the turmoil at the University of the North and talked about Black Theology and the martyrdom of Christ.'[172] Clive Glaser points to the influx of 'politically conscious Turfloop students (many of them expelled before finishing their studies) who took up jobs as teachers in Soweto's high schools' as an important

[170] Snyman, J.H., *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Certain Matters Relating to the University of the North* (Pretoria, 1975), p. 75.
[171] Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets,* p. 158.
[172] Ibid., p. 158.

influence on growing political movements in Soweto schools in 1974 and 1975. (These people and their roles inside and out of Turfloop will be examined further in chapter 3.)

At Turfloop, student politics across groups as disparate as SASO and the SCM relied on articulations of Christianity to muster support for their platforms; by the same token, previously apolitical Christian groups like SCM had to write politics into their agendas in order to maintain support in the student body. Christianity and politics at Turfloop, then, were mutually reliant on one another to mobilize student support.

Conclusion

In the decade and a half since its inception in 1959, Turfloop had gone from the vision of its planners' ideal of a cradle of Bantustan 'civilization' to, in reality, a hothouse for anti-apartheid and anti-Bantustan activists. This transformation was neither linear nor inevitable, though. The constraints of geography and tight control through the department of Bantu Education did exert significant pressure on those in and around Turfloop to conform to these founding ideals: in a 1973 speech at the Turfloop graduation ball, Collins Ramusi, a Johannesburg lawyer and Lebowa politician made an appeal for graduates to 'involve themselves in the development of their respective homelands':

> I'm appealing to you to be prepared to serve the people not theoretically, but practically because the people are suffering. They need doctors, clothes and food. There's hardly water for them. […] You can shun the people if you want to, but you have no right to refuse to assist us, although this business of homelands is embarrassing in so much that the educated people find it difficult to move freely and with dignity. But what can we do?[173]

[173] M. Nonyane, 'Give help in homelands, students told', *Rand Daily Mail*, 5 July 1973. [WHP AD1912/258.16]

Ramusi's appeal encapsulated the intractable situation created by apartheid's homelands: though he decried the policy as 'embarrassing', he appealed for university recruits with a sense of desperation, positing the 'practical' needs of suffering people against the 'theoretical' contribution of the political movements that advocated disengagement. But by the time of his speech, Ramusi was far to the right of the political trend at Turfloop. He was decried and dismissed as a collaborator, much as Themba Sono had been the previous year.

Turfloop student activists in SASO and SCM (after it was radicalized) pressed forward in their campaigns of political conscientization through Black Consciousness and Black Theology (in SASO), and in social outreach and activism to citizens in surrounding communities (in both). In this work, their twinning of politics and Christianity was an important mechanism in successful outreach to fellow students and to local communities, and it followed closely on the earlier example set by the UCM. A 1974 commission of inquiry report had a purely political reading of the University Christian Movement: 'UCM's secret objective was to train the Black people of South Africa for an armed revolution against the Whites.'[174] However, given that the UCM never made any moves towards armed struggle, this reading of the situation misses the point. The UCM was a radical organisation that politicized and arguably secularized religion for its aims, but its currency among activists, and particularly students at the University of the North, was due to its combination of politics with religion - not simply the use of religion in service of politics. This pattern was replicated in different ways in organisations like SASO and the SCM. As Anthony Butler has noted, perhaps in rebuttal to the fairly secularized literature on student politics in South

[174] Wolfson, *Turmoil at Turfloop,* p. 12.

Africa, 'It was an inescapable fact forgotten by radicals that almost all of the students on a campus like Turfloop were or had been active members of Christian organisations.'[175]

SASO itself followed this example; activist Nkwenkwe Nkomo frequently described SASO and other Black Consciousness activists as 'prophets…, bishops…, ministers [and] evangelists'.[176] Magaziner has suggested that this religiosity at the core of Black Consciousness and SASO was rooted, primarily, in the fact that the overwhelming majority of these organisations' leaders were, like Nkomo, Christian.[177] This is undoubtedly true, but in order to understand the political activism that gripped the University of the North in the early 1970s it is necessary to extend his argument: not only was Christianity central to Black Consciousness and SASO because it was a constitutive element of those organisations' leadership, but Christianity extended the political influence of those groups on campuses like Turfloop, because it spoke to a fundamental characteristic of the students they sought to mobilize. Christianity and politics were necessary bedfellows for activists of the time.

The University of the North at Turfloop, in spite of its small size, and relative geographic isolation, was a crucible for student protests in 1970s South Africa, years before the iconic Soweto uprisings of 1976. It became a site for integrating many levels of protest: through the closely intertwined roles of Black Consciousness, politics, Black Theology, and Christianity in student organisations like the University Christian Movement, the Students' Christian Movement, and especially the South African Students' Organisation. It was the cumulative effect of all these pieces that gave activists at Turfloop currency, and the scope to mobilize protests. Neither Christianity nor Black Consciousness alone would have provided as

[175] Butler, *Cyril Ramaphosa,* p. 52.
[176] Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets,* p. 55.
[177] Ibid., p. 56.

powerful an ideological motivator to the bulk of Turfloop's students, and SASO was ideally placed to channel that motivation into mobilization which had ripples of influence beyond Turfloop's campus and throughout South Africa.

Chapter 3:

Turfloop at the Centre of the Storm: Black Consciousness, SASO, and Student Politics in the 1970s

Introduction

By the early 1970s the University of the North at Turfloop was growing increasingly prominent as a centre of student resistance against the apartheid state, or 'the system' as it was called by student activists. This precipitous change in political profile was due in large part to a number of high profile student activists who had cut their political teeth with campus groups like the South African Students' Organisation, the Students' Christian Movement, and the earlier University Christian Movement, as discussed in the previous chapter. For these individuals, and for the majority of the student body of Turfloop, Christianity and political resistance against the system went hand in hand. These activists also served an important role in representing Turfloop, and the radical politics that had developed on campus, to the rest of South Africa and to other student and political activists in the anti-apartheid cause.

These developments occurred against a backdrop of changes in the way that protest politics were being enacted throughout South Africa. Julian Brown's work on the emergence of confrontational politics informs my approach to these issues. Brown contends that a shift toward confrontational protest politics originated on white university campuses in 1966 and 1968; he points to the aftermath of Tiro's expulsion in 1972 as the first move towards such confrontation on black campuses, and the Viva-FRELIMO rallies of 1974, one of which was held at Turfloop, as the culmination of this trend at black universities.[178] Building on Brown,

[178] Brown, 'Public Protest and Violence', see particularly chapters 3 (Student Protests 1968-1972) and 5 (The pro-Frelimo Rallies, 1974).

who is primarily concerned with the form of these protests and linking them to national trends, I aim to contextualize them in the local specificities of life and campus politics at Turfloop, and to understand the ways in which these issues came to incorporate broader political concerns around national liberation.

In this chapter I will consider Turfloop's increasingly prominent place as a centre of student activism, SASO's growing organisational capacity and public profile, and how these two phenomena interacted with one another. As a lens for doing so I will examine some prominent activists, the roles they played both at and outside of Turfloop, and their importance in South African student politics in the middle of the 1970s – perhaps the most important period of student activism in the country's history. I will also consider the impact of two major and related events - the 1974 Viva-FRELIMO Rallies, and the resulting arrest and trial of the SASO Nine - on the trajectory of SASO's organisational history

Turfloop's Student-Teacher Activists

Arguably Turfloop's most high-profile student activist was Abraham Onkgopotse Tiro, author of the controversial graduation speech in April 1972. Tiro's stand against the inequality he encountered at the university, at the graduation itself, and throughout South Africa resulted in his expulsion, the temporary closure of the university, and solidarity protests at Turfloop and on campuses throughout the country. The speech and its immediate aftermath at Turfloop and beyond have already been discussed in chapter two, but here I want to consider Tiro's continuing role as an activist after he left university. Following the dramatic closure of the university and summary expulsion of all Turfloop students, which resulted in a carefully orchestrated readmission process that allowed the university authorities

to exclude Tiro, the entire SRC, and 'other additional influential members of the student community'[179], Tiro left campus and moved to Soweto where he stayed with his mother, who was living there at the time.[180]

Tiro continued his activism in student politics immediately, unhampered by his expulsion from Turfloop. He became a key organizer for SASO at the executive level, and was paired with Permanent Organizer (and fellow ex-Turfloop student) Harry Nengwekhulu as part of SASO's tiered approach to leadership. These tiers were designed to create stables of leadership within the organisation that permeated beyond the most visible leaders like Steve Biko and Barney Pityana. From its inception, the founders of SASO understood their tenuous position as an aboveground activist organisation. They were aware of the banning of other political groups, including the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress, less than a decade earlier, and realized the risks of directly challenging the state. One way they successfully sought to delay this clash was to target a mutual enemy: white liberals. As I argued in chapter two, at Turfloop this allowed the fledgling SASO room to develop without immediate interference from university authorities. But targeting white liberals first was at best a delaying tactic – conflict with the state would come, SASO activists knew; it was only a matter of when. As Harry Nengwekhulu describes early debate amongst SASO founders,

> We were not agreed, ourselves, whether we wanted above-the-ground student movement or we wanted underground movement. Some people said "You form a student movement that operates above the ground, we are going to be banned in three, four, five weeks. It won't exist." But an underground movement, it also has its own major weaknesses. We would not be able to mobilize. So ultimately, the view that we must form an above-the-ground movement prevailed, and we decided we must give it a five year period of

[179] Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe.
[180] TRC Testimony of Moleseng Anna Tiro, 29 April 1996, accessed 12 May 2011 at http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans%5Cmethodis/tiro.htm.

> existence; within five years we should have been able to mobilize almost everybody.[181]

In order to maximize their influence and mobilization within those estimated five years SASO devised strategies to prolong their existence and influence. One of these strategies was the layering of leadership.

> [W]e had three, four layers of leadership. What we used to do at the conference, we used to have a straw vote. We would collect the votes, and those are the people who were elected. But we knew who was popular. […] Tiro was attached to me, because we knew he was a good organizer. Pityana had, you know, Ben Khoapa. […] So he spent time with Pityana, to know administration. I tried following Tiro around the country; the idea was that you know, when we get banned, they could take over immediately. So we survived because of that. We were six layers! So even if they burned the first layer, the second layer – the third layer could take over immediately.[182]

Abraham Tiro, then, was part of this backbench of leaders, prepared to step seamlessly to the fore if Nengwekhulu was banned or otherwise incapacitated. He traveled within and even outside South Africa in the course of this work, bringing SASO's message with him. In a 1973 speech in Lesotho he reiterated SASO's position against white liberalism: 'We have no use for liberals. We reject their help. They have no part to play in the struggle for liberation. Their policy of multi-racialism is useless.'[183]

Mzamane, Maaba, and Biko have argued that effective leadership training was a key SASO strength, and that formation schools in particular facilitated the growth of a cohort of leaders who were able to expand black consciousness ideas beyond SASO itself.[184] But I would contend that the greatest strength of its leadership training was contained within SASO itself, in the depth of leadership it was to contain at a given time. Of the pervasive organisational diffusion that resulted from the layered-leadership approach, Gail Gerhart has written, 'While

[181] Author's interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a).
[182] Ibid.
[183] 'Tiro's goal was black liberation', *The Star*, 4 February 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[184] M.V. Mzamane, B. Maaba, and N. Biko. 'The Black Consciousness Movement', p. 138.

there were feelings of intense loyalty and even adulation to the organisation's top leadership, deliberate and very successful efforts were also made to identify and indoctrinate promising new cadres at every opportunity. The result, among black university students […] was thus a level of political education and ideological diffusion never before achieved by any black political organisation.'[185] SASO's strategy to prevent banning of its leadership and to prolong the organisation's existence, then, also served to promote more thorough and deep-reaching indoctrination in its ranks. Students were a natural audience for the intellectual message of black consciousness, which emphasized psychological liberation before physical revolution. With education at its core, targeting this demographic enabled SASO to achieve the deep diffusion of political ideas across campuses and even schools that Gerhart indicates. Other liberation organisations (including the ANC) working across more disparate class, race, generation, and geographic groups could not achieve the same levels of ideological cohesion, even as they exceeded SASO's organisational capacity in other areas.

Indeed, SASO itself was unable to maintain high levels of ideological cohesion and organisational effectiveness once it moved beyond the bounds of educational institutions, though its activists were also engaged in reaching outside SASO's ranks to spread the message of Black Consciousness. As Harry Nengwekhulu said, 'within five years we should have been able to mobilize almost everybody.'[186] An important, albeit much later implemented, part of SASO's goal to mobilize 'almost everybody' came about with the development of its sister organisation, the Black People's Convention (BPC). The BPC was conceived as a political party to carry SASO's message of Black Consciousness and Africanisation (the move to replace white with black leadership in core African institutions,

[185] G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, p. 270.
[186] Author's interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a).

like Turfloop) to a more diffuse group than the existing system of working through students allowed. It was meant to be a platform for organizing those who were outside SASO's remit – namely adults who were outside the educational system.[187] The organisation was planned by the student leaders of SASO, and fleshed out by their executive,[188] but it was to stand apart as its own independent organisation. In order for this new party to embody its different demographic from SASO, it made its first new head Winifred Motlalepula Kgware, wife of Turfloop professor William Kgware and mother of activists Ben, Manana, and Pinky.[189] Winifred Kgware had been deeply involved in the Turfloop branch of the University Christian Movement during the late 1960s, but had been more removed from direct political action since the UCM's dissolution. She had no personal involvement with SASO, though her daughter Manana had been part of the early executive in 1969. Kgware's transition from wife and mother to activist and figurehead of a party is instructive in several ways: her Christian beliefs were the impetus that prompted her own politicization through the University Christian Movement. She agitated for more press coverage of student protests at Turfloop, and of what she perceived as the persecution of the UCM by the then Rector, whom she described as unscrupulous and unfair.[190] In the face of that persecution, though, she helped students smuggle information inside programmes for events, and through letters to other UCM colleagues out to the press, in spite of her fear that she might face retribution 'from all sides, including my employers, the Bantu Ed. Dept.'[191] In addition to her political activism, Mrs Kgware was a teacher at Mankweng's Hwiti High School, just outside the Turfloop gates. Here she helped expose her students to some of the political movements that

[187] Black People's Convention, First National Congress, 16-17 December 1972. [WHP A2177]
[188] Author's interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a).
[189] The Kgware family's role in politics and activism at Turfloop is more thoroughly discussed in chapter two (pp. 34-52), and chapter four (pp. 160-8).
[190] Letter from Winifred Kgware to Colin Collins, 23 September 1968. [WHP AD1126/F]
[191] Ibid.; Letter from Manana Kgware to James Moulder, 15 August 1968. [WHP AD1126/F]

were blossoming on the nearby campus. As a mother, wife, and teacher she was an ideal figure to lead the BPC because she encapsulated an age group and demographic as a middle-aged woman, a mother, and a teacher, that the more radically active students in SASO hoped to reach: Winifred Kgware was very much part of the profile of Harry Nengwekhulu's 'almost everybody'.

In spite of such concerted efforts, however, BPC never achieved the organisational success of its sister body SASO; it remained one of the many groups under the Black Consciousness Movement remit, but it failed to mobilize the non-student population the way SASO had done with students. In part this must be attributed to the unique character of students themselves. Particularly at an institution like Turfloop, where, as Tiro's stinging critique had clearly indicated, the rhetoric of self-rule and institutions for Africans met the harsh reality of apartheid oppression and inequality, students formed a ready cohort for politicization. The intellectual curiosity and sharing of ideas that characterize university life for students around the world were also present for those at Turfloop and its fellow 'bush' colleges in the early 1970s. The development of an ideology like Black Consciousness, which presented exciting intellectual engagement and addressed students' personal circumstances, proved very popular and expanded beyond universities to schools. But its outreach to other groups – through the BPC and other organisations – never achieved the same success. Theories of psychological liberation were harder to market to non-students outside the black intelligentsia; Magaziner has described the 'vague' political platform of the BPC: '[t]he BPC was SASO's philosophical approach in another form. Its program to "oppose vigorously" and "negate" racism resonated with SASO's existentialism-infused calls to negate nonwhiteness and

assume an oppositional stance.'[192] I would argue that the very vagueness that enabled SASO's message to intellectually excite students, also hampered its ability to politically mobilize their parents and older generations.

As Winifred Kgware was becoming more politically active in the BPC, her husband William Kgware was distancing himself from the activism that most of his family had embraced. A motivating factor in this move may have been the death of his son Bob, in 1968. According to UCM leader Reverend Basil Moore, Bob, an active student leader in the University Christian Movement, was murdered 'by unknown assailants (but presumably the security police)' shortly after their return from a UCM conference in the United States.[193] That same year, William Kgware withdrew his membership from the University Christian Movement, which at the time was becoming increasingly politically outspoken. This move also marked a shift to focus on his career as an academic; by 1969 he had risen to become head of the Department of Didactics, and younger staff respected him as the most senior black academic on campus.[194] He still endeavoured to straddle the disparate worlds of black political emancipation and the constrained Bantustan system of which he found himself part, and which, though it was tightly controlled, offered the possibility of social and career advancement. It was Professor Kgware who led the black academic staff of Turfloop in the walkout from the May 1972 meeting in which Tiro's expulsion was debated. Percy Mokwele, a young lecturer in education at the time, remembers the moment:

> The black members of staff marched out, led by the most senior black member of staff, Professor Kgware, who was the most senior. I was new of

[192] Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets,* p. 143.
[193] B. Moore, 'Learning from Black Theology' speech given at Rhodes University Graduation, 8 April 2011, accessed 15 August 2012 at http://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/ruhome/documents/Basil%20Moore%20Speech%20%20-%20Black%20Theology.pdf. (Parentheses original)
[194] Author's interview with Percy Mokwele.

> course at that time, and my attitude was that if he goes out, I go out with him.[195]

But in spite of such moments of political protest, Kgware more commonly preached caution and discretion as students agitated against the oppression and segregation imposed by apartheid. In an article published in October 1974, entitled 'Education of the Africans in South Africa', Kgware discussed the roots of Bantu Education policy, the boom in primary education that had occurred since its implementation, the 'disturbingly high drop-out rate' among black pupils, and the inadequacy of government funding for black schools.[196] He did so without challenging the premises of separate education, never linking the specific inadequacies to the injustice of the system as a whole, something his Turfloop students had long been doing. Indeed, he described the development of eight Bantustans as a 'welcome and inevitable' development, indicating that South Africa's own African independence was on its way to completion, but what remained to be achieved was a 'commensurate development of human and natural resources'.[197] Though he advocated African independence, increased development, and, most vociferously, improved educational opportunities for black students, Kgware advocated pursuit of these agendas through the Bantustan system and not through conflict with the South African state. His family, in contrast, became increasingly politically radical: his daughters Manana and Pinky were both active in SASO on campus at Turfloop; Manana was part of the first SASO executive under Steve Biko, and continued her activism as a teacher when she graduated from Turfloop and moved to Thaba 'Nchu in the Orange Free State. Winifred had remained an active member of the University Christian Movement until its dissolution in 1972; in December of that year

[195] Ibid.
[196] Kgware, William. 'Education of the Africans in South Africa', *South Africa International*, October 1974. [WHP A2675/III/943]
[197] Ibid.

she became the first president of the BPC, and later tried (but failed) to set up a BPC branch at Turfloop.[198]

In addition to its work through BPC to conscientize adults, SASO sought to reach out to younger students who had not yet arrived at university. This effort became a main priority in 1972, and after his expulsion Abraham Tiro was deeply involved in this approach. In addition to his continued activism with SASO, he found a job as a teacher in Soweto's Morris Isaacson High School. In spite of his expulsion from Turfloop, Tiro had a bachelor's degree and partially completed university diploma in education; in the context Kgware had described – of the booming numbers of school children and inadequate resources and staff to teach them – Tiro's political past did not preclude his employment. The principal at Morris Isaacson, Lekgau Mathabathe, hired Tiro to teach English and History.

Once they were involved in school structures, Tiro and other SASO activists found that a framework for political organisation was already established within some schools. The African Students Movement (ASM) had emerged in the late 1960s[199] at Diepkloof High School in Soweto. It spread to a limited number of neighboring schools, first Orlando West High School and Orlando High School, and drew together students primarily from Christian youth groups like Y-Teens, Leseding, and Youth Alive.[200] Furthering this Christian identity, the ASM in its early days had links to the University Christian Movement. UCM members like Tom Manthata, then a teacher at Sekano Ntoane High School in Soweto, encouraged the fledgling group and provided them 'access to literature on developments in Africa.'[201] As

[198] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5296 (Lekota) [WHP AD2012/14.1]
[199] Nozipho Diseko ('Origins and Development of SASM') and Clive Glaser (*Bo-Tsotsi*) date this as 1968.
[200] Diseko, 'Origins and Development of SASM', p. 43.
[201] Ibid., p. 43.

with the University Christian Movement, ASM's Christian associations did not preclude its political development, and redressing the perceived apolitical nature of youth organisations (among them those that had fed into ASM) in Soweto became one of its goals. Its political development came to be focused on Africanism in its early years (thanks in part to literature from people like Manthata). The first Organising Secretary of SASM described that ideological formation: 'We were grappling and experimenting with Africanism and did this on our own, without reference to the PAC [Pan Africanist Congress]. […] We were just trying for ourselves to work out what it means to be African.'[202]

Africanism, the philosophy developed by Anton Lembede for the early ANC Youth League, was what Gerhart has called 'a first attempt to formulate a creed of orthodox nationalism for black South Africa,' and as this implies, Lembede's vision informed a number of subsequent nationalist movements. The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) was perhaps its most overt inheritor, founded by Lembede's Youth League colleagues, A.P. Mda and Robert Sobukwe. That organisation emphasized the racial singularity that Lembede had borrowed from Marcus Garvey, but also advocated pan-African unity over ethnic differences. As the quote above from P. Lenkwe, the Organising Secretary of SASM indicates, however, Africanism was a wider philosophy than the PAC captured, and by the early 1970s a generation of students were grappling with what it might offer them. In this their primary influence was Black Consciousness. The Black Consciousness Movement and SASO had adopted tenets of Africanism, particularly, as discussed in chapter two, Lembede's focus on psychological liberation as a precursor to political autonomy. It was these ideas of what it meant to be an African that galvanized many of the students in SASM. According to Anthony W. Marx, this was an aspect of Lembede's ideology that the PAC did not share: 'Indeed, BC's focus on

[202] P. Lenkwe, quoted in Diseko, 'Origins and Development of SASM', p. 43.

reshaping ideas was criticized by the PAC's founder, Robert Sobukwe, as an elitist concern.'[203] For school students, though, as for students at Turfloop, a focus on the politics of ideas was a natural extension of their education and it led them to consider large questions like what it meant to be African.

They also grappled with national identity: by the early 1970s, the ASM was focusing more concretely on the situation inside South Africa, and this was reflected in its 1972 change of name to the South African Students' Movement (SASM), which coincided with the efforts of SASO to conscientize school students. Tebello Motapanyane, one of the key leaders of the June 1976 uprising, described this shift as reflective of the organisation's national growth, as well:

> Immediately after ASM was formed in these three high schools [Soweto's Diepkloof, Orlando, and Orlando West], messages were transmitted to all the other high school in the whole of the Republic of South Africa. ASM spread quickly to the other high schools because the students realised that it served their aspirations. By 1972 it was decided that since the movement was now national, it should be known as the South African Students Movement, that is SASM.[204]

Clive Glaser has argued that the name change also represents a growing identification with SASO, and its 'more inclusive interpretation of black identity.'[205] The decision to adopt the new name, with its links to SASO and nationalist undertones, marked an increasingly political focus within SASM. Of students' political awareness at this point, Motapanyane said:

> We were, of course, very alive to the fact that we as Black people were being oppressed. The students especially were quite sensitive to this and we were all the time trying to find a way to do something about it. It was

[203] A. Marx, *Lessons of Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960-1990* (Oxford, 1992), p. 50.
[204] Motapanyane, Tebello. 'How June 16 demo was planned', *Sechaba* Vol. 11 (2), 1977. [WHP A2953]
[205] Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi*, p. 162.

> just unfortunate that we were not so clear about how to show our anger and resentment in a clear political way.[206]

In contrast to this lack of outlet to articulate political frustrations, the ASM became SASM as political protest was beginning to heat up on black university campuses. Abraham Tiro's expulsion and the subsequent protests at Turfloop, Ngoye, Fort Hare, and others, were the first public signs of major dissatisfaction at the 'bush' colleges. These developments had important implications for the growing politicization among school students, even beyond symbolic resonance.

As I have noted, just months after his expulsion Tiro moved to Soweto where he secured a job teaching history at Morris Isaacson High School; teaching became an outlet for many politically active university students who were expelled in waves of protest at places like Turfloop between 1972 and 1974. In his testimony after the Soweto uprising, Aubrey Mokoena, former Turfloop student and president of the SRC, noted that 'BPC and SASO had some of its members teaching in schools. […] It was the duty of these people to conscientise students with regard to the struggle for liberation.'[207] Among these teachers, Mokoena noted Tiro at Morris Isaacson, himself at Orlando North Secondary, Tom Manthata at Sekano Ntoane High School, and Cyril Ramaphosa and Lybon Mabasa at Meadowlands High School. All of these except Manthata had been students at Turfloop and were expelled for their political activities.

Their work was effective, because by 1973 SASM had established a cooperative relationship with SASO and its brand of politics, and was using the language of Black Consciousness.

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[206] Motapanyane, Tebello. 'How June 16 demo was planned', *Sechaba* Vol. 11 (2), 1977, p. 2. [WHP A2953]

[207] Deposition of Aubrey Mokoena taken by Justice of the Peace DL Aspelling in Johannesburg. Undated (c. early 1977). [WHP A2953]

Nozipho Diseko has argued persuasively that SASM did not develop as a school wing of SASO, and that it in fact predated the development of Black Consciousness as an ideology, to counter the way that much of the literature has conflated these two movements.[208] Though SASM did not develop as a subset of SASO and did have its own autonomous identity, I would contend that development within the two organisations was closely related and eventually converged in the early 1970s. The style of Africanism espoused by SASM and by SASO developed in tandem, and with related influences – the University Christian Movement being a significant early one – so that by 1973 they were well positioned to work together. Teachers from the Black Consciousness Movement who were teaching in schools with SASM branches fostered this ideological symmetry. Most prominently, Abraham Tiro, in his role at Morris Isaacson, was perhaps the closest SASO member to the workings of SASM. Tiro acted as liaison between the organisations, and under his watch an official wing of SASM was created for SASO and older members; from the SASO perspective there was SASM (Junior), which was the original South African Students' Movement, based in schools, and SASM (Senior) which consisted of the affiliated older membership of groups like SASO that supported SASM's efforts to conscientize and organize school students. Tiro became the first president of SASM (Senior),[209] a semi-formalized position that was designed to facilitate cooperation between SASM and other organisations in the Black Consciousness Movement like SASO and the BPC.

As a teacher and in his capacity as SASM liaison, Tiro worked to seek out politically curious and motivated students, and strove to conscientize them in the SASO mold. The students

[208] Diseko, 'Origins and Development of SASM'.
[209] Composite Executive Report to the 6th GSC, 7 July 1974. [WHP A2176] p. 2; Deposition of Aubrey Mokoena taken by Justice of the Peace DL Aspelling in Johannesburg. Undated (c. early 1977), p. 20. [WHP A2953]; T. Mashinini, 'Behind the Growing Upsurge in South Africa', *Intercontinental Press*, 15 November 1976 [not paginated]. [WHP A2953]

who passed through Tiro's classes, and under his wing, were to become some of the most prominent figures in the next generation of student political actors. One, Tsietsi Mashinini, later became the chair of the influential Soweto Students' Representative Council (SSRC) which played a critical organisational role in the June 1976 Soweto riots and their aftermath. Another of Tiro's students was Esau Tshehlo Mokhethi: older than Mashinini, he had already moved to Turfloop by 1976, where he was involved in the reorganisation of the SRC at the university, and later became an activist and exile for the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO).[210] Such direct links to students like Mashinini and Mokhethi are evidence of how, in a short time, Tiro's influence had been expanded by his work at Morris Isaacson.

Other students expelled in the aftermath of the Alice Declaration stay-aways found themselves in similar situations. In an interview with Clive Glaser, Jake Msimanga, a student at Soweto's Sekano Ntoane High School in 1972, 'recalls that ex-Turfloop students played a key role in the "conscientisation process". "There were about four or five young teachers from Turfloop; some had been expelled and some had graduated".'[211] Though Soweto was a hotspot for such activism – the urban areas of the Rand attracted a large number of expelled Turfloop students – it existed elsewhere as well. Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, a member of the SRC committee that had invited Tiro to speak, also found employment as a teacher, in Sibasa, Venda in 1973.[212] Even though he was teaching maths and science, Nefolovhodwe strove to conscientize his students politically.

> I would request them to read all the newspapers, the ones that were around that area – there were only two or three types of newspapers - during the

[210] K. Dikobo, 'Esau Mokhethi Reburial Speech', accessed 27 March 2012 at [http://azapo.org.za/esau-mokhethi-reburial-speech/].
[211] Glaser, Clive. 'We Must Infiltrate the Tsotsis': School Politics and Youth Gangs in Soweto, 1968-1976. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24(2) (June 1998), pp. 301-323, p. 305.
[212] Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe; SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5561 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]

> course of the week, my science students. […] So on Fridays the students they take over – they tell me about what is happening around the area, around the country; just [to] broaden their scope about what is happening. And once we finish I would say, "What have you seen or read that makes you believe you can use your science and mathematics for the good of society?" That's the first thing, and that's more relevant to their studies. But I would add my own political activism; that's what I used to do. But the first thing to do was to make them understand that all science is meant to resolve societal problems. You can't have science pure, on your own; you will be useful in society. [I focused on] these ones who may finish schools and go to universities, so I was trying to link them with the activities already at a higher level. So that is what I used to do, and it went very, very well. There are a lot of others [among my students] who went on to go to university and became very good activists […].[213]

In her article on the origins of SASM, Nozipho Diseko has said, 'The presence of these teachers constituted one of the important ways in which the Black Consciousness philosophy was transmitted into the schools in the townships.'[214] More explicitly drawing the link between expelled Turfloop students and conscientization in Soweto schools, Clive Glaser writes, 'Black Consciousness was reinforced in the schools by a number of politically conscious Turfloop students (many of them expelled before finishing their studies) who took up jobs in Soweto's high schools. The most prominent of these teachers was Ongopotse [sic] Tiro […]. These ex-Turfloop teachers encouraged political debate and spoke regularly at SASM functions.'[215]

Morris Isaacson, in particular, was a major and early centre for student politicization in Soweto. The ASM had been active in the school since the late 1960s, as had the Students' Christian Movement. By the time that ASM was changing to SASM, and incorporating itself more fully into the Black Consciousness Movement, the SCM was shifting firmly into the political arena – at Turfloop (as discussed in chapter two) but also in schools like Morris

[213] Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe.
[214] Diseko, 'Origins and Development of SASM', p. 57.
[215] Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi*, p. 162.

Isaacson and some of its Soweto fellows. 'The concerns of the SCM [in schools] were primarily Christian but it was increasingly exposed to, and intertwined with, Black Theology, the Christian arm of the emerging Black Consciousness movement. […] Christianity gave cover to mounting political awareness and debate.'[216] It was into this already increasingly political environment that Tiro and others arrived, following the expulsions and unrest of May 1972. The environment was ripe for such politically active teachers: 'Mary Mxadana, who studied and taught at [Morris Isaacson], recalls that students talked enthusiastically about Tiro's teaching. He asserted the need to move away from rigid syllabi, "to challenge the poison of Bantu Education".'[217] He also became a sought-after advisor and speaker for student groups like SASM.

As significant as this influence was, it was short-lived in terms of direct student-teacher contact. Glaser has noted that 'The [Department of Bantu Education] forced some of these teachers out of their Soweto jobs, but they were often able to make a major impact even in the few weeks or months of their stay.'[218] Tiro was dismissed from Morris Isaacson less than a full year after he had started. In her testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, his mother said of his dismissal from the teaching job:

> The school [Morris Isaacson] closed and they reopened and I saw [Abraham] coming home. He was together with another one, it was his companion that I don't know and he said to me Mamma they expelled me again from school. And I asked him again why have you been expelled? No they just said I should get out of the school, I will teach my fellow schoolmates wrong information.[219]

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[216] Glaser, 'We must infiltrate the tsotsis', p. 303.
[217] Ibid., p. 305.
[218] Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi,* p. 162.
[219] TRC Testimony of Moleseng Anna Tiro, 29 April 1996, accessed 12 May 2011 at [http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans%5Cmethodis/tiro.htm]

Tiro's 'wrong information' was the SASO and Black Consciousness ideology that he had been imparting to his students, which had drawn the attention of government officials beyond the school itself. According to a *Rand Daily Mail* article, 'In February [1973], after months of confrontation between the local school committee and officials of the Bantu Education Department, Mr. Tiro was sacked from his teaching position at Morris Isaacson High School in Soweto.'[220] The timing of his dismissal coincided with a nation-wide crackdown on SASO and Black People's Convention activists: in early March 1973 banning orders were issued against the most prominent leaders in both groups including, among SASO's top tier of leadership, Biko, Pityana, and Nengwekhulu. After their banning Nengwekhulu was restricted to Venda, in the far north of the Northern Transvaal, and tried to organize covertly for SASO while there. Due to the restrictive terms of his banning, though, such organisation proved all but impossible. After months in isolation at a house near Tshilindzini in Venda, Nengwekhulu fled in the middle of one September 1973 night, making for the Botswana border. He met Tiro, along with Bokwe Mafuna and some other SASO activists in Zeerust, very near the border and where Tiro had grown up. Together they went into exile in Botswana.[221]

Tiro and Nengwekhulu remained active in their efforts to bolster student resistance within South Africa, and to raise support for their cause within Botswana. Tiro had papers allowing him to move legally between South Africa and Botswana, so he assumed Nengwekhulu's role of Permanent Organizer, when exile prevented the other man from fulfilling the role. SASO's tiered leadership allowed for minimal disruption to their work even as banning and exile sidelined major leaders. Tiro had little time to pursue this work, however. He was

[220] 'Bomb kills ex-Saso leader', *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 February 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[221] Interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a); 'Top SASO men flee the country', *The Star,* 6 October 1973. [WHP AD1912/239]

killed by a parcel bomb on February 1, 1974, under suspicious circumstances, only five months after fleeing South Africa. The parcel bomb that killed him allegedly had markings from the International University Exchange Fund (IUEF) in Geneva, but among friends of Tiro and officials in Botswana alike it was widely believed to have been sent by agents of the South African government.[222] The package was addressed in longhand, and hand-delivered by a priest with whom Tiro was living, just south of Gaborone.[223] For its part, IUEF denied that the package had originated with them, saying, 'the fund's correspondence to Southern Africa never carries any indication of its origin.'[224]

The public reaction following Tiro's death speaks to the impact of his activism both in South Africa, and in Botswana, for the short time he was there. In a memorial to him at their General Students Council that year, SASO said, 'Circumstances surrounding Tiro's death have [not] been made absolutely clear, but one thing [is] certain, he died at the violent hands of agents of imperialism.'[225] And the Transvaal regional secretary for SASO noted, 'It is a real tragedy to have one of the most able and dedicated leaders brutally and ruthlessly murdered,' going on to describe the culprit as 'the enemy'.[226] In a statement, the Office of the President of Botswana said:

> Mr Tiro had, during the last few years of his life been an outspoken critic of a so-called South African way of life under which Black South Africans are subjected to racial discrimination and many other indignities. And in speaking out against the denial to Black South Africans of their human rights, Mr Tiro had incurred the deep displeasure of certain powerful circles in South Africa. Mr Tiro's sudden and cruel death will in no way depart from the validity of his criticism of the politicians in South Africa. Nor will it intimidate others from speaking out in that country. For its part, the Botswana Government strongly condemns the inhuman and dastardly manner

[222] 'Tiro bomb "a real killer"', *The Star*. 4 February 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[223] 'Bomb kills ex-Saso leader', *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 February 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[224] 'The Tiro mystery', *Sunday Times,* undated, c. 6 February 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[225] Composite Executive Report to the 6th GSC, 7th July 1974. 2 [SASO A2176]
[226] Transvaal Region Report to the 6th GSC, p. 1. [SASO A2176/5.5]

> in which Mr Tiro's life was taken. The Botswana Government wishes to state unequivocally that this kind of terrorism will not make it change its attitude towards those who seek refuge in Botswana from oppression in their own country.[227]

This statement itself ignited controversy, as South African newspapers took up the gauntlet that had been thrown down by the government of Botswana. An editorial in the *Sunday Times* called it 'a slur on South Africa which the Government should not allow to hang in the air unanswered. If our police are, as they should be, making every possible effort to establish the truth, then the Prime Minister should say so.'[228] In fact, the South African police were not involved in the investigation into Tiro's killing, which was handled by the police in Botswana, and the South African government did allow the statement from their northern neighbor to 'hang in the air unanswered'.

Activists inside South Africa did not let the event pass unmarked, however. When the news reached SASO's branches in the Transvaal, 'Members from alll [sic] over the region started flooding into the office and became involved in several undertakings that were geared at the burial of our brother. Fundraising lists were prepared and widely distributed around the regions.'[229] Memorials for Tiro were held at Regina Mundi Catholic Church in Soweto, one of the township's largest churches, as well as in Kimberley and at Turfloop itself. Students from SASO 'and other black organisations' raised more than two thousand rand in support of a memorial held in Tiro's home village of Dinokana, and many, including those in the acting executive, traveled to the remote area of the northwestern Transvaal to attend.[230] Meanwhile,

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[227] 'Botswana hits at Tiro killing', *Rand Daily Mail*, 6 February 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[228] 'The Tiro mystery', *Sunday Times,* undated, c. 6 February 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[229] Transvaal Region Report to the 6th GSC, pp. 1-2. [WHP A2176/5.5]
[230] Ibid., p. 2.

more than 1200 people attended a special ceremony in Tiro's memory at the Roman Catholic cathedral in Gaborone, Botswana.[231]

The loss of Tiro was a blow to SASO, as well as to Turfloop and school students for whom he had been a formative figure in their political education; but rather than dampening student activism for his cause, his death furthered the resolve of the organisations with which he had worked. As the SASO Transvaal regional secretary at the time noted, 'The enemy must have really joyfully felicitated for the brutal and cold-blooded murder, though at least realising that on that very point in time a hundred Tiros emerged and decided to join hands with those who are involved in the fighting against oppression.'[232]

Turfloop, 1972 - 1974: disquiet between the storms

Though Tiro and other expelled students had left Turfloop, the campus remained a restive place after most students returned to campus in June 1972. They met with greater suspicion and harsher control exerted by the university authorities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, all readmitted students were required to sign a pledge that they would not participate in any demonstrations or political activities and acknowledge that particular students (including Tiro and the SRC) would not be readmitted. Refusing to sign was grounds for their application to be rejected.

> Every student together with his parent/guardian must sign this statement in the presence of two witnesses. No person will be registered as a student unless his application form is accompanied by this statement duly signed. […] At the University of the North adequate channels have been created for students to approach the University authorities if they want to present their requests to the authorities. There is therefore no need to stage protests or strikes which may disrupt or cause difficulties in any activities of or at the

[231] '1200 Mourn Tiro', *The Star*'s Africa News Service, 9 February 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[232] Transvaal Region Report to the 6th GSC, p. 1. [WHP A2176/5.5]

> University. A student guilty of engaging in any such activity will have to leave the campus forthwith or be subject to other measures approved by the Council.[233]

Additionally, the university authorities banned SASO from campus in the aftermath of the Tiro controversy, and they refused to reconstitute an SRC on campus following the expulsion of all sitting members of the previous SRC under Aubrey Mokoena. In lieu of an SRC the rector, Professor J. L. Boshoff, 'appointed a committee to represent student interests but they [the student body] rejected the nominees, electing their own men.'[234] This was likely done by mass meeting, which was the vehicle for much student political action at Turfloop at the time. The elected representatives were not given official standing as an SRC, however, and were therefore limited in their power to negotiate on behalf of students with university administrators and authorities. Discontent with this usurping of student representation was one of the main factors influencing a stay-away from the 1973 diploma ceremony. In April of that year, 82 of 97 students scheduled to receive their diplomas from the faculties of nursing, commerce, and education boycotted the ceremony and persuaded their parents to do the same. Only fifteen graduates crossed the stage in a ceremony palpably at odds with the packed auditorium that Tiro had addressed the previous year; its very emptiness spoke volumes of the same discontent among students that his speech had highlighted.

In addition to enforcing stricter rules about student politics and activism on campus, the University of the North administration undertook an investigation into the 1972 protests. The Wright Commission completed its report in March 1973, and though the university refused to publish or release its findings, some details were leaked to the press. The Commission determined that lack of communication was 'the main cause of the trouble' after Tiro's

[233] 'University of the North Statement of Policy on Behalf of the Council of the University', 13 November 1972. [WHP A835/C7]
[234] '82 Students boycott at Turfloop', *The Star*, 2 April 1973. [WHP AD1912/258.16]

speech in May 1972. It also pointed to student impatience with the slow pace of Africanisation at the university following its ostensible autonomy (which was discussed in chapter two), and particularly to the election of W.W.M. Eiselen, a controversial white member of staff with close ties to the government and the National Party, as the new Chancellor.[235]

Following the Wright Commission's conclusions, and the boycotts of the 1973 diploma ceremony, the university reconstituted the Students' Representative Council and allowed students to elect their own officers. Isaac Nkwe became president of this new SRC in the winter of 1973, but his position was to be short-lived.[236] By the fall of 1974, students had become disillusioned with Nkwe's leadership. They complained that the SRC had failed to execute its mandate in a variety of areas. Of particular note were complaints about failing to advocate for student accommodation, about inadequate dialogue between the SRC and students, and the SRC and the rector, and about abuses of power by installing SRC members as primarii, in prefect-style leadership roles.[237] This was controversial because the role of primarius provided remuneration, so the installation of SRC members in the positions, apparently at their own instigation, had a whiff of nepotism to it. But it was also problematic because historically, as discussed in chapter two, the SRC had been created explicitly to bring democratic representation into a closed power system between the university administration and its handpicked prefects. The re-conflation of these roles caused an outcry amongst the student body.

[235] 'Turfloop unrest probed' *Rand Daily Mail*, 14 March 1973. [WHP AD1912/258.16]
[236] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5567 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[237] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5574 (Nefolovhodwe), and p. 5858 (Sedibe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]

Another major complaint was the way in which the SRC had dealt with the popular issue of Africanisation at the university. In late March 1974 students petitioned the SRC for an emergency meeting on its conduct; the petition noted, among other complaints, 'Furthermore while the student body supports the move for Africanisation of this university, [we] deplore the SRC's tactless and reckless approach to the Rector on this issue of Africanisation of the university staff. This may result in the deterioration of the student/White lecturers relationship in general, and the consequence that can crop up on the part of the student body.'[238] This note is revelatory of the tension students experienced, pushing the university for change but cognizant of doing so in a way which would not incite backlash, if possible. The petition was initially brought by a single student, Peter Gaele, but at the meeting called by the SRC it was clear that Gaele was supported more broadly in his concerns. At the mass meeting the students in attendance made a no-confidence vote, and ousted the sitting SRC under Nkwe in what Mosiuoa 'Terror' Lekota later described as a 'coup'.[239] In its place, the students present appointed a three person electoral committee to temporarily 'occupy the SRC offices for the purpose of running new elections of the SRC.'[240] Law students Cyril Ramaphosa and John Nkadimeng were two of the electoral officers chosen.[241]

In the weeks preceding the ousting of the SRC, political activism was once again fomenting at Turfloop, but for the first time it was primarily taking place off campus: in the middle of March 1974 Lekota, a former Turfloop student who had recently been elected SASO's

[238] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5575 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[239] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5567 (Nefolovhodwe), and p. 5261 (Lekota). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[240] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5575 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[241] SASO9 Trial Transcript, p. 5576 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]; Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe.

permanent organizer,[242] arrived in Mankweng to set up an off-campus branch of SASO. This was designed to circumnavigate the university's still-standing ban against SASO on campus.[243] A meeting was held in the local Roman Catholic Church, and was advertised widely to students through the SRC. An estimated 300-400 students came to the meeting, and there they elected Pandelani Nefolovhodwe as chairman of their new local SASO branch.[244] A week later he was also elected president of the new SRC, following the vote of no confidence in Nkwe.

The timing of these two meetings is significant: the new Mankweng SASO branch was formed in the middle of March, and less than a week later student discontent on campus resulted in the ousting of the SRC.[245] The key SASO members involved in constituting the local branch – Terror Lekota and Pandelani Nefolovhodwe – both maintained (at their later trial for trying to overthrow the state) that SASO itself had not instigated the coup.[246] In his testimony, however, Lekota admitted, 'Of course, I also tried to make some propaganda here for our organisation here by suggesting that because the student body had subsequently elected Accused No. 6 [Nefolovhodwe] as president of the SRC that this was in a way a declaration of confidence by the student body in the organisation SASO itself.'[247]

Beyond 'making propaganda', Lekota was drawing an important point. Though SASO had not been directly involved in the ousting of the SRC, its imprint could be found on the whole episode: students moved to replace their SRC almost as soon as a viable alternative was

[242] Lekota stepped in to fill the post, which Tiro had occupied before his death in February 1972. (SASO 6th GSC minutes, p. 4. [WHP A2176/5.5])
[243] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5259 (Lekota), p. 5570 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[244] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5262. [WHP AD2021/14.1]; Also SASO 6th GSC minutes Res. 11/74, p.25. [WHP A2176/5.5]
[245] SASO 6th GSC minutes, Report of the Permanent Organizer, p. 2 [WHP A2176/5.5]
[246] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5571 (Nefolovhodwe), p. 5261 (Lekota). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[247] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5261 (Lekota). [WHP AD2021/14.1]

available. SASO was a popular organisation on campus (attested by the level of attendance at the off-campus meeting, which attracted between a quarter and a third of the student body) – arguably the most popular.[248] Well-known SASO supporter Cyril Ramaphosa was selected as one of three electoral officers who were charged with running the elections of the new SRC.[249] Nefolovhodwe's selection as chairman of the local SASO branch and then shortly after as president of the new SRC also emphasizes the critical role that SASO was playing in student politics at Turfloop.

> [I]n that meeting I was elected SRC president. So in that sense I was no longer worried about having to run the affairs of SASO outside campus. I had then a legitimate position of SRC President, to propagate whatever I wanted to propagate within the student body. So together with the new SRC we then went on activities that were consistent with [SASO] – against apartheid.[250]

This cooperation was to become even more critical later in 1974, as, amid heightening tensions, the links between SASO and the Turfloop SRC became more closely intertwined.

Under Nefolovhodwe the new SRC embarked on a distinctly SASO-driven platform. One of its earliest priorities was to negotiate the return of SASO as an organisation allowed on campus. Nefolovhodwe described it thus, 'Well, once I was SRC president, in a subsequent meeting of the SRC, the students urged that we should step into the steps that had already been taken by the previous SRC in negotiating with the Rector for the bringing back of SASO on campus.'[251] The Black Academic Staff Association also supported this move.[252] After conferrals with the university council, members of whom were as far afield as Pretoria, the Rector approved Nefolovhodwe's request and SASO was once again permitted to operate

[248] As Pandelani Nefolovhodwe described its importance, 'There was no other student organisation of black people. It was the central organisation throughout.' [Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe.]
[249] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5576 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[250] Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe.
[251] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5578 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[252] SASO 6th GSC minutes, Report of the Permanent Organizer, p. 3. [WHP A2176/5.5]

on campus in June 1974. There is no record of why this decision was taken, but it may have been an attempt to appease students and preempt further protests. By this stage Nefolovhodwe was straddling dual roles as president of the SRC and chairman of the local branch of SASO. Widespread support of SASO among the Turfloop student body seems to have prevented this from posing a perceived conflict of interest among students; in fact three of the members of the local SASO committee were elected to the new SRC.[253] On his visit to Turfloop in April/May of 1974, SASO's national president Muntu Myeza noted, 'The SRC and the newly constituted [SASO] Local Committee Executive […] enjoy the following and support of the student body.'[254]

From 30 June – 6 July 1974 SASO held its annual General Students Council in Roodepoort. Here the Turfloop situation was hailed as a success, having thrown off 'more than eighteen months of inactivity' following the unrest and upheaval of mid-1972.[255] Terror Lekota described the constitution of the new SASO branch as 'a breath-taking event' and Nefolovhodwe in particular was roundly applauded for his efforts in revitalizing SASO at one of its core campuses.[256] Following the carefully orchestrated way in which SASO elections were handled, as discussed in the previous section, it is perhaps unsurprising that Pandelani Nefolovhodwe was elected the new national president of SASO at the end of the 6th GSC in July 1974. For a short time, Nef, as he was known, also retained his position as president of the Turfloop SRC, and as chairman of the local SASO branch. In August this conglomeration of positions was diffused: Cyril Ramaphosa was elected to lead the Turfloop branch of SASO, which was once again allowed to operate on campus, and Gilbert 'Kaunda'

[253] SASO 9 Trial Transcripts, p.5696 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[254] 'Report of the President Presented at the 6th GSC', SASO 6th GSC minutes, p. 207-8. [WHP A2176/5.5]
[255] SASO 6th GSC minutes, Report of the Permanent Organizer, p. 2 [WHP A2176/5.5]
[256] Ibid., p. 2.

Sedibe was elected as president of a new SRC, which was inaugurated on 13 September.[257] In spite of devolving these three positions from one person (Nefolovhodwe) to three (Nefolovhodwe, Ramaphosa, and Sedibe), the links between SASO and the Turfloop SRC were still extremely close. Ramaphosa, the new campus leader of SASO, had acted in the role of electoral officer during the SRC's emergency elections in March of 1974 -- the same elections that had resulted in Nefolovhodwe's rise to the position of SRC president (while he already chaired the off-campus branch of SASO). Sedibe, an active member of SASO, had been present at Nefolovhodwe's election to both offices and he worked closely with his predecessor after taking over the SRC presidency. These relationships allowed the two organisations to coordinate their efforts in promoting anti-apartheid politics to an unprecedented degree on campus. The intricate ties between the Turfloop SRC and SASO on a local and national scale were to become of paramount importance in the months to come.

The Viva-FRELIMO Rallies

September 25, 1974 marked the ascension of FRELIMO, the Front for Liberation of Mozambique, to power in that country. This event reverberated beyond Mozambique itself, and was seized by activists across the border in South Africa as an opportunity to celebrate and herald the turn to majority rule in the region.

By late 1974, as has been discussed above, SASO had increased the scope of its activism to regional and local chapters not necessarily affiliated directly with universities, had begun outreach in schools, and had made serious efforts to extend its reach beyond the student population with the development of the BPC. These two groups coordinated a series of

[257] SASO 9 Trial Transcripts, p. 5861 (Sedibe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]

rallies around the country to celebrate FRELIMO's victory. These 'Viva-FRELIMO' rallies were planned for major cities – Durban, Cape Town, and Johannesburg, as well as for the black university campuses of Fort Hare, the University of Zululand, the University of the Western Cape, and the University of the North at Turfloop. Though accounts differ, as many as seven rallies were planned to occur across South Africa and in some of its Bantustans.[258] To publicize the events, SASO announced that several FRELIMO leaders would be crossing the border to address South African crowds at the rallies. They also posted placards with Pro-FRELIMO and anti-Apartheid slogans. It was one of these placards that 'so incensed' Mr. Cornelius Koekemoer, a Durban resident, that when he saw it two days before the scheduled rally he tore it down and sent a telegram to Prime Minister Vorster asking for government intervention to prohibit the planned demonstration. Koekemoer counseled against 'supporting terrorists whilst citizens of all races are sacrificing lives on [the] country's border' and claimed 'Thousands of Whites ready to take necessary steps to prevent demonstration.'[259]

Koekemoer's telegram made it to the office of Minister of Justice Jimmy Kruger, where on the 24th of September – one day before the scheduled rallies – the minister issued a comprehensive ban on the rallies, under the Riotous Assemblies Act. It prohibited:

> [A]ny gatherings convened, supported, or approved, or the attendance of which is encouraged or promoted, or in respect of which it is intimated or professed that it is convened, supported or approved, or that the attendance thereof is encouraged or promoted, by or on behalf of the South African Students' Organisation or the Black People's Convention, everywhere in the Republic, up to and including 20 October 1974.[260]

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[258] 'Kruger to stop mass Saso rally', *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 September 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[259] 'Whites urged to stay away' *City Late,* 24 September 1974. [SANA MJU 727 MP17/2/3]
[260] *Republic of South Africa Government Gazette*, Vol. III, No. 4415. Cape Town, 25 September 1974. [SANA MJU 727 MP17/2/3]

It is hard to be certain of the causation behind the banning order; it is likely that police were already monitoring the preparations for the rallies – particularly the highly publicized Durban one – but Koekemoer's telegram, and perhaps more importantly the press's publicizing of it, seems to have influenced Kruger's decision to proceed with the ban (as much was indicated by the justice during the trial of the SASO 9 after the rallies).[261] The order amounted to an effective ban on all SASO and BPC meetings, movements, and events for nearly a month – though both SASO and the BPC were still legal organisations at the time. In scope it reached well beyond the Viva-FRELIMO rallies themselves, but there was no suggestion that its purpose was anything other than to ban public displays of support for the FRELIMO victory.

As word began to circulate about the ban, SASO hit back swiftly, releasing a joint statement with the BPC, saying that press reports had aggravated the situation and distorted the planned rallies by saying that the FRELIMO leaders would be 'smuggled or sneaked into the country'; SASO maintained that the guest speakers 'were going to come through normal channels'.[262] On the morning of 25th September, Muntu Myeza, SASO and BPC's joint publicity officer based in Durban, announced to reporters that, in spite of Kruger's ban, 'This afternoon's rally will go ahead as planned and the Frelimo leaders will be there.'[263]

The escalating tension was played out in local and national newspapers. A Durban *Daily News* editorial referred obliquely to Koekemoer, stating that, 'one White citizen telegraphed an objection to [Minister Kruger], who forthwith manufactured instant alarm.'[264] When asked if his decision had been influenced by the telegram, Kruger acknowledged that it had

[261] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5635 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[262] 'Kruger to stop mass Saso rally', *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 September 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[263] '"Frelimo" Secrecy', *Durban Daily News*, 25 September 1974. [SANA MJU 727 MP17/2/3]
[264] 'Cheers and boos' in *The Daily News*, 24 September 1974. [SANA MJU 727 MP17/2/3]

been a factor, though he contended, 'It was not the only consideration. I have taken all sorts of things into consideration.'[265] He said the rallies had 'evoked a strong emotional reaction among certain sections of the public.'[266] The *Daily News* editorial countered that the rally had actually evoked 'a strong emotional overreaction on the part of the Minister. What he has achieved now is to focus national, perhaps international, attention on what could well have been a damp squib of a meeting.'[267]

Whatever the Viva-FRELIMO rallies might have been -- in the absence of Cornelius Koekemoer, the heated press coverage, and the banning order -- what they actually were was fundamentally shaped by these factors. Of the many rallies planned to take place across the country, on the afternoon of September 25th only two of the rallies went ahead: The first was held at Curries Fountain Stadium in Durban, and was the one that Mr. Koekemoer had threatened to disrupt with 'thousands of whites'. It was at the epicentre of the controversy, as SASO and the BPC both had their national headquarters in Durban, and many of their most prominent activists were based there. It was the Durban *Daily News* that was primarily responsible for the press coverage before the rallies took place, and Durban's proximity to Lourenço Marques, the capital of Mozambique, also helped to focus attention there given the anticipated arrival of FRELIMO leaders.

The second Viva-FRELIMO rally that proceeded in spite of the ban was nearly a thousand kilometres away, at the altogether less likely rural campus of the University of the North. In contrast to events in Durban, Turfloop was almost entirely ignored in the pre-rally controversy. The announcement of Minister Kruger's ban did not reach the area until the

[265] 'Kruger to stop mass Saso rally' in the *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 September 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[266] 'Cheers and boos' in *The Daily News*, 24 September 1974. [SANA MJU 727 MP17/2/3]
[267] 'Cheers and boos' in *The Daily News*, 24 September 1974. [SANA MJU 727 MP17/2/3]

evening of 24 September; it initially arrived by radio broadcast from the nearest town of Pietersburg, 30 kilometres away, and took some time to filter through to key people on campus.[268] According to Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, the Turfloop student who was also the national president of SASO, news of the broadcast did not reach him until midday on the 25th:

> [W]hen I came back from my classes at about I think it was half past twelve, then one of the SRC members, I think Rathlagane, he came to me […] to inform me that SASO and BPC rallies have been banned, and then I asked him: where did you hear this, because I did not have a radio, I was one of the unprivileged students, and I did not hear anything through the radio.[269]

In fact, under cross-examination during his treason trial in 1975, it became clear that Nefolovhodwe and other key SASO activists had, in fact, heard about the possibility of the ban the previous evening (24 September). Communication across its leadership was an important facet of SASO's organisational capacity. Though access to phones and other office equipment was scarce outside SASO headquarters in Durban, local leaders were able to use resources at their various institutions to stay in touch with one another. At Turfloop, this was one benefit of the close relationship of SASO to the SRC, who provided access to important facilities like their telephone and photostat machines. As described by Nefolovhodwe:

> With facilities like a telephone, what would happen is that you would go to the SRC president and you talk to him about using the telephone, and you have got to write down in the book, the book that checks the telephone so that the SASO local committee should pay the bill of the telephone, but you can use the telephone with the permission of the SRC.[270]

It was via this phone, on the evening of 24 September, that Nefolovhodwe was first alerted to the possibility that the Viva-FRELIMO rallies might be banned. In a conversation with Muntu Myeza, SASO's General Secretary who was based in Durban at the time, Myeza informed Nefolovhodwe of the press coverage surrounding the rally there and Minister

[268] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5633 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[269] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5608 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[270] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, pp. 5633-34 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]

Kruger's response – that 'the necessary steps will be taken' – which both men considered ambiguous enough to provide a loophole for the rallies.[271] (This conversation had been bugged and recorded by security police, and was later admitted as evidence in Myeza and Nefolovhodwe's trial for terrorism.) In addition, at Turfloop they had the extra cover of being a step removed from the organisation of the rally, which was explicitly under the coordination of the SRC. They decided to proceed with their plans; Nefolovhodwe explained this decision to the judge in their trial:

> Well what I meant is that they must continue that way because the reports, the Minister says therefore the necessary steps will be taken, so I was saying until such time the Minister bans the rally categorically in the Government Gazette you continue as though nothing has happened.[272]

Continue they did, even when the printed ban reproduced in the *Rand Daily Mail* reached campus on the morning of the 25th.[273] So while Durban was braced for a conflict, Turfloop remained relatively quiet. But by late 1974 protests and class boycotts had become commonplace at Turfloop, and the campus was ripe for political confrontation led by their increasingly coordinated SRC and campus branch of SASO.[274] As well as having produced high profile activists like Tiro, Nengwekhulu, and Nefolovhodwe, Turfloop was home to a burgeoning group of new activists, including the SRC president Gilbert Sedibe, local SASO chapter chairman Cyril Ramaphosa, and Students' Christian Movement leaders Frank Chikane, Lybon Mabasa, and Ishmael Mkhabela. As argued above, by September 1974 the links between SASO and the Turfloop student leadership were unprecedentedly close. It was an already highly politicized student body, peppered with prominent activists that made the

[271] The conversation was bugged and recorded by the security police, and a transcript of it later introduced at the trial of the SASO Nine, in which both Nefolovhodwe and Myeza were defendants. [SASO 9 Trial Transcript, pp. 5634-40 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]]
[272] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5636 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[273] Republic of South Africa *Government Gazette*, Vol. 111, No. 4415 [SANA, MJU 727 MP17/2/3]
[274] The Snyman Commission chronicles at least 13 incidents of student protest and activism in the two years between Tiro's expulsion and the Viva-FRELIMO rally at Turfloop.

decision to hold the Viva-FRELIMO rally in spite of Kruger's banning order. They were the only group to do so besides Durban -- where tensions had been brought to boiling by external factors before the rally.

If the tension at Turfloop was less than in Durban leading up to the rally, that was certainly not the case on the day itself. On the morning of 25 September students and staff at the University of the North awoke to find their campus plastered in political slogans and placards. Posters were everywhere, and slogans had been painted directly onto buildings. 'Those entering the campus from outside were greeted with the slogan "Voetsek [piss off] Vorster and his pigs".'[275] According to Pandelani Nefolovhodwe,

> The students themselves, that was on the evening of the 24th, they had littered that campus with placards and all kinds of things. […] One of [the slogans] said FRELIMO KILLED. SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS? Which suggests that FRELIMO killed in order to get its liberation, we must also kill. Those students had put all kinds of […] things – and those were put voluntarily. When we woke up in the morning, we were all eyes on […] these things.[276]

At 9am Lieutenant Viljoen of the Security Police arrived at the Rector's office and told him that 'they had information that SASO had arranged a pro-Frelimo rally in contravention of the Minister's prohibition for 2 o'clock that afternoon in the students' hall'.[277] This appears to have been the first the Rector learned of the possibility of a rally on his campus that would contravene Kruger's ban.

The details here are still a matter of contention: The students involved in coordinating the Turfloop rally said they did so with the blessing of the University Rector. But in the aftermath of the rally Rector Boshoff 'denied it, and said he had warned the students against

[275] Snyman Commission Report, p. 106 (6.3.1).
[276] Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe.
[277] Snyman Commission Report, p. 108 (6.3.4).

holding a meeting', because he was concerned it would bring them into conflict with the state.[278] In fact, this warning was not issued until 12:30pm on the day of the rally itself, at which point the students decided to proceed with their plans. They defended their case by arguing that Kruger's ban did not apply to the Turfloop rally, which, they contended, had been organized under the auspices of the Student Representative Council and was not a SASO or BPC event. After the SRC had received word of the ban on the morning of the 25th, Gilbert Sedibe consulted several senior law students to determine the legality of proceeding. 'They also assured me that the banning of the SASO and BPC rallies would not affect our SRC rally.'[279] The Black Academic Staff Association (BASA) further defended the students after the rally took place. In a memo from its chairman BASA argued that 'such [police] intervention would have been called for were the celebration organized by the South African Students' Organisation; as it is, there is no evidence that this was not a purely SRC affair.'[280]

In fact, there was rather a lot of evidence that it was not purely an SRC affair. The rally had been coordinated by the SRC, but, as I have argued above, in September of 1974 the Turfloop SRC was wholly affiliated to SASO. The recent transfer of SRC office to SASO member Gilbert Sedibe from national president Pandelani Nefolovhodwe did not represent an ideological shift away from SASO politics in the SRC. Nefolovhodwe was still a student at Turfloop, and closely involved in student politics. He also addressed the rally on the

[278] 'Rector "warned students"', *Rand Daily Mail,* 26 September 1974. [WHP AD1912/258.16]
[279] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5884 (Sedibe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[280] 'Whites must share blame, says rector', *Rand Daily Mail,* 30 September 1974. [WHP AD1912/258.16] Boshoff's contention to the press was that 'in contact situations the blame never lies on one side only. […] There are too many Whites who reject apartheid and the Blacks in their relationships.' The article further explains that 'by apartheid he understood the pragmatic adjustment to a contact situation'.

afternoon of 25 September, and he was joined in speaking by Sedibe and a female student, N.C. Tshoni, who was a member of both SASO and the SRC.[281]

It is interesting that the organizers of the Turfloop rally took such a different approach to the outright defiance displayed in Durban, where the Curries Fountain rally was never billed as anything other than a SASO/BPC event. Though there were many similarities between the rallies – motivation and organisational tactics, and police response – a primary difference is that Turfloop was a university campus. Until this point it had enjoyed a measure of shelter from the direct intervention of the state into student affairs. Though students had a history of conflict with the university administration, their protests and actions had thus far been a step removed from state penalty or retribution. Even Abraham Tiro's high-profile expulsion had not prevented him from getting a job as a teacher under the Department of Bantu Education (short-lived though it was). Perhaps by claiming that the SRC had organized the rally the students sought to maintain that distance, whereas in Durban there was no distance to maintain; perhaps the Rector's belated warning not to go ahead with the rally was the first sign that such protection – if it can be called that – would no longer be possible.

In the hour leading up to the 2pm start of the rally, 82 policemen – 32 white and 50 black – assembled at the Mankweng police station, which sits just outside the western campus gates of Turfloop.[282] A later enquiry found that 'All the members of the police were armed with rubber batons, while each of the White members of the force was [also] armed with a service revolver. […] Some of the police had dogs which were controlled with long leashes.' The acting District Commandant of the South African Police, Major Erasmus, was commanding

[281] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5863 (Sedibe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[282] These numbers and times are taken from police reports submitted into evidence to the Snyman Commission of Inquiry, which was held to uncover the causes of unrest at Turfloop.

them. At 1:45pm, Major Strydom of the Security Police 'moved to the campus […] and saw that the students intended to go ahead with the rally. He reported immediately to Major Erasmus.'[283]

At 2pm, as students were gathering in the hall for the beginning of the rally, the Rector left the main campus to play golf with the Registrar. In his absence no member of the university staff or administration was designated to liaise with the police who were amassed outside campus.

Meanwhile students had gathered in the hall, and the turnout was so large that many had to amass outside the building itself and listen to the proceedings from there.[284] Gilbert Sedibe, President of the SRC, was the first to take the floor, and he reflected on the importance of the FRELIMO victory in Mozambique for South Africans, and particularly for South African students. He emphasized that the assassinated president of FRELIMO, Eduardo Mondlane, had been a student himself in the Northern Transvaal before going to the University of the Witwatersrand and subsequently being expelled from South Africa.[285] (Mondlane attended the Douglas Lain Smit Secondary School – a Swiss Missionary school southeast of Louis Trichardt - in Lemana from 1944 to 1948, before moving to the Jan H. Hofmeyr School of Social Work in Johannesburg and, finally, to the University of the Witwatersrand. He left in 1950 without completing his degree, expelled by the new Nationalist government of South Africa.)[286] Sedibe's remarks were followed by a brief address from Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, who endeavoured to make clear that he spoke only in his capacity 'as an

[283] Snyman Commission, p. 110, (6.3.12).
[284] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 205 (Ledwaba). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[285] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5613 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[286] Biography of Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane, accessed on 24 June 2012 at [http://www.oberlin.edu/archive/holdings/finding/RG30/SG307/biography2.html].

individual member of the student community' and not as the national president of SASO.[287] His efforts were undermined, however, by the fact that programmes for the rally – printed before Kruger's ban – listed him as representing SASO at the meeting.[288] The final speaker, N. C. Tshoni, a member of both SASO and the SRC, took the stage, and like Sedibe, she drew important links between South African student activists and FRELIMO, as well as other pan-African examples. Her speech was remembered by her fellow SRC member, Jonas Ledwaba, as follows:

> [S]he said that students could continue fighting for a good university with no freedom, but it is time we start and fight for our freedom. She said that she is actually disappointing president Kaunda, Nyerere and Mabuti [sic] when she is not fighting for her freedom. Then she further said that don't students demanding [sic] something similar[ly] dramatic as the South African Mau Mau.[289]

Tshoni's speech was the most radical of the three, as she drew direct parallels between student activism in South Africa and violent guerilla liberation movements elsewhere on the continent, but all three speakers made an effort to explicitly link the work of student activists in South Africa to the liberation movement in Mozambique (and in Tshoni's speech, beyond). As demonstrated by the placards around campus that called for immediate – and often physical – action, the rhetoric of the Viva-FRELIMO rally was more militant and less psychological than SASO events that preceded it; it had also lost the overt Christian overtones of Abraham Tiro's graduation speech two years earlier.

At approximately 2:20pm the police unit entered campus and moved to the hall in a convoy of police cars. When they reached the hall they found the rally was already in progress, and Tshoni's speech was in full flow. Major Erasmus entered the hall, addressed the assembled

[287] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, pp. 5614-5 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[288] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5613 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[289] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 207 (Ledwaba). [WHP AD2021/14.1]

students through a megaphone, and ordered everyone to disperse within 15 minutes. An estimated 1200 students were gathered, and according to evidence submitted to the Snyman Commission, 'absolute pandemonium broke out, during which the SASO salute (a clenched fist) was given by many students and slogans such as "Viva-FRELIMO" and "Freedom" were shouted.'[290] The students did leave the hall, but many of them (approximately 700) reconvened on the sports grounds. Here the details get fuzzier.[291] Students claim that they congregated on the sports ground to conclude the rally with the singing of the African anthem, *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*. The police reports say the students 'gave the SASO (or Black Power) salute and marched up and down,' refusing to disperse.[292] The police allege that at this point a group of male students began to throw stones and bottles at them. 'Major Erasmus then gave an order for the students to be dispersed. A baton charge followed and the students ran away but soon afterwards they again formed a unit.' Students countered this narrative, saying that bottles and stones were only thrown after the police baton charge, in retaliation. Clashes between students armed with bottles and stones, and police armed with batons and dogs, continued for several minutes; in the chaos one student was attacked and wounded by a police dog. The students were finally dispersed when the police fired teargas at them; they left the sports ground and retreated to their residences, but many returned. In the conflict three students – including the one attacked by the dog – had been arrested. The SRC leaders returned to the sports ground and demanded the release of the arrested students, and at this stage the Rector arrived on the scene. He had been called back to address the situation, and he successfully negotiated the release of the arrested students, the withdrawal of the police, and the dispersal of the students.

[290] Snyman Commission, p. 111, (6.3.15).
[291] The previous information is generally confirmed both by evidence given to the Snyman Commission, by press reports, and in interviews.
[292] Snyman Commission, p. 112, (6.3.17).

The détente was premature, however; some groups of students moved to other sections of campus, and began to try to barricade areas. Two white staff members and two white tradesmen, traveling in three different cars, were attacked and stoned by 'a mob' of students. Two of the men sustained injuries, and one was 'permanently disfigured' when a stone thrown through the broken window of his car struck his face. The police were once again called to campus, but 'when the students saw them they dispersed and disappeared into residences'.[293]

The Viva-FRELIMO rally represents a turning point in protest at Turfloop: it is the first incident of student violence against the university staff and, in turn, the first use of state force against the students on campus. In this it was part of a larger trend towards confrontational politics across South Africa, which Julian Brown has explored. Brown suggests that the violence employed on both sides during the Turfloop rally 'short-lived and ineffectual as it may have been – represented a new form of confrontation.'[294] For students, consequences of the rally also marked a major departure from previous campus conflicts. On the one hand, with the intervention of the Rector in negotiating the dispersal of both students and police from the sports ground, the university administration had reinserted itself in the narrowing space between students and state. But this was fleeting – only a few hours after the Rector's efforts, campus again devolved into clashes directly between students and the police.

The university authorities found themselves similarly impotent in the aftermath of the rally. Two meetings of the university disciplinary committee failed to pass a resolution disciplining

[293] Snyman Commission, p. 115, (6.3.26).
[294] Brown, 'Public Protest and Violence', p. 286.

the SRC, as the members of the Black Academic Staff Association insisted (in a majority vote) 'that the SRC could not be held responsible in any way for any of the incidents on 25 September 1974.'[295] The Rector and white staff largely disagreed, and the University Council made the decision to shut the university for two weeks in October to consider how best to address the situation.[296] In the end they turned to the state. After a meeting in Pretoria on October 8 the Council 'decided to request the Minister to appoint a judicial commission of inquiry.'[297] From this request the Snyman Commission was appointed. As noted earlier, following the student unrest after the Tiro incident in 1972, the University had appointed its own commission of inquiry, resulting in the secret Wright report. The failure of the university to be similarly proactive in the aftermath of the Viva-FRELIMO rally suggests that the university authorities no longer had confidence in their own ability to maintain order on campus.

The state had no such qualms: in the weeks following the rallies, police conducted sweeping arrests of SASO and BPC activists involved in the Turfloop and Durban rallies. Gilbert Sedibe was arrested and held in the Mankweng police station, while Pandelani Nefolovhodwe was arrested at the SASO headquarters in Durban, where he had traveled to help arrange bail for Muntu Myeza, Terror Lekota, and others.[298] In a protest march from Turfloop campus to the Mankweng police to demand the release of Sedibe, Cyril Ramaphosa

[295] Snyman Commission, p. 118, (6.4.7).
[296] The University Council was the body charged with governing the university, and was composed of senior administrators on campus as well as educators and bureaucrats outside the structure of the university itself; at its inception in 1960, it was an all-white, all-male group. It was 'assisted' by an Advisory Council of no fewer than eight non-white members, who were appointed by the Governor General of the Council. Both bodies' decisions were subject to approval and veto by the Minister of Bantu Education. It was not until 1975, with the publication of the Jackson Report, which advocated Africanisation of Turfloop's leadership that these demographics began to shift and Africans were included in the highest reaches of the university's administration. [White, *From Despair to Hope,* pp. 85-89, 116-120]
[297] Snyman Commission, p. 119, (6.4.9).
[298] Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe; SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 34 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]

was also arrested. Of the activists gathered in this round up, nine – including Nefolovhodwe and Sedibe – were eventually tried for terrorist activities in the SASO/BPC trial.

On 17 October the SRC resolved to hold a sit-in until Sedibe, Nefolovhodwe, and Ramaphosa were released from police custody. They blamed the rector for 'selling our rightful leaders to the system'.[299] The resolution was undertaken at a mass meeting and enjoyed the support of the majority of the student body, but there was also some dissent, demonstrating the increasingly polarized nature of politics at Turfloop. Only approximately fifty students on a campus of more than 1200 actively contravened the SRC sit-in, while a large majority participated. Small groups of students in pharmacy and nursing passed resolutions dissenting from the SRC's decision to hold the sit-in. In the case of the pharmacy students, they even explicitly supported the student body in its aim of Africanisation, but objected to the approach:

> The procedural machinery has failed to allow us to bring forth our views in a mass meeting. We feel it is our right to differ. We feel that we should dissociate ourselves from the popular stand of holding a sit-in because we consider it to be a cause of self-destruction and facilitates the aims and objects of the very system [of apartheid]. […] We all cherish the idea of the system of Africanisation of this University, but a sit-in will destroy the very means of achieving this ideal.[300]

The nursing students, in contrast, dissociated themselves from the aims and movements of the student body completely: they requested to write their examinations, declaring,

> We are professional people, civil servants, sent by our employing authorities and sponsored by the South African Nursing Association. We are answerable for our behaviour to the South African Nursing Council. As such we are not party to what is taking place concerning the Student body.[301]

[299] Wolfson, *Turmoil at Turfloop*, Annexure O, p.68.
[300] Ibid., Annexure P, p. 69.
[301] Ibid., Annexure Q, p. 70.

The SRC responded to each of these minority resolutions; to the pharmacy students it was conciliatory, conceding 'that, rather than calling the dissenters to appear before the SRC Disciplinary Committee, they should be called to give their views to the house and to assure them of the fullest protection they will enjoy as the house is eager to have them in the deliberations.'[302] But to the more confrontational stand taken by the nurses it responded angrily decrying 'the self-evident reactionary collaboration between the SA Nursing Council and our Administration'; the nurses themselves were understood to be caught in an impossible position, between their employer, the South African Nursing Council, and the student body of which they were part. To settle the conflict, the SRC resolved 'to recognise that nurses are not part of this Student Body, since an employee is subject to instructions from the employer'.[303] As the nurses were no longer considered part of the student body, they were also not bound to abide by SRC resolutions. But this demonstrates the drastic steps that could be taken to ensure near-universal support – the SRC went as far as redefining who constituted a student in order to maintain this. Turfloop's growing history of large student protests and class boycotts, beginning with the protests over university autonomy in 1970 and arguably epitomized by the protests over the expulsion of Abraham Tiro in 1972, exerted significant pressure for students to participate in these highly politicized events. There were sometimes allegations of coercion surrounding such protests.

The Trial of the SASO Nine

The Trial of the SASO/BPC Nine, as it came to be called, began in July 1975, nearly nine months after the October 1974 detentions of a wide scope of political activists associated

[302] Wolfson, *Turmoil at Turfloop,* Annexure R, p. 71.
[303] Ibid., Annexure S, p. 72.

with SASO, BPC, and the Student Representative Council of the University of the North. As remembered by defendant Pandelani Nefolovhodwe:

> [A]fter the pro-FRELIMO rally they really arrested almost anybody who knows… Barney Pityana, all of the activists that were ever there in the Black Consciousness Movement. Then they put them in jail, and all of us were taken to the Pretoria Central Prison, where Steve Biko finally died. We were locked up there as a large group, and they went on to interrogate us, put us in solitary confinement […] and finally they selected a few of us to become the accused on a terrorism charge. We were then charged under the Terrorism Act, we were fomenting hostility against white people, emulating FRELIMO… We were thirteen in number when we were charged, and finally the charges for four others don't stick, so we ended up with nine.[304]

The final nine defendants were Sathasivan (Saths) Cooper, for whom the official docket (*State v. Cooper*) was named, Muntu Myeza, Mosioua (Terror) Lekota, Aubrey Mokoape, Nkwenkwe Nkomo, Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, Gilbert Sedibe, Zithulele Cindi, and Strinivasa (Strini) Moodley. Sadecque Variava, Rubin Hare, Sulayman Ismail, and Sivalingam Moodley were also initially charged, but released when it was determined they weakened the state's case against the other nine.[305] Those nine defendants came to play a pivotal role in the broader public conception of SASO as an organisation, and in a growing political conscientization among certain sections of the population. In his historical analysis of this trial, Michael Lobban has argued that it offers particular insights into how the South African state sought to "use a political trial to control its opponents."[306] In this section, I shall argue that the trial also demonstrates the way that young activists used the court system and attendant press coverage (especially important for those from Turfloop who were under a gag-order on campus, and for those who were banned from publishing or public speech) to propagate their own political agenda. Similarly to Tiro before them, these defendants came

[304] Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe.
[305] Supreme Court of South Africa (Transvaal Provincial Division) Initial Charge Sheet against Sathasivan Cooper and 11 others (undated, c. early 1975), published by the International University Exchange Fund, July 1976. [MPP]; Trial Transcript of the SASO 9, p.1 (Judgment). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[306] M. Lobban, *White Man's Justice: South African Political Trials in the Black Consciousness Era* (Oxford, 1996), p 77.

to be the public face of student resistance to 'the system' at the outset of their trial in 1975. The government's crackdown on the defiance displayed at Turfloop and Durban during the pro-FRELIMO rallies – evidenced by the first use of force by police on the university campus and in the sweeping detentions and arrests that followed – was designed to clamp down on SASO's mobilization and activism. Instead the trial provided a platform to highlight their cause. 'South African legal history's longest Terrorism Act trial'[307] played out over the course of seventeen months and garnered substantial press coverage. Of its public impact Gail Gerhart has written:

> [F]ar from helping the government to intimidate actual and potential activists, [the trial] appears to have had the opposite effect. Aware that the eyes of the country were on them, the accused used the trial to restate the nationalist viewpoint, and took every opportunity to symbolize their defiance of the state by singing freedom songs and raising clenched fists in the courtroom. Thus, instead of contributing to the suppression of Black Consciousness ideology, the trial […] merely disseminated that ideology even more widely […].[308]

Magaziner has said that 'the trial was more farce than tragedy, and reasoning that some sort of conviction was inevitable, the defendants treated it like theater.'[309] While theatricality did play a role in how the defendants presented themselves on the stand, there were serious motives behind this performance, perhaps more so than Magaziner's 'farce' allows. More than a stage, the defendants used the stand as a microphone, and indeed a pulpit from which to propagate their message. Famously, Steve Biko, SASO's founder and figurehead, took his opportunity on the stand as a witness for the defense to expound on the birth of SASO and the philosophy of Black Consciousness as the guiding principle for SASO and the BPC. In his explanation to presiding Judge Boshoff, he states:

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[307] Quote from 'Nine get 51 years' jail over rally plot', *The Daily News*, 22 December 1976. At the time the SASO Nine trial, lasting for seventeen months, was South Africa's longest under the Terrorism Act; the Delmas Treason Trial of 1985-88 later surpassed it.
[308] Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, p. 298.
[309] Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets,* p. 153.

> [B]asically Black Consciousness refers itself to the Black man and to his situation, and I think the Black man is subjected to two forces in this country. He is first of all oppressed by an external world through institutionalised machinery: through laws that restrict him from doing certain things, through heavy work conditions, through poor education, these are all external to him, and secondly, and this we regard as the most important, the Black man in himself has developed a certain state of alienation, he rejects himself, precisely because he attaches the meaning White to all that is good, in other words he associates good and he equates good with White. This arises out of his living and it arises out of his development from childhood […]. This is carried through to adulthood when the Black man has got to live and work.[310]

Redressing this psychological conditioning formed the core thrust of the Black Consciousness Movement; over the course of five days of testimony in May 1976 Biko articulated the process of forming SASO as an organisation and the challenges that had been faced by black student activists in the 1960s; he ranged from discussing the psychological grounding of the SASO slogan 'Black is beautiful' to the importance of disinvestment in South Africa by foreign firms. Over those days, Biko articulated his position not just to the lawyers, judge, and accused in the courtroom, but to a much broader audience through the platform provided by the press. Banned to a location outside King Williams Town in the rural Eastern Cape since 1973, and further restricted from public engagement and publishing in 1975, Biko seized the opportunity to use the witness box at the trial as a pulpit for the movement. He was not the only one to do so – many of the defendants followed this lead.

In debunking the state's case that the Viva-FRELIMO rallies had revolutionary capacity, Lobban has argued that at the outset of the trials, SASO and BPC did not have "coherent confrontational strategies or ideologies";[311] but the psychological, and indeed, theological aspects of Black Consciousness were coherent and current among students on campuses like Turfloop, as I have argued in this and the previous chapter. When they came to the stand, the

[310] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, pp. 4362-3 (Biko). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[311] Lobban, *White Man's Justice*, p. 77.

SASO Nine defendants were able to articulate aspects of these platforms. In his testimony, defendant Mosiuoa Lekota made a detailed exposition of Black Theology, as SASO preached it:

> I think, M'Lord, the importance of Black Theology is one because of the prime interest of Black people in spiritual health. Perhaps one can just generalize and say so, what Black Theology in fact attempts in my view to do is to suggest to Black people that the fact that for instance they are in the ghettoes, that they live in those conditions and so on, is not a God-created kind of situation. What in fact Black Theology seeks to say there is that God is not approving of the oppression of Black people or their desolate situation. It seeks to draw from the Bible the liberatory message that is in there, and putting into context Black people in relation to God. If I may just be literal, what they would really seek to say would be that God is involved with the Black people, he is involved with the Black experience, and that therefore Black people must see themselves as an extension if I may so say of God – I mean an embodiment of God.[312]

Theologically this bears comparison to other religions that preached of a people 'chosen' by God. Though often associated with Judaism, this was also a key tenet of Afrikaner Christianity in the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK). But in contrast to the theology of the NGK, Black Theology was corrective rather than exclusive; it did not say that blacks were chosen by God to the exclusion of other peoples; rather it sought to redress their own exclusion from the way that Christianity had historically been practiced in South Africa.

Lekota's testimony recalls the significance of Christianity to SASO as a whole, and also specifically at Turfloop. When forced to operate outside campus in setting up a new branch of SASO, Lekota himself, who was an alumnus, had arranged the meeting at the local Catholic Church in Mankweng. Biko also described the spirituality that was exhibited at SASO gatherings, in his testimony about SASO memorials on Heroes Day and the Day of Compassion, using explicitly Christian imagery:

[312] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5265 (Lekota). [WHP AD2021/14.1]

> Certainly the way SASO conducted the various services in our campus it was mainly a sermon, and we called various distinguished ministers to conduct a service, and I have no doubt that the majority of people there were moved by the way the whole thing was handled. In a way they tended to relate it to a biblical sacrifice, you know, to say that these people died for us.[313]

Those commemorated on Heroes Day included the victims of the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, Ahmed Timol and those who had died in detention, Abraham Tiro, and others; with its religious overtones of sacrifice and selflessness, this day essentially enshrined a set of martyrs to the struggle against apartheid.[314] The Day of Compassion sought to highlight suffering in communities that were victims of natural disasters (like flooding) and the disastrous circumstances of poverty in which some South Africans found themselves. As Biko explained it, 'In a sense, the main theme in Compassion Day was to get students to develop a social conscience, to see themselves as part of the community, and to direct their energies at solving problems of the nature we were thinking about on Compassion Day.'[315]

SASO leaders worked to draw direct links between Christian theology and liberation. This linkage between student politics and Christianity was not restricted to the early days of the movement, when it was most closely associated with overtly Christian groups like the University Christian Movement. On the Day of Compassion (August 17) in 1974, Lekota traveled to Turfloop to address the crowd on Black Theology. As Jonas Ledwaba, a member of the Turfloop SRC who was in the audience that day recalled, '[Lekota] said […] as we go to the Holy Bible we find that the true God is a God of justice who took care of the children of Israel when they were under Egyptian oppression, and so if these churches can get the right God, then that God will take care of people under oppression.'[316]

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[313] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 4359 (Biko). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[314] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 4359 (Biko). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[315] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, pp. 4360-1 (Biko). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[316] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 216 (Ledwaba). [WHP AD2021/14.1]

Events at Turfloop, ranging from the Day of Compassion up to and including the rally, comprised an important focus of the trial, and once again drew national attention to the rural campus of the University of the North. Two of the defendants in the SASO trial were accused for their roles in the Viva-FRELIMO rally at Turfloop: Gilbert Sedibe and Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, and a third, Mosiuoa Lekota, was a Turfloop alumnus who helped organize the Durban rally and had been active as a SASO organizer on campus earlier in 1974.

Of simultaneous public interest was the Snyman Commission of Inquiry, which had been appointed to investigate the causes of unrest at the university. Its hearings were also well publicized, and between reports of the trial and the commission in 1975 Turfloop found itself featuring as the pinnacle of student unrest in newspapers throughout the country. Rector Boshoff publically called the situation 'extremely serious' in an interview with *The Star*, where he described escalating racial tension on campus: 'We are doing all we can to sort things out here by consultation with the people concerned. But many of the students come here with anti-White ideas and these are encouraged by some members of the Black academic staff.'[317] Such perceptions were reinforced by articles like an editorial in *The Star* by Jean Le May, 'Turfloop has been a trouble spot for years', which reiterated the campus's history of unrest during the Tiro episode, and earlier student protests surrounding its split from UNISA to become an 'independent' university in 1970.[318] In the wake of the rally increased tensions on campus were rarely out of the headlines: 'Turfloop Students Boycott

[317] 'Turfloop situation is now "serious"' in *The Star,* 30 September 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[318] 'Turfloop has been a trouble spot for years', *The Star,* 8 October 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]

Classes', 'White 'home guard' on patrol in Turfloop', 'Police keep watch as Turfloop sit-in goes on'.[319]

But while such press coverage may have inspired fear and worry in some South Africans, for others the increased coverage of Turfloop as a centre for resistance, and of the defiant defendants in the SASO Nine Trial, was inspiring. The trial 'held up to youth once again a model of "rebel" courage.'[320] The courtroom was routinely full of onlookers in the gallery, a mix of supporters and the curious. The prosecutor, Mr. Rees, noted the composition of spectators in the court in his cross-examination of Pandelani Nefolovhodwe: 'You have your Turfloop friends here, you have had Ramaphosa comes [sic] and visit you regularly […].'[321] This support extended beyond personal friends and fellow SASO activists, as well. Following the convictions of all nine defendants in December 1976, with sentences ranging from five to six years imprisonment, 'Shouts of Amandla by the nine convicted men were met with a chorus of Awethu from a packed gallery of about 200 people after sentence was passed in the Saso terror trial […].'[322] Two white students from the University of Cape Town were detained by security police for handing out pamphlets to spectators outside the Pretoria courthouse on the day of the verdicts, and police with dogs entered the Palace of Justice itself when 'a crowd of spectator [sic] had an altercation with police guarding the courtroom door'.[323]

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[319] 'Turfloop Students Boycott Classes' in *The Star*, 17 October 1974. [WHP AD1912/258.16]; 'White "home guard" on patrol in Turfloop' in the *Sunday Times,* 20 October 1974. [WHP AD1912/258.16]; 'Police keep watch as Turfloop sit-in goes on' in the *Rand Daily Mail*, 21 October 1974. [WHP AD1912/258.16]
[320] Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa,* pp. 298-9.
[321] SASO 9 Trial Transcript, p. 5705 (Nefolovhodwe). [WHP AD2021/14.1]
[322] 'Nine get 51 years' jail over rally plot' in *The Daily News*, 22 December 1976. [WHP AD1912/239]
[323] Ibid.

During the course of the trial the Soweto student riots began in June 1976, marking a critical turning point in South Africa's history when school children took to the streets in mass protest against the Bantu Education policy of teaching in Afrikaans. Among them were those who had been taught by Tiro and many other expelled Turfloop students. With the uprisings in Soweto all student protest was cast into sharper relief throughout the country, and heightened public interest in the SASO Nine Trial reflects this. Though all of the nine were convicted and given sentences of between five and six years on Robben Island, their trial had provided such an important platform for proliferating SASO's message that the imprisonment of the bulk of its leadership was a steep but worthwhile cost. When the trial ended, student protest and conscientization in the Black Consciousness mold had never been stronger.

The Snyman Commission of Inquiry

The middle of the 1970s was a time of unparalleled prominence for the South African Students' Organisation and other Black Consciousness organisations. As argued above, the trial of the SASO Nine, taking place over seventeen months from July 1975 to December 1976, provided an exceptional platform for the SASO leadership to broadcast their messages of equality, self-sufficiency, and Africanism. Just preceding the trial, another event had also put SASO in headlines regularly, particularly with regard to its role at the University of the North. The Commission of Inquiry into Certain Matters Relating to the University of the North (or the Snyman Commission, as it has been called for its head Justice J.H. Snyman), held hearings from November 1974 to June 1975 in order to determine the root causes of unrest at the university. The constitution of this committee, as has been mentioned, was requested by the university council after the Viva-FRELIMO rally on 25 September 1974. Between the rally itself, the hearings held by the commission, and the trial of the SASO Nine,

SASO and Turfloop were rarely out of the national press between late 1974 and the end of 1976. In concert with the Soweto uprisings of June 1976 that spread across the country and carried the ideology of Black Consciousness with them, this served to make 1976-77 a pinnacle moment for Black Consciousness and Africanist politics in South Africa.

This period of prominence wrought tangible changes in life at Turfloop: in the aftermath of the Viva-FRELIMO rally of September 1974, some of the most noticeable changes were influenced by the hearings of the Snyman Commission. The hearings were initially held publicly near campus, and later moved to Pretoria in January 1976. Students and staff were regularly in attendance at these hearings between November and December 1975, while they were held in Lebowa government administrative offices in Mankweng. The press described the crowded events: 'the 200 seat auditorium was crammed to capacity'[324] and 'students and staff turned out in force at the inquiry.'[325]

Initially, though, there was some debate on campus about whether students would participate in the commission at all: Justice Snyman came to campus in late November to address a mass meeting of students about the importance of hearing all sides of the circumstances surrounding the Viva-FRELIMO rally. He came at the invitation of the SRC. 'I asked the students to back their SRC [in testifying], because I did not want one-sided views or a one-sided report,' Snyman said to a reporter.[326] Eventually the students voted to allow student testimonies: two days into hearings 'an SRC spokesman said they had now been given a mandate by the 1000-strong student body to appear before Mr Justice J. H. Snyman.'[327] The

[324] 'Turfloop Inquiry hears of slogans', *Pretoria News*, 19 November 1974. [WHP AD1912/258.16]
[325] 'Turfloop students to give evidence', *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 November 1974. [WHP AD1912/258.16]
[326] 'Judge appeals to students at Turfloop', *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 November 1974. [WHP AD1912/258.16]
[327] 'Turfloop students to give evidence', *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 November 1974. [WHP AD1912/258.16]

Black Academic Staff Association (BASA) also agreed to give evidence; both BASA and the SRC were led in their submissions by legal counsel: Ishmael Mohammed appeared on behalf of BASA, and Ishmael Ayob appeared on behalf of the SRC.[328]

In spite of the students' mandate to testify, student participation in the commission was minimal. Evidence came primarily from staff and from the submission of documentary evidence and affidavits; only one student, Frank Chikane, actually took the stand before the commission. In part this lack of representation can be attributed to the quick backlash that had already hamstrung the student and SASO leadership at Turfloop following the rally. In the weeks following the Viva-FRELIMO rally the presidents of the SRC, and of SASO both locally and nationally (all of whom were Turfloop students) were detained. Pandelani Nefolovhodwe, the national president of SASO and former Turfloop SRC president, recalled the frustration of not being able to participate in the commission of inquiry during his detention and trial as one of the 'SASO Nine':

> But in the meantime, while we were in here [in Pretoria] standing trial, Turfloop established a commission of inquiry on the activities that took place during our time before we were arrested. We kept on asking that we should be allowed to give evidence to that commission of inquiry, but the apartheid government refused. So we who were leaders of the students were never given a chance to state our case, we were not given a chance to state our case at our own trial.[329]

But it is also clear that the student body was concerned with presenting a cohesive story, and a united front to the commission. The SRC leadership refused to testify until mandated to do so by a majority vote at their mass meeting; even once the mandate had been secured, they

[328] S. Duval, 'Who's who at the Turfloop inquiry', *Rand Daily Mail*, 30 November 1974. [WHP AD 1912/258.16]
[329] Author's interview with Pandelani Nefolovhodwe.

decided to have only one student represent their case in verbal testimony, rather than to open the opportunity to testify to all students.

It fell to Chikane then, not one of the rally's organizers, but a student of some prominence on campus, a member of SASO and of the executive of the Student's Christian Movement, to speak for the student body. He confined his testimony to the events on the day of the rally, speaking concretely about the order of events and the chaos that erupted on the sports fields in confrontation with the police.[330] He explained – in justifying the decision to hold the rally – that the students were confident the ban from Minister Kruger on SASO gatherings did not apply to their SRC-organized event. And he described police perpetrating violence in the confusion after the event: 'As I was running [from the police] I noticed one of the students I had been walking with earlier being knocked to the ground by the police. I realised he would need help. It took all my courage to go back and help him.'[331]

Aside from Chikane's testimony, other student evidence was amassed by letters and motions by the SRC that were submitted to the commission, and these too stuck very closely to the subject of what happened as the rally was broken up by the police. Rector Boshoff read one such letter aloud at the hearing in his own testimony. In it, the SRC defended their right to hold the rally and declared that 'the police who came and interrupted the rally had no cause to believe that law and order would be disturbed, and the police disturbed the peace of the campus by the use of dogs, batons, and teargas.'[332]

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[330] 'Student tells of unrest at Turfloop rally', *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 November 1975. [GPP]
[331] 'Student tells of unrest at Turfloop rally', *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 November 1975. [GPP]
[332] Quoted in 'Police accused of disturbing peace', *Natal Witness*, 20 November 1975. [WHP AD1912/258.16]

Student submissions to the commission focused on creating a narrow and consistent narrative of a peaceful rally that turned to violence when police used force to disperse it. In contrast to this, some staff recognized the opportunity that the Snyman Commission afforded to express their views about Turfloop publicly, beyond its specific remit of the events surrounding the Viva-FRELIMO rally. Arguably the single most significant piece of evidence submitted to the Commission was the compiled survey of the Black Academic Staff Association (BASA), who elected to respond to Snyman's written survey of university staff *en masse*, rather than individually. The fifty-two members of BASA signed this collective memorandum, raising issues from pay parity and promotion scales between black and white staff to the lack of white staff involvement in students' extracurricular clubs.[333] From BASA the Snyman Commission heard evidence on university life broadly defined, considering the breadth of student societies and activities from SASO to religious groups, the Students' Choral Society, and African Arts Week.[334]

Conclusion

The mid 1970s became the hallmark period of student protest in South Africa's history. Though the pivotal Soweto riots have come to epitomize this era, the concerted work of the South African Students' Organisation that predated the uprisings of students in the townships played an important role in laying the foundations for June 1976. The University of the North at Turfloop also occupied a critical place in the national landscape of student protest, and particularly in the rise of Black Consciousness throughout the country. Brown has demonstrated how the use of confrontational protest in the Viva-FRELIMO rallies ushered in a new era in the form of South African protest politics. In this chapter I have extended that

[333] Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony*, pp. 25, 27.
[334] Snyman Commission, pp. 45, 75-6.

case and argued for the role of Turfloop specifically in propagating both new form and content of protest on a national scale. Highly publicized events like the student protests after Tiro's expulsion and the Viva-FRELIMO rally demonstrated Turfloop's politics – which combined an important mix of local grievances with a broader anti-apartheid rhetoric – to a national audience, while student activists strove to bring the message of Black Consciousness to local communities throughout South Africa.

High profile figures like Abraham Tiro and the SASO Nine were able to leverage their positions as student activists and amplify the SASO message of Black Consciousness to a broad audience. From Tiro's work as a teacher in Soweto, to traveling around South Africa and to frontline neighbours like Botswana and Lesotho, his enduring impact belies the relatively short time he occupied the activists' stage. His role as mentor to some of the students who led the 1976 protests is testament to his achievement in mobilizing and conscientizing his students. The SASO Nine were many of Tiro's contemporaries, and had almost all been longtime activists by the time of their arrests after his death. But it was their prolonged trial that provided them an unparalleled platform from which to speak. Aware that it might be their last opportunity to do so, many of the defendants used the witness stand to articulate principles of Black Consciousness and Black Theology.

Of equal importance to the high profile figures that were the public face of Turfloop, of SASO, and of student resistance to the state, organisational mechanisms played a critical role in facilitating this work. SASO's tiered approach to leadership enabled the organisation to react quickly and efficiently to the sidelining and loss of its leaders. The role of Permanent Organizer in the early-mid 1970s is an example of this: Harry Nengwekhulu occupied it until his exile in September 1973, when Abraham Tiro stepped into the breach until he was killed

in February 1974. Mosiuoa Lekota assumed the role immediately following the death of Tiro. Throughout the period and under each man, the role of Permanent Organizer continued to be a major force for SASO's organizing capacity, benefitting, especially in the case of Nengwekhulu and Tiro, from the layered leadership model that had paired the two men as work partners long before Nengwekhulu's banning. All traveled widely as long as they could do so, and worked to bring the message of Black Consciousness to new communities in South Africa, as well as to maintain its presence in strongholds like Turfloop. An important, albeit secondary, by-product of the tiered leadership was the ability of SASO to deeply diffuse ideology throughout its ranks, ensuring that the movement was ideologically cohesive.

By expanding on SASO's ability to mobilize students and focusing on the role of Turfloop in this capacity, I modify the current historiography of the Black Consciousness Movement. This has focused in large part on ideological development at the organisational level[335], and on the mobilizing structures that SASO and the BPC employed.[336] As the case of Turfloop shows – particularly in the extremely close relationship between the local branch of SASO and the SRC – SASO's national success owed a great deal to local circumstances at strongholds like Turfloop.

Ideological cohesion actually reached beyond SASO itself at the University of the North in 1974: the close ties between SASO at a local and national level and the Students

[335] For the best analysis of SASO's development of Black Consciousness ideology, see Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets,* chapter 7 '"I write what I like": Conscientization, Culture, and Politicization', especially pp. 133-38. See also Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa,* pp. 262-8; and Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (New York, 1983), pp. 322-25.
[336] See, for instance, Marx, *Lessons of Struggle*, pp. 53-56; and Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa,* pp.269-70.

Representative Council resulted in what amounted to a cooperative effort between the organisations in mounting the Viva-FRELIMO rally on campus. This was the biggest planned protest event to take place at Turfloop since the university's founding, and it marked the first clash of students directly with agents of the state – in this case the police. Far from being an isolated incident, police and state intervention in everyday life at Turfloop went on to become a common occurrence over the next 20 years. In the 1980s Turfloop became the first university in South Africa to have military troops garrisoned on its campus. The Viva-FRELIMO rally was the first moment in the university's development that made that eventuality possible.

Chapter 4:

From SASO to AZASO: The Decline of Black Consciousness Politics in Student Activism (1976 - 1980)

Introduction

Student politics in South Africa underwent seismic shifts between 1976 and 1980. In early 1976 the South African Students' Organisation remained a major force on black campuses, while its graduates and proponents preached Black Consciousness ideology in schools in some of the country's biggest urban townships. As I argued in chapter three, this period marked the height of Black Consciousness' prominence, especially among its student constituency. But, though its impact on South African youth was critical, the student movement was still not considered a central force in liberation politics by either government or the more established liberation organisations; it represented one element of the resistance against apartheid, alongside the armed struggle, liberation organisations in exile, and trade union movements.

After June 1976 that changed irrevocably. School students in Soweto had shown their country and the world the importance and power of student organisation and politics. Protesting against the use of Afrikaans as a classroom medium they took to the streets of Soweto in tens of thousands. Confronted with armed police, they continued to march until they were fired upon and brutally repressed. The Soweto uprising and its aftermath – when students across the country made their schools and campuses ungovernable – changed the public perception of students in South Africa. It also changed the dynamics of resistance politics in the country. No single liberation organisation had been prepared for the scope and scale of the uprising, and the way organisations like SASO and the African National

Congress (ANC) dealt with the aftermath would have an important effect on the future shape of student and liberation politics. Another critical factor impacting this future was government repression, which increased significantly on the organisations that existed under the umbrella of Black Consciousness in the late 1970s. The death of Steve Biko and mass bannings in 1977 diminished the Black Consciousness Movement's capacity to influence student politics at the level it had achieved just a year or two earlier. Into the breach, and influenced by all these factors, the multi-racial Charterist politics of the ANC began a resurgence in new student political movements, bringing with it a new wave of student activism for the 1980s. The northern Transvaal and the University of the North at Turfloop were key fields on which such shifts took place.

This chapter explores the shifts away from Black Consciousness and the seeds of Charterism's renewal in student politics that arose in the wake of the Soweto Uprising, and concurrent changes in the administration of the University of the North. The decline of the Black Consciousness Movement happened just as its ideal of Africanisation at the highest level was achieved at Turfloop. This was the result of pressure from the reports released by both the Snyman and Jackson Commissions, in early 1976. However, the appointment of Professor William Kgware as rector in 1977 did not result in the political shifts at the university that student activists had envisioned. These unmet expectations, and the frequent conflicts with both students and staff that dogged Kgware's administration, are one primary focus of this chapter. The other is the decline and deterioration of the Black Consciousness Movement under pressure from government repression and in exile. As I have suggested, the confluence of these events – Africanisation at Turfloop and the decline of Black Consciousness – is related.

The commission reports of both the Snyman and Jackson Commissions, and the joint submission to the Snyman Commission by Turfloop's Black Academic Staff Association (BASA), act as both source and subject for sections of this chapter: the reports and their reception, at Turfloop and publicly, and the later controversy over the publication and distribution of BASA's submission, illuminate the disagreements about running the university that arose between the university administration, the staff, the students, and the government. Generally discussions of Turfloop in the literature suggest that its significance waned after the Viva-FRELIMO rally of 1974.[337] But I argue that contestation at the university contained the seeds of changes that were significant both on campus and more widely during and beyond the mid-1970s.

The Snyman and Jackson Reports and the push for Africanisation at Turfloop

The report of the Snyman Commission, released in February 1976, called for important changes at the university. Though it broadly affirmed the principles of separate development, and said that 'the development of the University of the North as a university has been sound since its inception and its establishment has been justified,'[338] it also called for major changes in the structure of the university itself, to address the discontent among students and black staff. Many of these seem to have been drawn from BASA's recommendations to the commission in its submission. Among the changes suggested included parity of pay between black and white staff, greater financial autonomy for the university (like that enjoyed by its white counterparts), and a reorganisation of the (white) council that ran the university:

> The commission visualises a university controlled by a council consisting of a majority of Blacks designated by the homeland governments concerned,

[337] Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets*, pp. 152-4; Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, pp. 298-9.
[338] Untitled, *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 February 1976. [WHP AD1912/258.16]

> while the teaching and administrative functions will be the joint responsibility of Whites and Blacks. The Blacks would thus have the predominant say in the control of the university established for them.[339]

These proposed changes were supported, in part, by testimony from the student and staff bodies; both vocally supported the process of 'Africanisation' at the top levels of the university. In its submission to the Snyman Commission, BASA criticized the inequitable practices of employment and promotion for black and white staff at Turfloop[340], and the system of advancement governed primarily by racial, rather than academic, qualifications:

> The fact that Black people are not put in positions of authority over White persons at the University of the North has often been considered as formidable evidence in support of the impression that the University of the North continues to express and extend views of white supremacy often to be found outside the homelands. […] A Black academician would most certainly not object to working under a White man merely because he is White. He would object if there are objective grounds for such objection. […] Fundamental in this regard is also the Black man's desire that the University must be controlled and administered by Black men of ability. The choice of White personnel in positions of authority will then be made by them in exercise of their own sovereignty and free will, not imposed from without.[341]

In broad agreement with the structure of racialized authority at the university, the SRC issued a statement on 16 October 1974 declaring 'the need for a black rector for the University of the North could not be overemphasised.'[342] However, race was not to be the only salient factor in the appointment of a new rector. 'The rector of the university should not be a member of any political body *that was not representative of the Black people*, the students said.'[343] This insistence is a reminder of Turfloop's place as a catchment of students from four separate homelands, and the fact that it was purpose-built to educate the future elite of these areas. While BASA had indicated that homelands represented an arena that was

[339] 'Equal pay with help to ease tension', *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 February 1976. [WHP AD1912/258.16]
[340] Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony*, pp. 28-31.
[341] Ibid., pp. 39-40.
[342] 'Students call for Black rector', *Natal Mercury,* 22 November 1974. [WHP AD1912/258.16]
[343] Ibid. (emphasis mine)

protected from attitudes of white supremacy, the SRC remained suspicious of them, and this reflected the position of many students and student organisations. SASO, in particular, distrusted members of the black elite who participated in the Bantustan system (as demonstrated by the backlash against Themba Sono when he proposed cooperating with the Bantustan authorities), and its dominance on campus likely played a role in the SRC's insistence that any black rector have what they considered an appropriate political background. For his part, Justice Snyman had little sympathy for SASO's influence on campus saying that it could not be described as a true students' organisation, but was rather closer to a political party. The bitterness expressed in its politics, he judged, 'can only bedevil relations, especially between students on the one side and the White staff on the other.'[344]

Gessler Nkondo, head of BASA, also called for blacks to take 'complete control of the university,' rather than just nominal or symbolic posts. Nkondo was a member of a politically active family from the Northern Transvaal by way of Soweto; one of four sons, his brothers entered various forms of political life. Zinjiva had been a student at Turfloop and an organizer for the Black Consciousness group Black Community Programmes (BCP) before going into exile in 1977; he was later arrested and detained by security police when he returned to South Africa in 1979.[345] Brother Ephraim joined *Umkhonto we Sizwe* but allegedly criticized some leaders (Joe Modise and Mzwai Piliso were named in a later exposé article) and was later tortured and presumed to have been killed in 1984 at MK's notorious camp in Angola, Quatro.[346] Curtis, the most politically prominent of the brothers, also entered education as a profession, and as a teacher in Soweto he was supportive of the

[344] Snyman Commission Report, pp. 54-56.
[345] 'Where is Zinjiva, asks brother', *Argus*, 19 December 1979. [GPP]
[346] 'The execution of a camp commander', *Mail and Guardian*, 30 October 1998. [GPP]

students' 1976 uprising. He went on to become the first president of AZAPO, and his role in that organisation is further discussed later in this chapter. Of the Nkondo brothers, Gessler was the most academically successful, and he melded this success with political activism similarly to his brother Curtis. He was one of the University College of the North's earliest cohort, and became the president of its first SRC in 1961. He was later appointed to a junior lectureship at Turfloop in 1966, after the completion of his honours degree. After earning masters degrees at UNISA (1968) and then abroad at Leeds University in the UK (around 1972), Nkondo returned to Turfloop as a senior lecturer and quickly became a leading member of the black faculty. He became the chairman of BASA in or around 1974, and came to prominence beyond the campus as the spokesman for black staff in the aftermath of the Viva-FRELIMO rallies. He was the editor of BASA's joint submission to the Snyman Commission.

In spite of many points of commonality, Nkondo and other staff did not completely align with the concerns of the SRC in their testimony. Rather than adhering to SASO's ideological denigration of the homeland system, Nkondo was willing to use it as a justification for the goal of complete Africanisation, saying, 'This [complete black control at Turfloop] should not be regarded as an unreasonable request since it is in line with Government policy for the homelands.'[347] Even many of Turfloop's white staff supported the move to Africanisation (though perhaps a version less 'complete' than that advocated by Nkondo), hoping that it would ameliorate the 'bad relations' between blacks and whites on campus.[348] This view was supported by BASA's joint submission to the commission, which argued that '[…] the abolition of discrimination between Black and White at the University and the power to

[347] Quoted in 'White Staff quitting Turfloop over disturbances', *The Star*, 11 October 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]
[348] 'White Staff quitting Turfloop over disturbances', *The Star*, 11 October 1974. [WHP AD1912/239]

administer and control the University by Blacks, are considered to be the basic foundations on which improved co-operation can be built.'[349]

This nearly universal support within the university community for the process of Africanisation was reflected in Snyman's findings. His report called for substantive changes in the way Turfloop was structured and run, thus validating many of its students' complaints. Despite being tame by SASO's standards, the Snyman report was praised for its calls for change by the liberal press; a *Rand Daily Mail* editorial noted that:

> A proper sense of alarm is a necessary commodity in South Africa today […] to generate the will to act so that ills can be redressed before it is too late. […] Now, thankfully, the judge has sounded a warning bell from a politically dispassionate watchtower. He has provided not only the incentive but also the opportunity to introduce change without fanning political tempers.[350]

The editors of the *Rand Daily Mail* were particularly pleased by the muted response from the government to the Commission's report, noting that Minister of Bantu Education Mr M. C. Botha 'implicitly accept[ed] some guilt for the situation by promising to do "everything possible and within the powers of existing legislation" to improve things [at Turfloop].'[351]

This cautious acceptance of the report was echoed by the University Council, which endorsed its recommendations for Africanisation and autonomy. According to Turfloop's public relations director, Mr Casper Squier, speaking two months after the report's release, implementation of the recommendations 'was now obviously out of the university's field of competence. It is over to the government department [Bantu Education] concerned and we all hope that the Minister will speedily decide to implement the recommendations.'[352] But

[349] Nkondo, *Turfloop Testimony,* p. 35.
[350] Editorial, *Rand Daily Mail*. 11 February 1976. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[351] Ibid.
[352] 'Turfloop: what next?', *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 April 1976.

this was not to be the case; though Minister Botha paid lip service to the recommendations, no timeline was adopted for implementation and, in spite of support from quarters as diverse as the *Rand Daily Mail* editors and the university council itself, many of the recommendations were never implemented after the report's release.

A second report, the Jackson Report on Africanisation at Turfloop, was released in tandem with the tabling of the Snyman report in Parliament. The Jackson report, which had been commissioned by the university council in early 1974 but was withheld until the release of the Snyman report, had similar and even further-reaching findings. Led by Professor Stanley Jackson of the University of the Witwatersrand, it called for improvements to black schooling at the earliest levels, and 'recommended that colleges be established, in close association with the universities which would select and train students of proven capacity for university work'; in addition, it advocated a reversal of apartheid policy in higher education, recommending that 'Black academics be allowed to move freely between White and Black universities.'[353] Though relations between black and white members of the Turfloop community were outside the purview of the Jackson Commission, it noted that 'The university will not function satisfactorily so long as [animosity between the groups] continues.'[354]

On the subject of its commission – Africanisation of the university staff and leadership – the commission 'considers that some important preliminary steps should be taken in order to

[353] 'Black education not good enough, says report', *Rand Daily Mail*, 11 February 1976. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[354] 'Committee report on Turfloop accepted', *Eastern Province Herald*, 11 February 1976. [WHP AD1912/258.17]

Africanise the university and at the same time maintain its educational standards.'[355] This relatively cautious recommendation was reiterated, 'Africanisation must […] take place at a pace that does not require lowering of standards, either in teaching or management. The high quality of the institution must not be sacrificed to the ideal of Black control.'[356] The Snyman Commission cited the Jackson Report in its own findings on Africanisation as well, and echoed its findings:

> The [Snyman] Commission endorses the [Jackson] Committee's findings on the problems connected with the Africanisation of the University, especially the fact that it is not possible to draw up a plan according to which Africanisation can take place. This should take place at a pace that will not lower the standards of administration or tuition.[357]

Though these endorsements may seem less than full-throated, one of the few recommendations that *was* pursued after the release of both the Snyman and Jackson reports was Africanisation at the top level of the university. For years students had been calling for a black rector to lead Turfloop and the retirement of Rector Boshoff in October 1976, close on the heels of the release of the reports, which both called for substantive changes in the structure of Turfloop, presented an ideal moment. Ironically Jackson, who had led the commission of inquiry into Africanisation, had been considered for the post as an intermediary to black leadership because it was perceived that his politics would make him sympathetic to the students.[358] However, the recommendations of Jackson's own report, together with Snyman and pressure from both staff and students prevailed. Prior to his own retirement Boshoff announced that his successor would be the first black rector of any university in South Africa: Professor William Kgware.

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[355] 'Committee report on Turfloop accepted', *Eastern Province Herald*, 11 February 1976. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[356] Ibid.
[357] Snyman Commission Report, p. 100.
[358] 'Turfloop move puts ball in Botha's court', *The Star*, 2 April 1976. [WHP AD1912/258.17]

From the perspective of the university council, Kgware was an ideal choice for the post. Having arrived there in 1960, he was the most senior black academic at Turfloop, with a long history at the institution. He had demonstrated his authority among his peers, leading them to walk out of the vote on Abraham Tiro's expulsion in 1972,[359] but he also enjoyed a close relationship with the university administration. As early as 1968, Manana Kgware noted in a letter to Colin Collins that her father had been asked to account for her and her brother Bob's activism within the University Christian Movement, but that 'Pop' had diffused the situation because neither she nor Bob had been questioned directly by the rector.[360] Kgware had resigned his own membership to UCM later in 1968 to avoid conflict with the university, and also later resigned from the Black Academic Staff Association in late 1974, as that organisation became more radical.

After the news of his appointment was announced, Kgware himself declared in an interview:

> There is no way that I am going to become a so-called radical in these times. I have been consistent in public life for 40 years and I will not change now, but somewhere a start has to be made to get all our people to regard each other as allies in the greater plan to develop all of South Africa.[361]

That interview, given in August 1976, could hardly have come at a more volatile moment in South African student politics. At pains to reassure a skittish staff, of which two-thirds were white, and to appease a restive and sometimes militant student body, Kgware tried to walk a fine line in his new public role.

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[359] Author's interview with Percy Mokwele; For a more thorough discussion of this event, see 'The Tiro Incident' in chapter two (p. 60-73).
[360] Letter from M. Kgware to C. Collins, 30 September 1968. [WHP AD1126/F]
[361] 'New rector is no radical', *Rand Daily Mail*, 11 August 1976. [WHP AD1912/258.17]

Radicals and 'Sell-outs': the polarization of politics at Turfloop

In the aftermath of the Soweto student riots in June of 1976, Turfloop students took action on their own campus. In late June 1976 the campus was beset by student protests, which resulted in the destruction of campus property and some buildings being set on fire; many students were accused of arson and public violence.[362] Allegedly there was also a student plot to hijack a bus of the children of white staff of the university on its way to school in Pietersburg, though nothing of this sort actually transpired.[363] In the aftermath of the unrest Turfloop fell back on its policy of mass expulsions. However, Professor Kgware, working with Rector Boshoff in an attempt to diffuse tensions between the students, their parents, and the university, prevailed on the university council to readmit 168 expelled students who had been charged with public violence and/or arson. 'Black parents have responded wonderfully to this decision to readmit the students, and the students who stand charged must know that we are sympathetic to their problems,' he said publicly.[364] This initial move towards appeasement and détente proved successful: the accused students returned to campus, and the university was able to resume functioning normally.

However, circumstances of being the first black rector at an institution like Turfloop did not allow Kgware to tread the line of equivocation for long. He took office at a time of great polarization between the black student body and some staff on one side, and many of Turfloop's white staff on the other. These fissures were broadly along lines of race, even as figures like Kgware tried to overcome the racial biases inherent in Turfloop's structure.

[362] 'New rector is no radical', *Rand Daily Mail*, 11 August 1976. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[363] Author's interview with Percy Mokwele.
[364] 'New rector is no radical', *Rand Daily Mail*, 11 August 1976. [WHP AD1912/258.17]

These two groups found frameworks of support in the wider political debates between groups like SASO and conservative supporters of the South African government.

Though there were students, staff, and groups at Turfloop that were moderate on the political spectrum, tensions at the university consistently pulled these toward the political extremes. Kgware recognized the challenge the polarized campus presented:

> "I have stood all my life for understanding between Blacks and Whites, yet I get this appointment at a time when Whites and Blacks across the country face each other in conflict," he said [in an interview]. Professor Kgware knows that there are Blacks who think he is a sell-out, a stooge of the White man's apartheid institution. "Those people must learn that neither White nor Black can do anything in this country without the other," he said.[365]

But it would take more than public statements about cooperation, and even changing the most visible university leadership, to address the deep-seated racial inequality and resentment at Turfloop; these struggles would mark the rest of Kgware's time in office and beyond.

Ideology in the South African Students' Movement and Soweto, June 16, 1976

The backdrop for so many of these pivotal events at Turfloop was, as has been mentioned, arguably the most important event in the history of South African student protests: the Soweto student uprising of 1976. I have touched briefly on the links between these events and the local developments in student politics at Turfloop in previous chapters, but this merits a more focused analysis. Here I will consider the process of conscientization that happened in some key Soweto schools, drawing on some of the issues addressed in chapter three's section on Turfloop's student-teacher activists. I will focus on the South African Students' Movement and its capacity to engage with diverse ideologies. Of these, Black

[365] 'New rector is no radical', *Rand Daily Mail*, 11 August 1976. [WHP AD1912/258.17]

Consciousness was the most prominent, but the inclusion of other political ideas – notably Charterism – increasingly played a critical role in the trajectory of student politics.

By early 1976 the SASO Nine were on trial for terrorism in Pretoria, but that year was also, as I have argued here, a peak in public recognition and mobilization for the Black Consciousness Movement. The trial of the SASO Nine and the findings of the Snyman Commission, calling for amelioration and Africanisation at Turfloop, were regularly in national headlines garnering publicity and raising awareness of the movement. Stay-aways, sit-ins, and boycotts at universities like Turfloop were becoming familiar. Until 1976, though, these sorts of actions had been mostly confined to universities and teacher-training colleges; political action had not yet affected secondary schools in a significant way.

In spite of a lack of overt action, political consciousness had been growing among secondary school students, particularly at key Soweto high schools, for some time. With Tiro's death in February 1974 the formal links between SASO and SASM effectively broke down, though other older members of BCM organisations continued to work with SASM. Aubrey Mokoena, who had been Tiro's contemporary at Turfloop, described his relationship to the organisation as follows: 'I began to associate with SASM towards the end of 1975, and played the role of consultant though [I was] not a member because it is basically a high school student's organisation.'[366] He participated in a series of planning meetings, with other members of the Soweto Parents Association (SPA) including Winnie Mandela, in the days before 16 June 1976. Adult organisations like the SPA continued to play a role in the uprising after the events on 16 June, as well. The Soweto Committee of Ten, an organisation

[366] Deposition of Aubrey Mokoena taken by Justice of the Peace DL Aspelling in Johannesburg. Undated (c. early 1977), p. 20. [WHP A2953]

of prominent Soweto residents led by Dr. Ntatho Motlana, was organized to provide leadership to the community in the turbulent period following the June 16 demonstration, and in the wake of the breakdown of Soweto's Urban Bantu Council (UBC).[367] Support also came from teachers and principals in Soweto schools: in 1977 the Soweto Teachers' Action Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Curtis Nkondo, brother of the former Turfloop professor, Gessler Nkondo. By late September of that year, this organisation led 331 Soweto teachers, including several prominent principals, among them Lekgau Mathabathe, the sympathetic principal of Morris Isaacson who had hired Abraham Tiro, in a mass resignation to protest the inferiority of Bantu Education.[368]

But while adult involvement and support increased markedly after the demonstration, select members of the Soweto Parents Association (like Mokoena and Mandela) were the only ones involved in its planning. This was primarily coordinated by SASM's Action Committee; they planned the demonstration to be a mass march and a one-day class boycott to protest the imposition of Afrikaans as a teaching medium in classes. The Action Committee was composed of student leaders from various Soweto High Schools who were members of the SASM executive. The most prominent of these were Tsietsi Mashinini from Morris Isaacson and Tebello Motapanyane from Orlando West. In the aftermath of the uprising, the Action Committee renamed itself the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) as it tried to influence and direct the wave of protest that had begun. Significantly, the rhetoric of these leaders during and after the uprising reflects Black Consciousness ideology. Though the formal links to SASO may have fallen away, the shared philosophy remained, at least in part.

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[367] E. Zuern, *The Politics of Necessity: Community Organizing and Democracy in South Africa* (Madison, WI, 2011), p. 25.
[368] 'Top principals join mass resignations', *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 September 1977; '325 Soweto teachers will resign today', *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 September 1977. [GPP]

Mashinini had been a student of Tiro's at Morris Isaacson, and in an interview given after the uprising in November 1976, he spoke strongly about the role of the Black Consciousness Movement in conscientizing Soweto students, and described SASO as 'the mother body of SASM.'[369]

> The ideology [of SASM and other Black Consciousness Organisations] is the same: to make the Black man more conscious of the evil of the white man, elements of oppression, and so on. The ideology concerned is to peacefully bring about change in the South African social aspect and to bring about the total liberation of the Black man.[370]

In his interview Mashinini privileged the role of the Black Consciousness Movement above South Africa's other liberation movements in fostering the student uprising. When asked specifically about SASM's connections with the ANC and PAC he said:

> I will tell you something. The ANC and PAC played their part in the South Africa struggle in the 1950s and 1960s. Right now there are ex-members of the ANC in the whole of South Africa. But they are not politically active, that is, have the concept of perpetuating the activity of the ANC or PAC political ideology. As far as the students in South Africa are concerned, the ANC and PAC are extinct internally. Externally we are aware they exist. Internally they are doing no work. There may be some underground work they are doing which we are not aware of, but as far as the struggle is concerned they are not doing anything.[371]

But Mashinini's dismissal of the other movements, particularly the ANC, was not a position shared by all his fellows in SASM. Black Consciousness was not the only ideological influence on the students of Soweto. Diseko has argued that, in contrast to Mashinini's contentions, by 1975 the ANC was exerting a significant impact on SASM, through local organizers like Joe Gqabi and secretive underground links between SASM members and

[369] T. Mashinini, 'Behind the Growing Upsurge in South Africa', *Intercontinental Press*, 15 November 1976 [not paginated].
[370] Ibid.
[371] Ibid.

ANC cells. These activists exposed students to ideologies that countered Black Consciousness and its brand of Africanism.

The ANC espoused the principles of the Freedom Charter (hence the term 'Charterist'). The Freedom Charter was drafted and launched at the Congress of the People in Kliptown, near Johannesburg, in 1955. It was a cooperative effort of the ANC, the South African Communist Party, the South African Indian Congress, and other organisations in the congress movement. As described by Lodge, it 'appears a bland enough document. It consists of a list of basic rights and freedoms.'[372] But Lodge rightly points out that protecting these rights and freedoms in the context of 1955 South Africa, when the construction of apartheid legislation was at its peak, had revolutionary potential. In an overt challenge to the racial segregation of apartheid, the Freedom Charter begins with the phrase 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white.' This multiracialism came to be one of the defining characteristics of all groups under the banner of Charterism – and one that distinguished them from Africanists.

An interview with Tebello Motapanyane, who was the Secretary General of SASM at the time of the uprisings and later became chairman of the Soweto Students' Representative Council (SSRC), by the ANC journal *Sechaba* supports Diseko's contention that Charterism and the ANC had influenced Soweto's students:

> Certainly I would say the ANC <u>was</u> known to the students and its ideas influenced many of them. […] There were political trials concerning the ANC. We knew that the ANC was operating because we would hear that this person was being charged in Durban, in Cape Town, in Grahamstown, and so on. We would always hear from the papers of ANC activity. We heard about the operations in which ANC guerillas were involved with the fascist police and soldiers in Zimbabwe, as they were trying to go back home to begin the war of liberation in South Africa. From time to time there were ANC pamphlets and journals which

[372] Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa,* p. 71.

> we used to get and we saw very little of any underground activity except by the ANC.[373]

Motapanyane's description, while supporting strong ideological links to the ANC, speaks predominantly of an organisation that SASM students knew by reputation and myth, rather than one with which they had much concrete interaction. Where interaction did occur it revealed the different priorities of SASM and the ANC. Of the underground cells that helped students network he said:

> They were formed by the ANC. We in SASM did not actually think of forming such things. We were operating legally and tried to keep SASM as a broad legal organisation. But some of us listened to our elders from the ANC when they said we needed more than just mass legal organisation. Hence we founded these underground cells.[374]

SASM, then, had a broad ideological scope by 1976 that allowed strong affiliates of the Black Consciousness Movement to mobilize under the same umbrella as stalwart ANC supporters. As has been mentioned, Mashinini and Motapanyane were two of the movement's most prominent leaders and they fell on opposite sides of this ideological divide. Perhaps Sibongile Mkhabela (née Mthembu), a SASM leader from Naledi High School during the uprising, captured this ideological diversity best:

> Within SASM there were people who had sympathies for ANC, sympathies for PAC, and all sorts of other sympathies. We'd debate and fight over this, but there would be some consensus. We agreed on certain basic principles. […] For me it was a strength […] within SASM- If you look at Murphy Morobe, he's always been an ANC kind of person. I've always been a BC kind of person. We'd debate and argue […] but it also did not create enemies as it created enemies later on when we said somebody is PAC, somebody is BC, and got into all these fights.[375]

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[373] 'How June 16 demo was planned', interview with T. Motapanyane, *Sechaba*, Vol. 11(2), January 1977. [WHP A2953]
[374] Ibid.
[375] Interview with Sibongile Mkhabela, conducted by the 3rd year class of African Politics Students at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 13 August 1994. [WHP A2675/I/23]

This ability for Africanism and ANC-centred viewpoints to coexist within an organisation would not last, as Mkhabela implies. It does, however, mark the first emergence of the ANC's non-racial, Charterist philosophy in organized student politics among black South Africans since the ANC Youth League had been banned in 1960.[376]

Student and staff dissent in Rector Kgware's administration

Following the unrest of the Soweto riots, student activists there and across South Africa were rocked by a second major event. On September 12, 1977 Steve Biko died in police custody while being detained in Pretoria Central Prison. The news of his death was a major blow to SASO and to its sister Black Consciousness organisations; though Biko had been banned in 1973 and had been out of the formal SASO executive for even longer, he remained the founder and most prominent advocate of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. His five-day testimony at the trial of the SASO Nine in 1975 had served to reinforce his status in the organisation, and it also provided a legal and public platform from which to preach Black Consciousness ideology. In spite of SASO's official tiers of leadership and power, Biko remained the figurehead and face of the movement at the time of his death in 1977. News of his killing hit student activists hard.

At Turfloop the news of Biko's death came in the midst of ongoing class boycotts. These reflected a growing trend in protest politics, both at Turfloop and on a national scale.[377] Julian Brown has explored the increasing willingness of black student protest to confront the

[376] NUSAS, the National Union of South African Students, had supported non-racialism since its inclusion of some students from Fort Hare in 1945, but it had also been dominated by white leaders and membership; these two factors contributed to SASO's break with it in 1968, which I discuss in chapter two (pp. 52-3).
[377] For a comprehensive discussion of the changing face of public protest among South African students, see Brown, 'Public Protest and Violence in South Africa, 1948 – 1976'.

state, and dates this shift in the form of political activism in black universities and schools first to the Viva-FRELIMO rallies in 1974,[378] and more completely to 1976 by which time he argues the relationship between protesters and police had fundamentally changed and become violently confrontational.[379]

September 1977 also marked the mass resignation of Soweto teachers, led by Curtis Nkondo and the Soweto Teacher's Action Committee. The Turfloop protest was playing out against a national stage where student boycotts and stay-aways were becoming all too familiar. But it followed even longer trends of such protest at Turfloop itself: in 1969 students had used mass protest when the university refused to allow them to affiliate with the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). In May of that year more than two-thirds of the student body marched on the Rector's office with a list of grievances including complaints about the affiliation controversy, student suspensions, and being disallowed from speaking to the press.[380] The following year a celebration of the university's 'independence' from UNISA was met with similar protests. By the time of the student strike in September 1977, Turfloop had experienced ten similar, and increasingly serious, student protest actions, including mass boycotts following the expulsion of Abraham Tiro in 1972, the sit-ins and arrests after the Viva-FRELIMO rally in 1974, and the temporary closure of the university after June 16,1976. These actions became increasingly frequent after 1976. The September 1977 strike was preceded by the temporary closure of the university in August, when students 'decided to boycott lectures and stage a hunger strike in protest at the expulsion of a Stofberg theological

[378] J. Brown, 'An Experiment in Confrontation: The Pro-Frelimo Rallies of 1974', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 38(1), 2012, pp. 55-71.
[379] Brown. 'Public Protest and Violence', pp. 318-321.
[380] NUSAS local committee report, 'Turfloop Erupts', May 1969. [RUCL MS 18 180/2]; NUSAS open memo regarding 'Demonstration at Turfloop', 14 May 1969. [RUCL MS 18 170/4]; 'Turfloop Students backed by Wits. mass meeting', *Rand Daily Mail,* 14 May 1969. [WHP AD1912/258.16]

college student and the quality of hostel food.'[381] Students returned to campus on September 12 by pre-arrangement, but refused to sign a declaration 'that they withdraw all demands made last month; undertake not to take part in unauthorized mass meetings and agree to the revision of the constitution of the Students' Representative Council.'[382] Between their objections to the university's demands, and the news of Biko's death that broke on September 13, the recently returned students turned immediately to renewed protest as an expression of their grievances. A mass meeting was held for the students who had returned, but during the night some students turned to violence: 'a fire bomb was thrown into the hostel superintendent's bedroom, injuring three children. One student was assaulted and another's room was set alight.'[383]

The following day six students – including the president and vice-president of the SRC – were expelled, and university authorities dissolved the SRC. This precipitated another round of lecture boycotts.[384] These continued for more than two weeks until, on 28 September, 1977, approximately 1000 students were asked to leave campus. According to a student spokesman, 'letters of expulsion were handed to [each student] personally yesterday [28 September 1977] requesting them to leave the campus by 2pm. No reasons were given.'[385] In a quick response to this version of events, which was published by the *Rand Daily Mail*, a university spokesman 'denied that students had been expelled from the university. He said a number of students had been refused entrance to examinations, however, and had returned home.'[386] He contended that the move was not political, and had simply been made to allow

[381] 'Expulsion move set aside by Supreme Court', *Times,* 8 April 1979. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[382] 'Students drifting back to Turfloop', *Star,* 12 September 1977. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[383] 'Expulsion move set aside by Supreme Court', *Times,* 8 April 1979. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[384] Ibid.
[385] '1000 Turfloop students expelled', *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 September 1977. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[386] 'Turfloop students were not expelled', *Rand Daily Mail*, 30 September 1977. [WHP AD1912/258.17]

the remaining students to prepare for their exams: 'To give those students who are serious with their studies an opportunity to continue studying and preparing for the exams which begin on October 24, the university put the entrance date forward by two weeks.'[387] In fact, Turfloop had long used eligibility requirements for exams to exert control over its student body. To be eligible to sit exams, Turfloop students had to achieve a certain level of work during the term. During the tumultuous years of class boycotts in the 1970s, achieving the required results was even more difficult. It was a controversial practice among students, who often read racism into the policy. Harry Nengwekhulu recalled the practice from his time as a student in 1969:

> [Y]ou see those universities, those days, they used to be taught by white lecturers who would come to class the first day and they would tell you - the class is [a] hundred, they said the hundred, right, half of the class will sit for exams. And half of that half will pass. So if you are hundred, only fifty qualify – because you had to qualify to write exams – and of that fifty, twenty-five would pass. Because there was so much prejudice.[388]

Student explanations that the procedures were rooted in racial prejudice were countered by staff who struggled to teach (just as students struggled to learn) in the fraught climate of campus protests throughout the 1970s. But whatever its roots, the practice of excluding students from campus before and during exams did enable the university administration to exercise a high degree of control over its student body. In 1977 the timing of the decision by the university administrators to move up the cut-off for exam qualifications was conspicuous, coming as it did in the midst of student protest, and it was not without backlash. The excluded students 'agreed among themselves to try to persuade the 100 or so students remaining at the university to return to their homes within two weeks "or face the consequences of letting the student body down".'[389] They also exerted pressure on parents at

[387] 'Turfloop students were not expelled', *Rand Daily Mail*, 30 September 1977. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[388] Author's interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a).
[389] '1000 Turfloop students expelled', *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 September 1977. [WHP AD1912/258.17]

home to recall their children who had been allowed to remain on campus.[390] The implication that the student body totaled approximately 1100 students in 1977 is inaccurate; enrolment data from the time suggests the number was around 1900. The 1000 students who left campus did number more than half of the student body, however. [391] It is also important to note that a high percentage of these students would be returning to homes in Soweto and other urban townships of the Rand when they left campus. In 1974 the Snyman Commission noted that approximately 60% of Turfloop students came from urban areas, and the vast majority of these were from the townships around Johannesburg and Pretoria in the southern Transvaal. In the winter of 1977 most students had been home a matter of weeks before with the August closure of the university, and at the height of resistance and repression in Soweto this fostered strong links between protest in the township and protest on campus.

Less than a year into the job, and after the success of readmitting those students who had been involved in the post-Soweto uprising protests, Rector Kgware had fallen back on Turfloop's old method of removing protesting students from campus. In addition, the dissolution of the SRC and the expulsion of its leadership recalled the crackdowns of 1972 and 1974, more than the accommodation that Kgware had favoured in 1976. Though it was five years later, and now a black man lived in the Turfloop Rector's mansion, little had changed from the time of Tiro's graduation speech in the way the university dealt with dissent in its student body.

Rather than an isolated incident of punitive action, the rest of Kgware's tenure was marked by similar crackdowns against student protest. In a high profile example, Ngoako

[390] '1000 Turfloop students expelled', *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 September 1977. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[391] Snyman Commission Report, p.48; 'Cops at Turfloop', *Post*, 4 May 1979. [WHP AD1912/258.17]

Ramathlodi, a third year law student at the university and later the first premier of Limpopo Province, was expelled in April 1979, allegedly for organizing and participating in a commemoration of the Sharpeville massacre. The university argued that this contravened the terms of his enrollment, as all students who registered in February 1979 had to sign a pledge (of the type that had been mooted in September 1977) not to participate in any protests. Ramathlodi denied the accusations against him, and argued the case in court. In response, Rector Kgware, 'calling for the application [to reinstate Ramathlodi] to be dismissed with costs, said that in view of the history of rioting at the university, maintaining discipline there was more important than at other universities in the Republic.'[392] In a blow to the university's authority to impose such bans – and perhaps in contravention of Kgware's argument that maintaining discipline at Turfloop was of primary importance – in July 1979 Justice H.H. Moll of the Pretoria Supreme Court ruled in Ramathlodi's favour, dictating that he be allowed to re-enroll for his final year.[393]

Richard Abel has written about the role of the South African judiciary – and the Supreme Court in particular – as a tool in the anti-apartheid struggle. He catalogues the attempts of that court to assert its authority through judicial review against powers of detention and other emergency regulations during the 1980s; most of these failed, however. The success of Ramathlodi's appeal in 1979 came a full decade before Abel points to a turning of tides in 1989 when the Appellate Court began 'to reassert judicial authority'.[394] But the assertion of judicial authority in Ramathlodi's case was less confrontational to the state than the instances Abel highlights, and thus less of a landmark for judicial intervention in state power. The

[392] 'Court reinstates Ramathlodi', *Rand Daily Mail*, 11 July 1979. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[393] Ibid.
[394] Abel, Richard L. *Politics by other means: Law in the struggle against apartheid, 1980-1994* (London, 1995), p. 17.

judgment of Justice Moll, intervening in the administration of a university – even one which was essentially controlled by the Department of Bantu Education – was less of an encroachment on state power than restricting the abilities and privileges of the Ministry of Justice to detain people. But it did set an important precedent by limiting the university's capacity to use political legislation to control its students.

In addition to criticisms of being an apartheid sell-out, Rector Kgware was increasingly accused of merely providing a black face to hide the white power that continued to call the shots at Turfloop. Perhaps no one made this argument more eloquently than respected author Es'kia Mphahlele. Mphahlele had grown up during the 1920s in the rural northern Transvaal outside of Pietersburg, near what is now Lebowakgomo.[395] After joining the ANC in the mid-1950s, he left South Africa in 1957 to teach abroad with the understanding he would not easily be able to return to his home country because of his politics.[396] After spending twenty years in exile and earning a doctorate in the United States, he returned home to South Africa in 1977 to participate in the political turning of the tides that he saw heralded by the student uprisings. He applied to teach English literature at Turfloop, but failed to get the post due to the 'disapproval of the then Minister of Education and Training.'[397] He went on to take up a post in English literature at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Years later in his autobiography, Mphahlele wrote of his experience applying to Turfloop:

> Here is an institution that purports to be for Africans, and yet does not reflect the African character; has a Rector who is a mere signature, a megaphone for orders that are issued by whites who are above him. The government imposes its own system of university administration. There is hardly any meaningful control between the University and the African communities in the same

[395] E. Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (London, 1959), pp. 11-14.
[396] Ibid., pp. 209-16.
[397] White, *From Despair to Hope: the Turfloop Experience* (1997), p.126

> district. The people regard it as distinct, inaccessible and alien to their culture and aspirations.[398]

Mphahlele's accusation that Kgware was simply a signature, or megaphone, for whites who were really in charge of what happened at Turfloop was published later but similar sentiments circulated among students and staff at the university at the time. In addition to having to answer to ministers in various government departments, it was widely believed that the reviled Academic Registrar of Turfloop, Professor J.C. Steenkamp, wielded more power than Kgware himself. Steenkamp had been a campus figure for many years; in 1974 he had survived a motion by the Black Academic Staff Association calling for his expulsion 'due to alleged racism and mismanagement.'[399] They made another call for his resignation years later in 1980, saying that his attitude towards students 'has consistently reflected his arrogance and impatience which borders on contempt and lack of respect for blacks.'[400] According to Dr Ntatho Motlana in 1981, when he was the chairman of the Soweto Committee of Ten, '[Steenkamp] has always been the power behind the throne at Turf, the manipulator of people and events. […] For too long now Turfloop has been under the shadow of domination of rightwing whites, and it is time the situation changed.'[401]

The furore around Mphahlele was not Kgware's only high profile staffing problem at this time: Gessler Nkondo, one-time head of the Black Academic Staff Association, had published the text of BASA's joint submission to the Snyman Commission under the title *Turfloop Testimony* in 1976. Nkondo acted as editor of the text and provided a historical preface about the founding of the university. Though originally a signatory on BASA's submission before he took up the post of Rector, Kgware strongly objected to the publication

[398] E. Mphahlele, *Afrika My Music* (Johannesburg,1984). p.182
[399] White, *From Despair to Hope,* p. 107.
[400] 'Turf Prof to go', *Sunday Times*, 20 June 1981. [WHP AD1912/258.16]
[401] Ibid.

in his new administrative role. He and the university council alleged that the book contained 'untrue and/or false statements concerning the university,' and required BASA to approve a retraction.[402] In the UNIN News, an on-campus newsletter, the book was called 'a misleading and incorrect reflection of the true state of affairs.'[403] After an emergency meeting in November 1976, BASA reaffirmed its position behind the statement of its joint submission as represented in *Turfloop Testimony*. BASA was subsequently suspended 'at the university council's pleasure' in March 1977, but by this stage Nkondo was no longer on campus. Shortly after the book's release in early 1976, he took academic leave and went to the United States to pursue a doctorate in English at Yale.[404] Two years later, on the verge of his return to his post at Turfloop, the university administration under Kgware began disciplinary proceedings against him for the publication of *Turfloop Testimony*. In addition, the administration accused Nkondo of issuing a press statement regarding the university, which neither staff nor students were allowed to do. Nkondo faced a hearing before an all-white disciplinary committee, but refused to attend. After a short return to South Africa, he left Turfloop and took up a teaching post in the United States in 1980.

Black Consciousness banned: the turn to exile and AZAPO

While Turfloop was engulfed in student demonstrations over Biko's death, the South African government prepared to capitalize on the blow that had been dealt to the South African Students' Organisation and other groups in the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). On 19 October 1977, SASO, the BPC, and sixteen of their other affiliates were issued banning orders by the government, effectively ending operations of the BCM within South Africa.

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[402] 'Turfloop lecturer faces "trial" over book', *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 July 1978. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[403] Quoted in White, *From Despair to Hope,* p. 111.
[404] He was awarded the degree in 1979, but it was later repealed by Yale in 1990.

Eighteen groups in total were banned, including sympathetic organs of the press like *The World* daily newspaper, and dozens of supporters and leaders of the Black Consciousness Movement who had escaped previous arrest or detention were detained. Among those affected were two high profile white activists, and friends of Steve Biko: journalist Donald Woods and cleric Beyers Naudé, as well as eight members of the prominent Soweto Committee of Ten, which had sprung out of the unrest in the wake of the student uprising. In addition, individuals from the Committee of Ten, SASM, the SSRC, and the Soweto Teacher's Action Committee were all also banned, drawing further links between these organisations and the Black Consciousness Movement.

SASO, the oldest and most developed of the Black Consciousness Movement groups, had long been prepared to face banning and repression, and October 1977 was not the first time it had faced a heavy loss of leadership. In March 1973 Biko and the first wave of SASO leaders were banned, and a wave of arrests in September and October 1974 had neutralized most of those who were involved in the Viva-FRELIMO rallies. But October 1977 was the first time that all of SASO's affiliates faced the same level of repression, negating them as alternate outlets for continuing its message. SASO had always been designed for aboveground mobilization. Its organisational structure focused on stabling leaders so that when one was banned another could step seamlessly to the fore. But banning the organisation itself brought unprecedented challenges. It came at a time when most of the original core of leadership was detained or in prison like Barney Pityana and Strini Moodley; in exile, like Bokwe Mafuna and Harry Nengwekhulu; or dead, like Steve Biko and Abraham Tiro.

As a result, it fell to the representatives of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) who were in exile to transform the movement into one that could operate effectively from outside of South Africa. Harry Nengwekhulu had, to some degree, been working towards this since he went into exile in Botswana in 1973, but his efforts had met with little success. Initially Nengwekhulu and the other 1973 exiles relied heavily on the existing network of leadership that still functioned within South Africa, and on the ability of Abraham Tiro to move legally into and around South Africa as Permanent Organizer. Essentially, they contributed to the internal movement as much as life in exile permitted and always through the structures of SASO itself within South Africa. As far as formal structures of the movement in exile went, there were none.

By late 1977, even before the October bannings, Nengwekhulu was working to establish links between the BCM and other exiled South African liberation movements: he was in contact with the ANC in Lusaka from early September 1977, trying to arrange a meeting between an ANC delegation to be led by then-party president Oliver Tambo, and a BCM delegation.[405] Arrangements for the meeting were made and subsequently fell through at various times over a period of nearly two years, over which time other BCM activists fled South Africa and moved into exile. Eventually the BCM delegation was also to include Barney Pityana, who had moved to the United Kingdom as a seminarian, and Ben Khoapa, who had become a teacher in the United States. The meeting finally took place in December 1979.[406] Its planning and agenda are important for understanding how the BCM sought to situate itself in exile, and how other liberation organisations like the ANC reacted to it.

[405] Correspondence between Harry Nengwekhulu and Oliver Tambo (2 October 1977 and 26 June 1979), and Harry Nengwekhulu and Thabo Mbeki (10 May 1978 and 3 March 1979). [UFH AZAPO Collection]
[406] B. Maaba and M. V. Mzamane, 'The Black Consciousness Movement of Azania, 1979 – 1990' in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 4, Part 2 (1980-1990) (Pretoria, 2010), pp. 1361-1398. pp. 1361.

Anthony Marx has noted that the BCM regarded rapprochement between the liberation movements as a major post-1976 priority:

> Such an agreement would both strengthen the opposition [to apartheid] as a whole and solidify the BC movement's position as the central unifying force in the country. Steve Biko welcomed this opportunity, admitting in 1977 that he "would like to see groups like ANC, PAC, and Black Consciousness movement deciding to form one liberation group. It is only, I think when black people are so dedicated and so united in their cause that we can effect the greatest results."[407]

According to Harry Nengwekhulu, one of his primary tasks in exile was to make contact with both the ANC and the PAC structures outside of South Africa, and to try to broker unification between the three parties.[408] Logistics prevented this plan from ever getting off the ground:

> Firstly we wanted to meet with O.R. Tambo. We were supposed to meet in Lesotho: me, Pityana, Tambo, and the delegation. We couldn't get to the place; we never flew to Lesotho. So we didn't meet. Pityana was going to fly, but we couldn't meet – we never met.[409]

In fact, Pityana, Khoapa, and Jeff Baqwa did meet with ANC leadership in December of 1979, though Nengwekhulu did not attend the meeting. Though Nengwekhulu's explanation of the struggle to arrange the meeting of the ANC and BCM in exile points to logistical failure, recent scholarship may suggest other factors as well. Daniel Magaziner has written about the struggle between the ANC in exile and the Black Consciousness Movement to claim responsibility for, and control of the narrative around, the aftermath of the Soweto uprisings, painting a picture of direct competition for influence and support, even as Biko and Nengwekhulu were orchestrating moves toward unity.[410] Indeed, Maaba and Mzamane contend that, though both organisations sought to pursue 'a process of consultation which would lead to unity' through the Lusaka meeting, each side envisioned that unity of liberation

[407] Marx, *Lessons of Struggle,* p. 82.
[408] Author's interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a).
[409] Ibid.
[410] Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets,* pp. 155-6.

movements under its own banner.[411] Stephen Ellis has argued that the ANC feared that Black Consciousness presented a so-called third force that would further divide the anti-apartheid opposition rather than unite them.[412] However, in his recent work on the ANC in exile, Hugh Macmillan has downplayed this concern and points to the organisational efforts of the ANC to help (and recruit) the students of the Black Consciousness Movement in the wake of the uprisings.[413] It is likely that the ANC was pragmatically helpful to new Black Consciousness exiles, as Macmillan suggests, in order to capitalize on the organisational momentum that Soweto presented, but also cautious of a new movement with strong and deep political education of its members and an ideology that was in part opposed to theirs. Macmillan notes that one result of the rise of Black Consciousness was that the ANC insisted on compulsory education in exile to combat the 'serious, regrettable political deterioration in our ranks abroad'.[414]

Regardless of the perception of other liberation organisations, this period of communication between the movements suggests important things about the perspective of the Black Consciousness Movement. In spite of its failure, the meeting with the ANC and attempt to unify the exiled movements is instructive about how the BCM understood itself in those early exile years. The Soweto uprisings, in which Black Consciousness ideology had played an important role, gave the Black Consciousness Movement and its affiliates weight in the collective struggle against apartheid. As I have argued, 1976-77 was the pinnacle of the BCM's political importance in South Africa, and at the time its networks and following within the country surpassed those of either the ANC or PAC, both of which had been

[411] B. Maaba and M.V. Mzamane, 'The Black Consciousness Movement of Azania', p. 1363.
[412] S. Ellis, *External Mission: The ANC in Exile 1960-1990* (London, 2012), pp. 89-90, 114-5, 307.
[413] H. Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia* (Johannesburg, 2013), p. 131.
[414] H. Macmillan, *Lusaka Years,* p. 107.

underground and in exile for nearly two decades. But banning and exile marked the end of this period of success. The leadership was scattered around the world, and with the lack of a dedicated headquarters coordination amongst them proved an almost insurmountable obstacle to continued activism. Maaba and Mzamane have pointed to fragmentation and in-fighting among exiles, failures of communication and infrastructure, and lack of recognition by international organisations and host states as key factors in the demise of Black Consciousness as a movement in exile.[415]

In addition, the BCM got far fewer exile recruits from the 1976 student uprisings than did the ANC or even the PAC. To some degree this too was a failure of logistical coordination, as Black Consciousness had strong ideological links to student activists, many of whom had been politically conscientized by SASO/BCM leaders like Tiro. But the ANC and the PAC had networks and camps in frontline countries, and military structures like *Umkhonto We Sizwe* (MK) to absorb the flow of new recruits; at the time, the Black Consciousness Movement was still organizing itself in exile. In fact, though all the Black Consciousness groups were affiliated, and had sprung from direct or indirect association with SASO, even in 1977 they did not exist under a unified banner of the 'Black Consciousness Movement.' Harry Nengwekhulu's correspondence with Thabo Mbeki and O.R. Tambo in Lusaka was all under the auspices of the Black Peoples' Convention, SASO's 'adult' political branch.

A high profile example of the Black Consciousness Movement's failure to absorb exile recruits was Tsietsi Mashinini, a leader of the 1976 uprising and the second chairman of the SSRC. After a matter of weeks in the role, Mashinini fled South Africa in August 1976, first

[415] B. Maaba and M.V. Mzamane, "The Black Consciousness Movement of Azania", pp. 1365-1371, 1374-5.

to Botswana and later to Europe, America, and eventually to West Africa. As has been noted, Mashinini was an outspoken proponent of Black Consciousness while in exile. He gave many interviews in the international press praising the Africanism of the BCM and criticizing the ANC, accusing it of corruption and of being 'extinct' in South Africa.[416] But after crossing the border to Botswana and arriving in Gaborone in late August 1976, Mashinini did not integrate himself into the Black Consciousness networks that existed there. Professing that he still felt pursued by BOSS (the South African Bureau of Secret Service) he left Botswana and moved to London in September 1976.[417] Just a month later he was in the United States, giving high profile interviews about the student situation in South Africa. By early 1977, Mashinini had become the face of South Africa's students in the international press, though his rise to prominence was not without critics. The ANC and some of its allies criticized his aggressive stance in the media, understandably, given the vehement stance Mashinini had taken against the liberation organisation.[418]

Perhaps more striking, though, is an open letter to the Botswana Daily News from the SRC of the University College of Botswana, criticizing Mashinini for his 'lust for publicity,' for being 'a running dog of the white liberal press', and for undermining 'the security of all exiles in Botswana.'[419] Their critique is particularly noteworthy because the language used by the SRC is redolent of Black Consciousness in its castigations of the white liberal press, and an emphasis on black self-sufficiency. 'The Tsietsi cult […] kills the spirit of self-

[416]'Tsietsi trained at Vanessa's Red school', *Sunday Times*, 30 January 1977, and 'Mashinini to head new force', *Sunday Times*, 28 August 1977. [GPP]; Transcript of television interview with Tsietsi Mashinini, aired 9 January 1977 in New York City. [KGC A2675/I/20]; T. Mashinini, 'Behind the Growing Upsurge in South Africa', *Intercontinental Press*, 15 November 1976. [UFH AZAPO/BCM 14/1].
[417] 'Mashinini tells how he got out of SA', *Star,* 5 October 1976. [GPP]
[418] 'Tsietsi trained at Vanessa's Red school', *Sunday Times*. 30 January 1977; 'Mashinini to head new force'. *Sunday Times*, 28 August 1977. [GPP]
[419] 'Mashinini "shut up!"', *Botswana Daily News*, 3 February 1977. [GPP]

reliance because of false expectations that the hero will make the first move.'[420] In spite of his rhetoric, Tsietsi was not incorporated into the Black Consciousness Movement in exile. By May 1977 Mashinini moved to Nigeria, where the government was attempting to organize a 'new liberation organisation' as an alternative force, 'rivaling South Africa's two established liberation organisations [the ANC and the PAC].'[421] Mashinini became its figurehead. Most of this new group was to be student recruits who sympathized with Black Consciousness, but though the BPC had declared itself responsible for helping 'to organize refugees belonging to the black consciousness movement [and] maintain[ed] a responsibility for the Nigerian students, [they] neither instigated nor approved of the Mashinini initiative.'[422]

The aftermath of the Soweto uprisings and flight into exile by many students presented an additional challenge for leaders of the Black Consciousness Movement: how to deal with the issue of violence, and particularly armed struggle. Ideologically SASO and its affiliates had never developed a clear policy with regard to the use of violence in their political struggle; they did not explicitly advocate the tactic of armed struggle, which had been adopted by both the ANC and PAC in the early 1960s, and never made any moves toward participating in the armed struggle themselves during the first wave of Black Consciousness bannings in 1973. In fact, a group led by Keith Mokoape at the 1972 General Students Coucil who supported adopting armed struggle was shouted down by other delegates because it would jeopardize the position of SASO as an above-ground organisation.[423] But neither was this a policy of *non*violence; indeed, in some of his later writing, Biko explicitly advocated the use of

[420] Ibid.
[421] 'Mashinini to head new force', *Sunday Times*, 28 August 1977. [GPP]
[422] 'Mashinini to head new force', *Sunday Times*, 28 August 1977. [GPP]
[423] M.V. Mzamane, B. Maaba, and N. Biko, 'The Black Consciousness Movement', p. 118.

calculated force when confronted with a violent opponent. In an interview a few months before his death in September 1977, Biko gave the (prophetic) example of responding to physical abuse in detention:

> If they want to beat me five times, they can only do so on condition that I allow them to beat me five times. If I react sharply, equally and oppositely, to the first clap, they are not going to be able to systematically count the next four claps, you see. It's a fight. So if they had meant to give me so much of a beating, and not more, my idea is to make them go beyond what they wanted to give me and to give back as much as I can give so that it becomes an uncontrollable thing.[424]

The violence that Biko described here was interpersonal, and the circumstances under which it could occur were when the individual encountered – and was assaulted by – an official of the state. For early Black Consciousness leaders this never translated into pre-emptive or structural violence of the type the armed struggle employed. Gail Gerhart has suggested that SASO's reluctance to engage in such forms of violent resistance lay, not in an ideology of pacificism, but in a pragmatic belief in the importance of patience. Gerhart suggests that for SASO, the experience of the PAC, in particular, was a cautionary tale: 'The PAC's undoing had not been in its ideology but in its reckless rush to confrontation at a time when circumstances did not favour a black victory.'[425] I would add that the affiliates of the Black Consciousness Movement lacked the underground and exile structures and capacity to mount an organized campaign of violence, and never attempted to develop these while they were able to operate above ground. For SASO, then, the most important questions with regards to violence as a political tool were of timing and situation, not ideology. This facilitated the entry of many young Black Consciousness recruits into the armed wings of the ANC (MK) and the PAC (APLA) in the wake of Soweto 1976. The significance of those events, and the use of violence by the state against thousands of students *en masse*, provided a set of

[424] Biko, *I Write What I Like,* p. 153.
[425] Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa,* pp. 284-5.

circumstances that permitted the abandonment of patience and the employment of calculated force. Nozipho Diseko has argued that the ANC's (and to a lesser extent the PAC's) use of armed struggle as a tool attracted the increasingly militant youth of 1976 and 1977.[426] This is persuasive, but not because of disaffection with the nonviolence of Black Consciousness, as she has suggested. Rather, as I have argued, Black Consciousness advocated violent responses to oppression and injustice in particular circumstances, and cautioned patience until such time as these tools could be used successfully. Engagement in armed struggle after the pivotal change in the state's use of violence after June 1976 was not antithetical to the Black Consciousness politics of many young South Africans; it fit neatly into it.

The failure of Black Consciousness figures to successfully organize in exile has been a theme of this chapter, and one that has been largely neglected from the literature on the movement, which generally ends with the death of Steve Biko and the October 1977 bannings.[427] This lacuna neglects an important, albeit unsuccessful, attempt by Black Consciousness exiles to form their own structures as a counterpoint to those of other liberation organisations. One notable exception is Maaba and Mzamane's contribution to *The Road to Democracy in South Africa,* on the founding of the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania; I will expand their discussion of the organisation here by looking particularly at its role in incorporating student exiles (or failing to do so).[428]

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[426] Diseko, 'Origins and Development of SASM', pp. 60-1.
[427] Magaziner ends his analysis in the 'quiet' after the BCM bannings, and extends his conclusions to consider the reintegration of Black Consciousness figures into politics in the new, post-apartheid South Africa. [Magaziner, *The Law and the Prophets,* pp. 182-90.] Tom Lodge acknowledges the formation of exile structures in passing, but only to note that many of those BC exiles soon joined the ANC. [Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa,* pp. 342-3.]
[428] B. Maaba and M.V. Mzamane, 'The Black Consciousness Movement of Azania', pp. 1361-1398.

In 1979 a united Black Consciousness Movement of South Africa (BCMSA) was founded in London by Barney Pityana. Shortly after its founding, in April 1980, the organisation held a 'redefinition and rededication' conference in London, where the name was changed to the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania (BCMA) 'to reflect more truly what the black people feel their country should be called.'[429] This was the first change of name pointing to the rift between Africanist and non-racial politics that had developed among South Africa's various anti-apartheid groups. Black Consciousness had always subscribed to its own brand of Africanism and their adoption of 'Azania' in their name reflects this. BCMA suffered from many of the problems that exiled members of the Black Consciousness Movement had faced before it; the leadership remained scattered and organisational cohesion was low. At the London conference BCMA's founder Pityana resigned his post as United Kingdom regional chairman due to 'a procedural disagreement.'[430] The organisation was less than a year old, but already it was succumbing to internal divisions. The conference was supposed to 'strengthen and consolidate BCMA's programme for the liberation of Azania through the creation of a unitary structure embodying all exiled activists who were involved internally in organisations such as Saso, BCP, BPC, SASM, Nayo, and others.'[431] But in practice it did little to bridge the gaps in the widely dispersed leadership. As well as Pityana's resignation of his post, Harry Nengwekhulu's role as external director was also phased out. Though BCMA continued to exist in exile for a decade, led by a new cohort of exiles, it was plagued by organisational challenges and failed to unite former BC activists under its banner.

Black Consciousness was – and had always been – primarily about changing the way black South Africans conceived of themselves and their place in their country; in order to do so

[429] 'Pityana resigns from post in BC movement', *Sunday Post*, 20 April 1980. [GPP]
[430] Ibid.
[431] 'Movement striving for unity', *Rand Daily Mail*, 9 May 1980. [GPP]

effectively, it needed to be amongst the people it was trying to conscientize. SASO's great success had come by effective mobilization techniques through campuses and schools that provided ready access to groups of students. In contrast to the organisational success of SASO, BCMA, having been removed from its base of operations and from the people it sought to reach, floundered outside of South Africa. In particular, it was hurt by its alienation from students and student networks within South Africa, which had always been the great strength of the Black Consciousness Movement. Maaba and Mzamane have argued that student life in exile was actually counterproductive to political activism, as scholarships restricted the ability and time of BCMA exiles to politically organize themselves.[432] Universities abroad did not provide the same fertile ground for mobilization that places like Turfloop had.

But the formation of BCMA in exile was only one inheritor of Black Consciousness' mantle; inside South Africa the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) was launched in 1978. AZAPO was formed by those SASO/BPC members who had been detained in or before October 1977, but were later released. Lybon Mabasa and Ishmael Mkhabela, two former Turfloop students and former members of the Students' Christian Movement on campus, were the founding members. Mabasa had also been a schoolteacher at Meadowlands High School in Soweto during the uprising and had been one of the first teachers detained in the aftermath.[433] Less than a week after the May 1978 founding of the organisation – before its constitution had even been written or its aims publicized – the police once again detained both men. The precedent alarmed observers:

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[432] B. Maaba and M.V. Mzamane, "The Black Consciousness Movement of Azania", p. 1366.
[433] Deposition of Aubrey Mokoena taken by Justice of the Peace DL Aspelling in Johannesburg. Undated (c. early 1977). [WHP A2953]; Author's interview with Lybon Mabasa, Johannesburg, 28 September 2011; Gail Gerhart interview with Lybon Tiyani Mabasa, New York, 7 April 1991.[DISA: http://www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/index.php?option=com_displaydc&recordID=ora19910407.000.009.000]

> Mr B. Nteso, a social worker, described the latest detentions as "frightening". He said: "We have hardly seen Azapo's constitution and objectives and its leaders are detained. This state of affairs is alarming when Black initiative is stifled at the beginning."[434]
>
> [Professor John Dugard of the University of the Witwatersrand Law Faculty] added that it was the first time, to his knowledge that an organisation in South Africa had had its officials detained soon after formation. "It was an indication the authorities won't tolerate Black organisations which operate outside Government policy."[435]

From the outset, AZAPO faced criticism in the press as well as government repression. White reporters were excluded from its founding conference, leading to accusations of racism and racialism from 'both the liberal and conservative press.'[436] In response, editors of *The Voice*, a black-run weekly paper, argued in an editorial:

> Exponents of Black Consciousness have (whether wrongly or rightly) over the past years expressed their disquiet about the treatment of events, especially by most White reporters, of Black activities which appeared to be a threat to the status quo. The belief is that White reporters, no matter how objective, tended to give prominence to the negative aspects only.[437]

This concern over representations in the press had also been true of SASO activists: white reporters had been condemned for their misreporting and misrepresenting the organisation at the 3rd General Students Council meeting in 1972,[438] and Harry Nengwekhulu described a confrontation over representations of blacks in the press with Allister Sparks, editor of the liberal *Rand Daily Mail* in the early days of SASO:

> [The *Rand Daily Mail*] kept on calling us non-whites. I then went there with a friend of mine, and I met [Allister Sparks]. And I said, "Mr. Sparks, […] why do you continue to call us non-whites? We're not non-whites. You can't be defined in terms of what you are not. You can't say a horse is a non-donkey. It doesn't make any sense." Then he made a very interesting statement. He then said, "We don't like the word black." I said, "What's the problem?" He said, "It's very emotive." I said, "You know, when you came here to Africa,

[434] 'Black Politics at Crossroads', *The Voice*, Vol. 2 No. 4, 11-18 May, 1978. [GPP]
[435] Ibid.
[436] Editorial 'We regret…', *The Voice*, 6 May 1978, p.2. [GPP]
[437] Ibid.
[438] 'Minutes of the Proceedings of the 3rd General Students Council of the South African Students' Organisation, St Peter's Seminary, Hammanskraal.' 2-9 July 1972, Resolution 20/72. [SASO A2176/5.2]

> you said you are Europeans – we called you Europeans; you said you are whites – we called you whites. So why don't you want to call us?" He said, "No, no. The Institute of Race Relations is looking for a name for you: Africans, Coloureds, and Indians. They have got a name." I said, "What is the name?" "Africolasians." Africolasians! Africans, Coloureds, Asians. [Laughter] I'll never forget that. […] The first thing that we did when we had conference at Hammanskraal [in 1972], we didn't invite the *Rand Daily Mail*, which was the most radical newspaper in the country.[439]

AZAPO's policy of no white press was no more racialized than SASO's had been, and in fact it followed neatly on from SASO's contentious relationship with the white media; but by 1979 it faced a great deal more backlash than its predecessor had, reflecting the escalation of internal anti-apartheid politics by the late 1970s. SASO's novelty and separation of races had allowed it space to grow and develop during the late 1960s; a decade later its inheritors were quashed even before they properly began.

It was not until more than a year after its founding that AZAPO held its first congress in October 1979, and elected Curtis Nkondo its first president. Nkondo, whose brother Gessler had caused controversy at Turfloop as the head of BASA and editor of *Turfloop Testimony*, had grown up in the Northern Transvaal near Louis Trichardt and had been a school teacher in Soweto before schools there were rocked by the student uprising. Nkondo supported his students and in the aftermath he became chairman of the Soweto Teachers Action Committee, which represented Soweto teachers and led more than 300 of them to resign in protest in September 1977. Lybon Mabasa, who became AZAPO's treasurer, and Ishmael Mkhabela, who became chairman, had been released from detention by the time of AZAPO's first congress but were unable to attend due to banning orders.[440] At the congress AZAPO articulated a set of aims and objectives that followed closely on the work of earlier Black Consciousness organisations, among these:

[439] Author's interview with Harry Nengwekhulu (a).
[440] 'Azapo's Blueprint', *Post,* 1 October 1979. [GPP]

> To conscientise, politicize, and mobilise black workers through the philosophy of black consciousness to strive for their legitimate rights; To work towards the establishment of an education system that will respond creatively towards the needs of Azanians; [and] To promote an interpretation of religion as a liberatory philosophy relevant to the black struggle.[441]

These goals bore a great deal of resemblance to those pursued by SASO and the BPC, yet AZAPO was to have a very different reception on the national scene in South Africa. Far from the unity that had been imagined by some exile leaders, the political parties still active within South Africa during the 1980s would become fierce competitors.

The suspension of Nkondo and AZASO's turn to Charterism

If AZAPO was the ideological heir to SASO and the BPC, it bore much greater structural resemblance to the latter as a political party focused on a broad swathe of the adult population. Not long after its October 1979 congress, 'in November, […] a conference was held in Johannesburg convened by people who were involved in AZAPO to look into the concept of establishing a student movement, which was seen as a necessity.'[442] This second conference gave rise to the idea of AZASO, the Azanian Students' Organisation, which would be the student wing to AZAPO's more wide-reaching political party. Branches were established at the historically black universities, as well as at one training college; in later years, they expanded among technical and educational colleges, and to black students at the 'open' English-speaking universities, like the University of the Witwatersrand. At Turfloop, the campus branch was established in 1980, with the help of Peter Mokaba, a young firebrand

[441] Ibid.
[442] 'Student Movement Today' interview with Joe Phaahla and Kate Philip, July 1983. p. 42 [AZASO AG2635/A]

science student, who would go on to become a national youth leader.[443] By AZASO's first official conference in 1981, Turfloop was already something of a stronghold. In an interview discussing the event later, Joe Phaahla, a medical student at the University of Natal who was from Sekhukhuneland in the Northern Transvaal and became a prominent student leader in AZASO, described the Turfloop branch at the 1981 conference as 'the only branch which actually existed' in terms of functioning organisational structures.[444]

At its inception, AZASO espoused the Black Consciousness ideology of AZAPO and its BCM forerunners. It saw itself as the inheritor of SASO's mantle among black university students.[445] Many of its early members, like Mokaba, had been politicized through BC ideology and in the wake of the Soweto uprisings. The links to Black Consciousness were to be short-lived, however. From its very early days there were arguments within AZASO about its political philosophy.[446] These were exacerbated by internal dissent over the suspension of Curtis Nkondo as AZAPO's President. In the role for only a few short months, Nkondo was suspended in early January 1980 for 'violating [AZAPO] principle and policy and not respecting protocol.'[447] His suspension was met with angry condemnation by student groups, like the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and AZASO itself, by the Writer's Association of South Africa (WASA), and by Winnie Kgware, the first head of the BPC and wife of Professor William Kgware. Mrs Kgware, speaking from Turfloop, said, 'I pledge solidarity with Azaso and Wasa for the stand they have taken on the suspension.

[443] Peter Mokaba Curriculum Vitae, African National Congress Mission to the United States, April 1994. [GPP]
[444] 'Student Movement Today' interview with Joe Phaahla and Kate Philip, July 1983. p. 43 [WHP AG2635/A].
[445] Ibid., p. 43.
[446] Ibid., p. 42; White, *From Despair to Hope*, p.55.
[447] 'Nkondo Indaba', *Rand Daily Mail*, January 19, 1980. [GPP]

Their action is encouraging. […] We have already noticed trends of selfless leadership in [Nkondo]. To use a black American expression, we say to him: hang in there!'[448]

The violation of protocol of which Nkondo was accused was variously described as speaking to Helen Suzman, a white politician and member of the Progressive Party, apparently about the whereabouts of his detained brother, Zinjiva Nkondo[449], and criticizing black trade unions for their 'spineless' avoidance of politics, potentially damaging AZAPO's relationship with the working class.[450] It was considered an open secret, however, that the real cause behind his suspension was that his politics were too sympathetic to the ANC. As Joe Phaahla said, '[S]ome of the people who were in AZAPO thought that why Mr Nkondo really had to go was because it was said that he was a "Charterist".'[451] Referring to Nkondo's alleged support for the multi-racial principles of the Freedom Charter, espoused by the ANC, Phaahla was pointing to a key divide in South African liberation politics between multi-racial Charterism and racially exclusive Africanism.

Up until the mid 1970s Charterism and multi-racialism had had little traction in student politics on black campuses. Though in the late 1960s there had been some enthusiasm for affiliating with NUSAS at Fort Hare and Turfloop, the advent of SASO curbed this movement. As noted above, however, the Soweto-based SASM was abandoning its ties to Black Consciousness in favour of cultivating deeper links with the ANC underground by the mid-1970s. Diseko points to frustrations with the racially exclusive doctrine of Black

[448] 'Nkondo Indaba', *Rand Daily Mail*, January 19, 1980. [GPP]
[449] 'Azapo gets a rocket on Nkondo', *Rand Daily Mail*, January 17, 1980. [GPP]
[450] B. Maaba and M.V. Mzamane, 'The Azanian People's Organisation, 1977 - 1990', SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 4, Part 2 1980 – 1990, (Pretoria, 2010), pp. 1299-1360. p. 1308.
[451] 'Student Movement Today' interview with Joe Phaahla and Kate Philip, July 1983. p. 42 [WHP AG2635/A]

Consciousness and to the BCM's failure to articulate a militant response to state repression (in the mode of armed struggle), and she notes that student activists were cultivating relationships with white activists and sympathizers.[452]

Maaba and Mzamane have pointed to developments in both AZAPO and the BCMA that brought class to the fore of Black Consciousness politics in the 1980s. During the height of the BCM in the 1970s, it had always remained subordinate to the issue of race as the mechanism of oppression and object against which the struggle was waged. But by 1979 and 1980, some activists were adopting a more explicit Marxist-Leninist class-based analysis of the situation in South Africa; in particular, Neville Alexander, an academic and former Robben Islander was credited with influencing the adoption of these ideas in AZAPO.[453] As a result, Maaba and Mzamane point to Nkondo's criticism of the unions as another factor in his suspension; it was yet another way that he bucked the trends emerging within his own party.

Following AZAPO's suspension of President Nkondo, who was popular with AZASO members, the party's student wing engaged in internal discussions of its own political philosophy. In December 1980, the interim committee of AZASO called a summit conference to discuss the issue. According to Joe Phaahla, 'At this conference the deficentcy [sic] of black consciousness philosophy as a rallying point was highlighted by various delegates.' Among these deficiencies delegates noted that the appeal of Black Consciousness had been confined to 'black intellectuals' and that the philosophy had been 'misused by

[452] Diseko, 'Origins and Development of SASM', pp. 59-61.
[453] Maaba and Mzamane, 'The Azanian People's Organisation', pp. 1306-8.

opportunists for their own interests.'[454] The issue was hotly debated at the conference, and one member of the Turfloop delegation even threatened to walk out in protest at the adoption of a new Charterist preamble to the AZASO Constitution.[455] But the majority of student delegates present disagreed, including the rest of the Turfloop delegation: they found that Black Consciousness was too narrow a framework for AZASO and 'that for the organisation to play a meaningful role in the liberation struggle, a more broader [sic] but clearer approach to defining issues at stake should be adopted.' This dissension from its ideological roots caused the AZASO delegates to redraft the preamble of their constitution and, importantly, to sever ties with AZAPO and its Black Consciousness ideology. As an expression of autonomy it followed SASO's lead towards student-led protest, if not its ideology. In the 1980s, Black Consciousness in student politics was becoming a thing of the past. It was more than two years before AZAPO formed a new student body to carry its torch, and by the time their Azanian Students Movement (AZASM) was born it lagged behind AZASO in organisation and support on the campuses that had once been strongholds of Black Consciousness.

Conclusion

The later years of the 1970s brought unparalleled changes in the student politics of South Africa, and especially in the Northern Transvaal and at the University of the North. The Soweto uprisings changed the scale and site of how students articulated grievances with their schools and the state. These owed a debt of ideology and organisation to the SASO-affiliated Black Consciousness expelled students from Turfloop in 1972 and 1974. The 'highs' of 1976, as the peak of the Black Consciousness Movement's organisation and notoriety, could not last however. The imprisonment of the SASO Nine, Steve Biko's death, and the banning

[454] SASPU Interview with Joe Phaahla, undated c. mid 1980s. [GPP]
[455] Ibid.

of all the organisations affiliated to the movement dealt a critical blow by late 1977. In exile, Black Consciousness failed to achieve the organisational cohesion and mobilization it had been able to achieve as a movement (rather than a party) within South Africa. Meanwhile, state repression within the country continued to hound its inheritors, and AZAPO faced stiff repression from its outset.

Beyond the organisational dilemmas faced by the BCM and its successors, though, the ANC's non-racial philosophy of Charterism had begun to take root with some student activists as early as 1975. Under the umbrella of the South African Students Movement, students expressed a variety of political ideologies, from the staunch Africanism of the BCM to the inclusive Charterism of the ANC. In spite of pro-ANC rhetoric from high profile student activists like Murphy Morobe and Tebello Motapanyane, Charterism remained one ideology among many for the students of 1976.

While the Black Consciousness Movement faced repression and decline throughout South Africa, one of its organisational priorities – Africanisation – was achieved (at least nominally) at Turfloop. In 1977 William Kgware became the university's first black rector, thanks to increased pressure after the release of the Snyman and Jackson Commission Reports. But public black leadership did not translate into the political shifts in university administration for which SASO and Black Consciousness activists had hoped. Kgware steered a cautious path in his approach to student dissent: after a brief attempt at conciliation with protesting students in late 1976 (just before his tenure began) he reverted to Turfloop's more familiar tactic of expulsions and university shutdowns. His administrative problems extended to staffing as well. Public fallouts with Gessler Nkondo over the publication of *Turfloop Testimony*, and over the failure to appoint Es'kia Mphahlele to a chair in the English

department contributed to suspicions that Kgware was actually just a black figurehead masking the unchanged white power at Turfloop.

These controversies took a personal toll: while Kgware found himself aligned with the conservative politics of the university administration, his family continued to be active in anti-apartheid politics (as evidenced by his wife's outspoken support for Curtis Nkondo after his ousting from AZAPO). By the time Kgware had become rector 'political disagreement [had] broken his marriage and disrupted his family.'[456] These stresses took a deep physical toll and Kgware died in the rector's mansion in 1980. Rather than the hoped-for political and psychological triumph of Black Consciousness organisation, Kgware's time as rector proved the process of Africanisation to be another step in the decline of Black Consciousness politics at Turfloop, and indeed, beyond.

The late 1970s also brought with them the beginning of coordinated student politics on a more local level. The work of SASM and the unexpected student uprisings of Soweto 1976 had shown schools to be a fruitful site for political engagement and action. Though this had been happening incrementally, through politically aware and active teachers, mobilization of politicized students became an important focus in the anti-apartheid movement from 1976 onwards. This renewed focus on students at the most local level – in their schools – would change the face of student resistance.

These two shifts – the turn to Charterism, and the growth of more numerous, local student groups like those that became the first chapters of COSAS – would be of paramount

[456] Tom Karis trip diary – Visit to Turfloop August 17, 1979. [WHP A2675/I/14]

importance in shaping the face of student politics in South Africa during the 1980s, and will be a major focus of chapter five.

Chapter 5:

Congresses and Comrades: Youth Organisations in the Northern Transvaal, 1979-1990

Introduction

The 1983 launch of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in a community hall in Mitchell's Plain on the Cape Flats has come to symbolize the rise of deeply local politics in the anti-apartheid struggle. The UDF was dominated by civics, trade unions, student groups, and women's organisations, and eventually came to envelop hundreds of these types of local and regional organisations across the country, all under the banner of non-racialism. In a shift from the dominant political ideology among students of the previous decade, when Black Consciousness had advocated racial separation as a necessary pre-condition for psychological and political freedom, the UDF reclaimed the earlier tradition of the ANC and other Charterist organisations that based their non-racialism on the ethos of the Freedom Charter.

But the birth of the UDF in 1983, in response to the South African government's 'reform' institution of a tricameral parliament to represent white, coloured, and Indian voters (but not black), was only the latest and most public move to politics of a more local sort in South Africa. In this chapter I will argue that increasing regionalization in the realm of student politics predates the UDF by several years, and that those early political entities had a profound effect on later UDF affiliates. To do so, I will focus particularly on the Congress of South African Students and student and youth congresses of the Northern Transvaal, and the tensions that existed between these local organisations and the national structures to which they affiliated.

The 1979 founding of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) predated the UDF by four years and marked the first reemergence of Charterism in national politics. It also effectively expanded the student struggle well beyond the crucible of universities, a major centre of 1970s activism, and beyond the schools of Soweto, which catapulted student protest to international attention in 1976. In the Northern Transvaal, Sekibakiba Lekgoathi has pointed to the expansion of western-style education in rural areas during the 1970s as a key influence on the growth of student organisation in the region.[457] COSAS brought the student struggle to remote corners of rural South Africa made newly accessible by the expansion of secondary education that Lekgoathi describes; in the Northern Transvaal its influence was adopted and transformed into the youth congresses of the comrade movement, which further expanded political engagement to include non-student youth.

In this chapter I will consider both students and youth as social and analytical categories; Colin Bundy, following Karl Mannheim, has argued that the groups share a 'generational consciousness' informed by their shared social and historical circumstances.[458] And in 1980s South Africa, each category was perhaps more fluid than might first be expected. As Deborah Durham has argued, youth is a 'historically constructed social category'[459], which gives it a large degree of contextual specificity and flexibility. Though students might be expected to be a more rigid category, defined primarily by school or university affiliation, for South African students and youth in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the distinction was not so clearly delineated. School boycotts, expulsions, and the detention of school and university

[457] S. Lekgoathi, 'The United Democratic Front in Lebowa and KwaNdebele during the 1980s', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, Vol. 4 Part 1 (1980-1990), (Pretoria, 2010), pp. 613-667. p. 630
[458] Bundy, 'Street Sociology and Pavement Politics', p. 305.
[459] D. Durham, 'Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa: Introduction to Parts 1 and 2', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 73(3) (2000), pp. 113-120, p. 114.

students often meant that little time was spent in classrooms, even for those formally enrolled in school or university. In addition, some students remained involved in student structures after they had left school. As Jeremy Seekings has noted, in its early years COSAS was 'dominated by ex-students until 1982'.[460] In spite of having left school, however, most of these former students had not participated in formal work, had maintained connections to their age cohort, and, perhaps most crucially, 'still regarded themselves as students'.[461] As such, they were not only incorporated into COSAS, but they also formed a significant portion of its early leadership.

In addition, the expansion of political activism in secondary schools began to impact young people who were outside the educational networks that broadly encompassed student activists (even those who were no longer technically students). In COSAS there was little room for young people who had no connection to their local school, and whose personal experience did not lend them to politicization over educational issues ranging from the cost of books and uniforms to the restrictive, ideological curriculum imposed by Bantu Education. But these rural youth did share Bundy's 'generational consciousness' and many of the same structural grievances with their student counterparts. Together they also formed a political cohort narrower than can be captured by an entire generation. Most obviously, both were subject to oppression by the apartheid state, and by the mid-1980s an economic slump and rising unemployment harshly confronted both those with school matric certificates and those without them. This differentiated them from youth counterparts even less than a decade earlier. As Bundy described the situation, particularly for school leavers:

> Take politically rightless, socially subordinate, economically vulnerable youths; educate them in numbers beyond their parents' wildest dreams, but in

[460] J. Seekings, *Heroes or Villains? Youth Politics in the 1980s* (Johannesburg, 1993), p. 32.
[461] Seekings, *Heroes or Villains*, p. 33.

> grotesquely inadequate institutions; ensure that their awareness is shaped by punitive social practices in the world beyond the schoolyard – and then dump them in large numbers on the economic scrap heap.[462]

In part this dire scenario was the product of pervasive economic malaise, but it also reflects a shift in the type of work that rural youth were willing to undertake. In contrast to their parents' and grandparents' generations, the youth of the Northern Transvaal in the 1980s were largely uninterested in participating in agricultural production.[463] Peter Delius has explored these generational shifts in his comparisons of rural uprisings in Sekhukhuneland during the 1950s, which rallied 'in defence of a residual but cherished economic and political autonomy grounded in chiefly power and communal tenure'[464], and the youth-led uprisings in the same area during the mid-1980s, which were concerned with conditions in schools and redressing aspects of chiefly rule, rather than participating in its structures and reproduction. These young people considered education a path to alternate forms of employment. 'Although some youths attended agricultural colleges, this was an alternative mainly pursued by those who could not gain access to other institutions of further education. And many of these students' primary aspirations involved bureaucratic employment rather than farming.'[465] Chiefs dominated access to land, and families with longevity in an area typically retained the best land rights. As I will argue in this chapter, conflict with the chieftaincy and related social institutions was a hallmark of the comrades who made up youth congresses.

Part of this cohort's generational consciousness, differentiating them from their parents, was a rejection of traditional rural economic, or agrarian, activities. Emphasis was rather placed

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[462] Bundy, 'Street Sociology and Pavement Politics', p. 313.
[463] For a more complete discussion of the importance of the land, livestock, and agrarian lifestyle during the mid-20th century in Sekhukhuneland and its decline see Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle,* particularly chapters 4 and 5 (pp. 108 - 171).
[464] P. Delius, 'Migrants, Comrades, and Rural Revolt: Sekhukhuneland 1950 – 1987', *Transformation* 13 (1990), pp. 2 – 26, p. 2.
[465] Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle,* p. 226.

on extending formal education, and the achievement of bureaucratic jobs in the Bantustan governments, or as teachers, for those who could get them. Even for students who came out of the politically radical environment of Turfloop, these jobs, offering security and stability, were desirable. As Bundy reminds us, however, those who gained such employment were a very lucky few. Looking specifically at the context in the Northern Transvaal, Sello Mathabatha has captured the accelerated deterioration that schools in Lebowa experienced during this period, and its effect on students: 'By the late 1970s to early 1980s secondary education in the Lebowa homeland was seen by a cross-section of society as being fundamental to survival and essential to any kind of advance. But rapid, poorly planned and poorly resourced expansion had dismaying results.'[466] In the face of such dismal prospects, fueled by shared generational consciousness and grievances, by the mid-1980s the student political movement had broadened to include structures for non-student youth.

Another hallmark of protest politics in the 1980s was the increased violence that was both experienced and expressed by student and youth activists. In rural villages across the Northern Transvaal young 'comrades' led violent witch-purges in efforts to cleanse their communities of evil, adapting the traditional discourse of witchcraft with contemporary political language and accusations. Meanwhile, student activists at Turfloop experienced heightened degrees of violence in their relationships to the university administration, to the police and South African Defence Force who had garrisoned troops on campus, and even between student groups of opposing politics. The increased regionalization and localization of politics during this period, and the inclusion of non-student youth in the realm of what had previously been student politics, meant that organisations sometimes struggled to exert

[466] S. Mathabatha, 'Missionary schools, student uprisings in Lebowa and the Sekhukhuneland students' revolts, 1983 -1986', *African Studies* 64:2, pp. 263-284, p.265.

control over their rank and file – the case of witch killings in Sekhukhuneland that I discuss in this chapter is one such instance. Further, spiraling violence as a mode of political expression mirrors the situation in other areas of South Africa, acting as a point of common political expression between comrades in the rural north, university campuses, and the townships of the country's major cities.

In contrast to chapters two, three, and four, which focused very narrowly on student movements that arose or were fostered at Turfloop, the organisations considered here are much more diffuse and disparate. To frame this important difference, in this chapter I have focused on the role of COSAS in establishing student politics at the local level throughout schools, on transformation of those political activities and organisations once non-student youth came to be included in them, and finally on the use of violence as a tool of political expression stretching across the breadth of youth politics and student politics at schools and at universities. At the end of the chapter I return to Turfloop to examine the way that some of these trends played out on that campus.

COSAS, the Resurgence of Charterism, and the Expansion of Politics in Schools

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Congress of South African Students (or COSAS) was founded in 1979; it was the first 'congress' organisation in South Africa since the banning of the African National Congress in 1960. The founding of COSAS marked a major change in the shape of South African student politics. Previously Black Consciousness organisations had dominated student politics during the 1970s; but COSAS heralded a return to the non-racial politics of the ANC and its Freedom Charter. COSAS was the first such

organisation to make this shift, preceding the formation of the UDF (of which it would become an affiliate) by four years.

COSAS was founded after a three-day conference at Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre in Roodepoort, outside Johannesburg. It was attended by delegates from across the country, and informed by deliberations amongst a mix of actors. Students who had been involved in the uprisings around the country in 1976 -77 were the core of COSAS' early leadership, and they were supported by ANC cells underground within South Africa. Joe Gqabi, who had been involved in the aftermath of the Soweto uprisings, was perhaps the most prominent of these links between the student movement and the ANC. Lynda Schuster has written of Gqabi's influence on the politically important Mashinini family, and his conversion to Charterism of Mpho Mashinini (brother of Tsietsi, who publicly supported Black Consciousness and scorned the ANC).[467] Additionally, Gqabi's influence on the 1976 generation of students is evident from trial records and government reports from the time.[468] Due to the work of such activists, Charterism was already making deeper incursions into the student movement following the uprisings of 1976, as Black Consciousness foundered under the weight of state repression and organisational failures in exile. Badat has suggested that the increased visibility of Charterist organisations during the early 1980s influenced the renewed interest of students in Charterism and non-racial ideology; in particular, he points to increased activity by *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, especially the high-profile bombing of SASOL oil refineries on the night of 31 May 1980, and to the launch of the Release Mandela Committee that same year,

[467] L. Schuster, *A Burning Hunger: One Family's Struggle Against Apartheid* (London, 2004), pp. 153-4; For further discussion of Tsietsi Mashinini's political ideology, see chapter four 'Black Consciousness banned: the turn to exile and AZAPO' (pp. 168-81).
[468] RSA, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Riots at Soweto and Elsewhere from the 16th of June to the 28th February 1977* (Pretoria, 1980). [hereafter Cillie Commision]; T. Matona, 'Student Organisation and Political Resistance in South Africa: an analysis of the Congress of South African Students, 1979-1985. (University of Cape Town, Honours Thesis, 1992).

which raised the profile of Nelson Mandela and, by proxy, other ANC political prisoners who had been in prison for nearly two decades.[469] Seekings has pointed to this period as the moment when 'a Charterist movement began to cohere inside the country'.[470] Also in 1980 the *Sunday Post* printed a copy of the Freedom Charter alongside an article on the history of the document; they also ran a Free Mandela petition campaign.[471] With the founding and growth of COSAS, the ideological shift of AZASO, and increasing visibility and adoption of the Freedom Charter, 1980 was the year that Charterism - if not necessarily the banned movements that had championed it - came out from underground.

Meanwhile prison, always a critical site of conscientization for adult political activists, now became the crucible for a new group of inmates[472]: many of the students themselves had been detained in the wake of 1976-77, and prisons – particularly Modderbee Prison on the East Rand – became a site of regrouping and planning. According to Super Moloi, one detained student,

> The idea to form COSAS… was born during the period we spent in prison under section 10 in 1977. This gave us a chance to discuss and evaluate the events of June 16. The idea of forming COSAS grew from this. In fact, originally, we were thinking of organising a political organisation.[473]

[469] Badat, *Black Student Politics,* pp. 213-16.
[470] Seekings, *The UDF*, p.36.
[471] Ibid, p. 216; Seekings, *The UDF*, p. 36.
[472] There is a rich biographical literature on the role of political education within South Africa's prisons during apartheid, centring predominantly around Robben Island; in particular see A. Kathrada, *Memoirs* (Cape Town, 2004), pp. 214-18 on the importance of access to study materials and news for increasing consciousness among prisoners; N. Alexander, *Robben Island Dossier, 1964-1974* (Cape Town, 1994), pp. 47-65, on the challenges political prisoners faced in pursuing education, including censorship of materials and restrictions on courses deemed too political; M. Maharaj (ed.), *Reflections in Prison* (Cape Town, 2001), especially Nelson Mandela's reflection 'Whither the Black Consciousness Movement?' for a discussion of competition among the political ideologies represented on Robben Island; Also see Marx, *Lessons of Struggle,* pp. 97-9, for a brief discussion of the influx of Black Consciousness prisoners into Robben Island and its effect on poltitical education.
[473] Nozipho Diseko's interview with Super Moloi, quoted in Matona, 'Student Organisation and Political Resistance', p. 42.

According to Tshediso Matona, a COSAS executive member in the 1980s, in his honours thesis on the subject, the push for an educational, rather than overtly political, organisation came from ANC advisors to student leaders. Gqabi, in particular, was concerned that COSAS not be repressed before it had a chance to develop, and discouraged the new organisation from having too political a platform and explicit ties to the ANC.[474]

In April 1979 the idea that had been fostered in prison came to fruition at COSAS' founding conference. Delegates were drawn from student bodies across the country, as well as student activists whose formal schooling had stopped in 1976 and 1977. Within this body, Matona has argued, were delegates of diverse political ideologies: most prominently, as discussed above, Charterists in the mold of the ANC were represented, but there were also delegates adhering to Black Consciousness, members of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) and other groups. This led to some debate over the direction that the new organisation would take in forming its ideological platform. 'On the question of a name, ANC sympathisers insisted that it should include the word "congress", while BC supporters proposed the Venda name "*Khuvhangano*" (Union) or alternatively, a name including "Azania".'[475] The latter would clearly have aligned the new organisation with AZAPO, which had inherited the mantle of Black Consciousness and adhered to a racially separatist philosophy. Selecting *Khuvhangano* would not have tied the new organisation as clearly to either an Africanist or Charterist ideology, but it arguably celebrated African heritage above non-racialism. In the end, the Charterists triumphed in the naming debate, and the Congress of South African Students was born.

[474] Matona, 'Student Organisation and Political Resistance', p. 43; Seekings, *Heroes or Villains*, pp. 35-6.
[475] Matona, 'Student Organisation and Political Resistance', p. 45.

In spite of this debate and its conclusion in the Charterists' favour, COSAS' goals as laid out at that first conference did not explicitly reference either Charterism or Africanism as its political philosophy. At this stage, the new organisation was feeling its way through the political landscape of late 1970s South Africa, and it aimed to provide space for both its Charterist and Africanist members to coexist, much as the SSRC had in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising a few years earlier. The late 1970s were a period of flux and uncertainty for both movements so soon after the repression of Black Consciousness organisations and the founding of AZAPO, and in the midst of Charterism's re-emergence in aboveground politics. For a period COSAS provided space for both ideologies. The decision not to form a political party aided this position. In its earliest programmes COSAS strove to focus primarily on educational concerns. They declared their five main objectives to be:

> To normalise relationships between the students and teacher. To create a spirit of trust, responsibility, and creative companionship. To struggle towards a dynamic education. To strive for a dynamic, free and compulsory education for the advancement of the society. [and] To involve itself in projects contributory to the aspirations of Cosas in pursuance of the above objectives.[476]

These objectives located COSAS' role in the struggle firmly within secondary schools, from which they were eventually able to organize throughout the country. At the time of the UDF's 1983 founding, COSAS was its largest student affiliate.[477] Matona and Seekings argue that COSAS' early stronghold was in the Southern Transvaal Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) area, but both authors focus on the role of urban organisation (and, in the case of Matona, some specific branches in the Eastern Cape) and their analysis neglects an important part of COSAS' national growth, particularly in the Northern Transvaal.

[476] 'New student body formed', in the *Rand Daily Mail,* 6 April 1979. [GPP]
[477] Seekings, *The UDF*, p. 59.

At their first conference, COSAS delegates elected Ephraim Mogale, a young man from the small town of Settlers in the Northern Transvaal as their president. It is noteworthy that Mogale came from outside the core of detained student activists who had helped conceive of the new organisation. However, he appealed to a majority of delegates because he had successfully organized several youth clubs in his home area. Mogale came from a Charterist political background; his family supported the ANC underground, and in the late 1970s he was involved in recruiting for the ANC. His election marked another small victory of Charterism over the Africanist politics of Black Consciousness in COSAS' political development. In contrast to the space that had existed within SASM for Charterism to exist alongside Black Consciousness, for COSAS Charterism was its foundational ideal. As I have noted, COSAS was the first 'congress' organisation in South Africa since the banning of the African National Congress in 1960. Names were important signifiers of ideology and affiliation; COSAS' name associated it from the outset with the ANC, the congress movement, and its multi-racial ideals. It was directed at pre-university students, the first such body since the Soweto Students Representative Council (SSRC) had been banned along with the other BCM organisations in October 1977.

In its early days, COSAS sought to establish links with other anti-apartheid groups, reaching out beyond student-specific issues to support issues like rent and shop boycotts, the Release Mandela Campaign, and to create ties with workers' organisations.[478] But by the mid-1980s it maintained a primary focus on educational issues, a divergence from SASO's broad political approach but with similarity to SASM before June 16, 1976. As self-described in its own 1984 pamphlet:

[478] COSAS flyer 'Workers, workers, build support for the students struggle in the schools', c. 1982. [WHP AD1790]; van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*.

> [COSAS] saw the need to organise and educate students about their day to day problems in their schools such as corporeal punishment, lack of text books, unqualified teachers, poor exam results, unmarked scripts, etc. They saw the need to unite all students throughout the country, Africans, Indians and Coloureds.[479]

Racially inclusive language like that in the pamphlet marked COSAS clearly as a Charterist organisation (though it is worth noting that the groups they sought to unite - Africans, coloureds and Indians - were the same SASO had grouped under the banner of black). More covertly, COSAS' early leadership was suspected of having links to the ANC underground.

Between 1977 and 1979 Mogale and his friend Thabo Makunyane, a student at Turfloop and son of the President of the Lebowa Chamber of Commerce, had organized local youth clubs around Potgietersrus, south of the region's largest town of Pietersburg. At these groups they distributed ANC literature like the exile journal *Mayibuye,* and other banned materials including political tracts called 'Being Black in South Africa Today' and 'Declaration of War'. These early youth groups were designed to 'provide social facilities and communal services' to local youth and students, but were not explicitly situated in schools. As discussed above, young people who were no longer students but maintained affiliation to student networks were some of the key leaders of student groups in the early 1980s - indeed both Makunyane and Mogale had left school by the time they set up these youth groups; Mogale was 20 in 1977, and Makunyane was 21.[480]

[479] COSAS Potchefstroom Pamphlet 'We Remember June 16: A Nation Mourns', 1984. [WHP AD1790]
[480] 'Students guilty of aid to ANC', *Rand Daily Mail,* 3 September 1980. [GPP]

Eventually the two young men were accused, tried, and convicted of using these youth clubs to 'promote unrest'.[481] After a frequently postponed trial a Pietersburg court convicted both young men of offenses under the Terrorism Act. They were each sentenced to eight years in prison. The evidence brought before them in court detailed links with the ANC:

> According to the charge sheet, the two are alleged to have promoted the objects of communism and of the banned African National Congress (ANC) between October 1977 and October 1979. In 1977 they are alleged to have distributed pamphlets entitled "Being black in South Africa today" and "Declaration of War". They are also alleged to have recruited members for the ANC and to have worked for the formation of youth clubs to promote unrest between 1977 and 1979.[482]

The presiding judge, Justice W.G.M. van Zyl found that,

> [T]he aim of the accused was to galvanise the black youth so that they would identify with unrest and uprisings when they occurred. Mogale encouraged the formation of youth clubs in Nylstroom, Mahwelereng and Potgietersrus to provide social facilities and communal services; but his ulterior aim was to provide a forum to train and politicize black youths in the aims of the ANC.[483]

In addition to links with the ANC, the judge's decision reveals the scope of Mogale's organisation in the Northern Transvaal, which was spreading across the region. Mogale's contact with local groups of students stretched from Venda in the far north, to Potchefstroom in the Western Transvaal, to southern Sekhukhuneland.[484] These local organisations in the small towns and townships of the Transvaal would become the forerunners of the youth congress movement that swept the country in the mid-1980s.

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[481] 'Terror Trial is postponed once more', *Rand Daily Mail,* 26 August 1980 [GPP]; 'Student leader in court again', *Rand Daily Mail,* 25 June 1980. [GPP] Their treason trial, conducted months after Mogale had become COSAS president, resulted in each man being sentenced to eight years in prison.
[482] 'Student leader in court again', *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 June 1980. [GPP]
[483] Pietersburg Regional Court, Decision Against Thabo Makunyane (24) and Ephraim Mogale (23). 17 October 1980. [GPP]
[484] Ibid.

When Mogale became COSAS President in 1979 he built upon his earlier experience with youth groups; the new organisation focused on students and rooted itself in secondary schools. Previously, the youth clubs had flourished especially well in Moutse district, near southern Sekhukhuneland, because they were organized around the personal networks of Mogale and Makunyane themselves, but COSAS transcended this. It quickly made concerted efforts to shape itself as a national student movement, in contrast to the locally rooted Soweto Students Representative Council of 1976-77 and other predecessors.[485] But arguably even more critical to its success was its mode of organizing through schools themselves. The model of establishing branches in schools offered COSAS a point of entry into every town and village with a secondary school. This enabled them to organize students with a degree of freedom. As Ineke van Kessel has noted, '[A]lthough school grounds and university campuses became major battlefields during the 1980s, during at least the first half of the decade they were preserves of relative freedom.'[486]

In addition to more freedom to organize, operating from schools afforded COSAS access to equipment like photocopiers and meeting space, as well as to students themselves, who were the most critical resource to expanding its base. In its early days, COSAS strove to reach out beyond the student community to engage with other groups in the struggle, but they still sought to orient this engagement around education. A 1982 campaign to engage workers used slogans like 'Workers, workers, build support for the students' struggle in the schools', and further declared:

> Like you workers: we want democratic committees under our control (SRCs) to fight for our needs. Like you workers: we students are prepared to fight all and every dismissal from our schools. Like you workers: we defend older students from being thrown out of our schools, just like you defend old

[485] Matona, 'Student Organisation and Political Resistance', p. 44.
[486] van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*, p. 20.

> workers from being thrown out of the factories. Like you workers demand free overalls and boots, so we students demand free books and schooling. And students don't pay for books and schools IT IS THE WORKERS WHO PAY. Just as the workers fight assaults against the workers in the factory so we students fight against the beatings we get at school.[487]

These appeals not only raised the profile of educational issues, but also aimed to tie the plight of the students to that of workers by articulating that the struggle of workers and the struggle of students were deeply intertwined. This was a critical linkage for COSAS to make, because the relatively privileged concerns of students sometimes failed to attract outside support. Such criticism had been a challenge for earlier groups, like the South African Students' Organisation (SASO). SASO had been based primarily on university campuses, and its members were sometimes criticized by parents and elders for being too liberal regarding things like sex and drugs, for being idle, and for wasting the privilege of being at university by neglecting their studies for politics.[488] This was a charge played upon by the state, as labour inspectors used it to detain and derail SASO's organisation. Harry Nengwekhulu had been arrested in the SASO offices by labour inspectors on a charge of being an 'idle or undesirable Bantu' in 1973.[489]

To overcome these sorts of preconceptions about students in politics and to build solidarity across the anti-apartheid struggle, COSAS sought to draw familial and communal links between themselves and other groups: 'Workers, you are our fathers and mothers, you are our brothers and sisters. Our struggle in the schools is your struggle in the factories. We fight against the same bosses [sic] government, we fight the same enemy.'[490] There is little

[487] COSAS Flyer, 'Workers, workers, build support for the students' struggle in the schools'. (emphasis original) [WHP AD1790]
[488] Author's interview with Lybon Mabasa.
[489] 'SASO BA man taken as "idle"', *The Star,* 18 July 1973. [WHP AD1912/239]
[490] COSAS Flyer, 'Workers, workers, build support for the students' struggle in the schools'. [WHP AD1790]

evidence that these overtures went beyond the rhetorical, though. COSAS did not develop any direct alliances with unions in its early years. Perhaps consequentially, this linking had limited success, and within a few years they had returned to targeting their outreach primarily at students themselves.

This shift back to students owed a debt to the founding of the UDF in 1983, which enabled COSAS to be officially linked to other local non-students' organisations like civics, parents' associations, and even unions. No longer did they have to legitimate student concerns as part of the larger struggle, and they could focus on expanding COSAS branches to new schools, which is where they gained organisational prominence. As a UDF affiliate they were part of a much broader network than solely student politics. Perhaps ironically that breadth allowed them to focus more narrowly on student concerns and to flourish by doing so. As Jeremy Seekings has said, 'The UDF inspired and mobilized people across South Africa to resist the state's institutions and policies; it helped to build an unprecedented organisational structure from the local to national levels; [and] it coordinated diverse protests and campaigns […].'[491] The tension between the politics of UDF affiliates being deeply local, and the national profile that it also offered, is important. Once student politics began to move outside of schools in the Northern Transvaal in the mid-1980s contention emerged between local forms of political expression and regional and national leadership.

By 1984, shortly after the founding of the UDF, COSAS had reoriented its slogans and campaigns to target students: 'Each One, Teach One', and 'COSAS support students' demands' spoke primarily of solidarity within the student community during a time of growing unrest in schools. Walk outs in Pretoria and Cradock, and the expulsion of five

[491] Seekings, *The UDF,* p. 3.

students from Hwiti High School in Mankweng, just outside the gates of the University of the North in the Northern Transvaal, called attention to the escalation of tensions within schools. In Mankweng, tensions between students and the school administration reached the breaking point when students boycotted in protest at being televised on the state-run South African Broadcasting Company on the occasion of the anniversary of Bantu Education. Protest over the use of press on campus – both not being allowed to speak to journalists, and being used to publicize university affairs – had long been a source of conflict and protest at nearby Turfloop. Now similar tactics were being employed in schools. According to the newsletter of COSAS' Mankweng Branch,

> The students felt by aggreeing [sic] to be televised by the SABC-TV they will be violating thier [sic] political principles. One of thier [sic] principle [sic] is of non-collaboration with the oppressor and institution created by the racist regime […].[492]

In response to the boycott, school authorities expelled five students, thought to be some of the most politically active in the student body, including three members of the Student Representative Council. COSAS rallied around these students, calling for regional and national solidarity. The Mankweng branch declared, 'We view the expulsion of our colleagues as part of the dirty tactics used by the white minority racist settlers regime and its collaborators to silence those who are opposed to it […].'[493]

The students of the 1980s were products of a restrictive system of Bantu Education, but – perhaps more importantly – as the quotes above demonstrate, they were also products of the generation of 1976 that had come before and claimed schools as a site of political struggle. As one of the founders of the UDF, Rev. Alan Boesak, said:

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[492] COSAS Mankweng Branch Newsletter, August 1984. [WHP AD1790]
[493] Ibid.

> After more than twenty years of Apartheid education they expected to see totally brainwashed, perfect little "hotnotjies" and "kaffirtjies" who knew their place in the world. Instead they find the most politically conscious generation of young people, determined to struggle for a better future.[494]

The shift to multi-racialism and the reintroduction of Charterism in student politics that was led by COSAS reached full fruition when AZASO and COSAS collaborated with NUSAS, the white liberal students' union, and the National Education Union of South Africa (NEUSA) on the Education Charter Campaign. Launched in 1985, to correspond with the International Year of Youth, this initiative had been in the works for more than a year previously. When it launched in April of 1985, the Education Charter Campaign had drafted a list of grievances and demands relating to education in South Africa, which was formed on the model of the Freedom Charter. It was frequently printed under the banner heading, 'The doors of learning and culture shall be opened!'[495], which is a direct quote from the Freedom Charter itself. It ended with pledges

> [T]o interlink the struggles in education with the broader struggle for a united, free, democratic and non-racial South Africa; to engage ourselves actively in a campaign for an Education Charter that will embody the short-term, medium-term, and long-term demands for a non-racial, free and compulsory education for all in a united and democratic South Africa based on the will of the people.[496]

The language within the Education Charter itself, of a united and non-racial South Africa, the format of the document and its heading, and, perhaps most visibly, the united front presented by multi-racial groups like AZASO, COSAS, and NUSAS represented the full conversion of major African student organisations to multi-racial Charterism, and of its ascendancy in student politics.

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[494] COSAS flyer, 'COSAS Support Students' Demands Solidarity', c. August 1984. [WHP AD1790]
[495] 'The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened' Education Charter Campaign pamphlet, 1985. [WHP A2635/A]
[496] Education Charter, April 1985. [WHP A2635/A]

The Development of Youth Congresses

Youth involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle was growing outside classrooms, as well. The growth of youth congresses catering to non-student youth in the mid 1980s acted as a supplement or counterweight to COSAS' organisation in schools. Although in its early years, COSAS had included many non-student youth in its membership, these were mostly former students who had finished school, but not yet moved into other formal structures for activism like civics, unions, or the armed struggle. According to Seekings, 'The history of COSAS thus straddles the period [1979-1982] in which the category of youth was reconstructed to embrace former student activists.'[497] As this quote implies, and as I argued in my introduction to this chapter, the categories of youth and students fluctuated and sometimes overlapped to accommodate various political actors. For instance, COSAS' early leadership was drawn from a cohort that, though they associated themselves with school networks, were no longer enrolled students. But by 1984 COSAS had reoriented itself around school-specific issues, and it no longer provided as relevant a space for the concerns of non-student youth. To fill this gap, local youth congresses began to arise around the country.

Chisholm dates the national rise of youth congresses to 1982, growing out of a base of unemployed youth in urban areas.[498] In centres like Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg, these structures grew in tandem with COSAS and the student movement in schools. But in the rural Northern Transvaal, youth congresses were slower to take hold. Lekgoathi has argued that, in Lebowa, they emerged first in the urban or peri-urban pockets of the Bantustan (particularly Seshego and Mankweng) before expanding to rural areas.[499] Schools

[497] Seekings, *Heroes or Villains*, p. 31.
[498] L. Chisholm, 'From a revolt to a search for alternatives', *Work in Progress,* no. 42 (1986). pp.14-19, p. 17.
[499] Lekgoathi, 'The United Democractic Front in Lebowa and KwaNdebele', p. 623.

provided a natural centre for organisation, and, as has been noted, students shared a set of concerns that facilitated their politicization. Local unemployed youth were less organized as a group and were not even engaged in the social and criminal groupings that gangs provided their urban counterparts. COSAS had already established itself as a national and local fixture in schools when, in rural Sekhukhuneland students inspired by COSAS' organisation and rhetoric took the struggle out of their schools and formed village-based youth groups.

The first of these, the Sekhukhune Youth Committee, which later changed its name to the Sekhukhune Youth Organisation (SEYO), was formed in late 1984 or early 1985 in the neighbouring villages of Apel and GaNkoane. The group, led by local students but open to all village youth, took inspiration from COSAS in nearby schools and from AZASO at the University of the North, where some local activists had family enrolled as students.[500] For its part, the Turfloop branch of AZASO actively worked to build the capacity and political consciousness of such local youth groups. Mpho Nchabeleng, a Turfloop student and AZASO member, recalls that it was an explicit policy of AZASO to try to mobilize students in schools and training colleges.[501] To do so, they engaged with the structures in schools where COSAS had laid the foundation for political mobilization; Richard Sekonya, another SEYO founding member, was initially politicized through the SRC in his secondary school, Tompi Seleka College of Agriculture.[502] SEYO quickly transcended the impact of local branches of COSAS and other student formations, though, and brought together students from various schools with non-student youth. As one activist described, 'When SEYO came

[500] van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams',* pp. 102-3; Author's interviews with Maurice Nchabeleng Polokwane 13 October 2011(a) and 6 September 2012(b), and Mpho Nchabeleng, Pretoria, 22 October 2011.
[501] Author's interview with Mpho Nchabeleng (a).
[502] Author's interview with Richard Sekonya, Apel, Sekhukhuneland, 18 November 2011.

then COSAS activity died. Because SEYO was our own organisation. People now pursued the same issues in SEYO, and it were [sic] mostly the same people who were involved.'[503]

The new youth group was centred in Apel around the Nchabeleng household. Peter Nchabeleng was a former political prisoner on Robben Island and the UDF's regional president in the Northern Transvaal at the time. He had been banned to the remote village in 1972, and the banning order was renewed after he was tried and released as one of the 'Pretoria 12' in the trial of the State versus Sexwale in 1977.[504] Richard Sekonya, one of SEYO's founders, remembers Peter Nchabeleng's role in guiding the organisation:

> You see at that time [early 1985] there were no clear directions on who can we speak to, who are these guys who can give us advice, who knows… we were still young at that time. I […] decided, no man, there is this old man […]. He was a well-known political figure at the time. He had been in prison for a number of years. Then we decided, there is this old man – let's go and see, probably he will give us a very good guide on what it is that we can do to establish youth formation, people that we can contact. […] We then started knowing the old man, he guided us. We then established the Youth Formation of SEYO here at home.[505]

Most of Nchabeleng's sons also became involved in political organisation; Luthuli, the eldest, left the country for military training with *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, while Elleck, the second son, recruited for the ANC and spent six years on Robben Island. After his release Elleck settled in Johannesburg and worked for the Community Resource Information Center (CRIC). The younger sons participated in student politics locally: Mpho, a law student at the University of the North became an active member of AZASO on campus and worked to mobilize Sekhukhune youth through that organisation, while his younger brother Maurice, along with

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[503] Quoted in van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p. 104.
[504] *State v. Sexwale*, Statement of Petrus Mampogoane Nchabeleng, Accused No. 8 – Detained 2 January 1977, p.1. [GPP]; 'Nchabeleng combatant and patriot', 'SASPU Nation', April/May 1986. [GPP]
[505] Author's interview with Richard Sekonya.

Sekonya, quoted above, became a founding member of the Sekhukhune Youth Committee in Apel.[506]

In the wake of COSAS' banning in August 1985 the Sekhukhune Youth Committee went on to become the most significant youth organisation in the region, and as Ineke van Kessel has argued, in the Northern Transvaal youth organisation preceded other parts of political activism during the 1980s; every village that had a civic organisation already had a youth congress first.[507] Maurice Nchabeleng, from Apel, was a student at Magong High School at the time that the Sekhukhune Youth Committee was formed. He had been politicized at home, part of a family of activists, but found that due to the activities of COSAS-affiliated SRCs in schools many of his fellow students, both at Magong and at his previous school, Madithame High School, were also politically aware. In 1986 the Sekhukhune Youth Committee changed its name to the Sekhukhune Youth Organisation (SEYO), in line with other UDF-affiliated youth congresses around the country, like the similarly named SOYO (Soweto Youth Organisation). One of the features of the new youth group that contrasted the structures of student organisations before it was the crosscutting nature of its membership and leadership. As Maurice Nchabeleng describes the make-up of the group, '[I]t was mostly constituted of students, of course with unemployed people. But students were coming from high schools and from the University of the North. […] And those [university students] were the people who had been also to give political education.'[508] SEYO drew its members from a variety of local schools and training colleges, as well as support from Turfloop students, who, as both Maurice and Mpho, above, note, were instrumental in the political education of younger, and particularly non-student, youth.

[506] Author's interviews with Maurice Nchabeleng (a) and Mpho Nchabeleng.
[507] van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p. 98.
[508] Author's interview with Maurice Nchabeleng (a).

SEYO made conscious efforts to unite the youth of Apel and GaNkoane. The two villages had been involved in historic land disputes, which led to factionalized fighting. These disputes originated in conflict over land rights between the two villages: the people of Apel claimed that, as the first settlers in the area they had primary rights to local land and that the people of GaNkoane were encroaching on this space. This mirrors patterns of access to and conflict over land, based on longevity of tenure, that Delius has noted across Sekhukhuneland.[509] Apel existed as a village in the early 20th century, while GaNkoane was likely part of a rapid expansion of betterment villages and settlements set up by the South African Native Trust in the 1950s and 1960s. The people of GaNkoane, however, 'maintained that the original settlers [of Apel] did not establish themselves in the present village of Apel, which invalidated their claim to these land rights.'[510] The dispute was contested both in court and in physical conflict over decades in the middle of the twentieth century. 'In the 1970s, Peter Nchabeleng's father was killed in one such armed invasion from GaNkoane.'[511] But by the mid 1980s the youth of the area were keen to overcome this historic dispute. As Maurice Nchabeleng describes it:

> [W]hen we started this organisation [SEYO], we had a nearest village, which was not in good relation with our village (which is Apel). The village was called GaNkoane. And this village, we used to have factional fights with them. But then those were our parents. But then as youth, we decided to say 'to neutralize this faction fight, we need to form one organisation that encompasses the two villages'. We then established a branch called Apel-GaNkoane Branch of SEYO.[512]

Richard Sekonya, an early SEYO leader from GaNkoane, concurs with this description of local youth overcoming old grievances:

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[509] Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle,* pp. 144-5.
[510] van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p. 124.
[511] Ibid., p.124.
[512] Author's interview with Maurice Nchabeleng (a).

> […]GaNkoane and Apel are two villages that are very adjacent to one another; they belong to two different tribal authorities, but we [the founders of SEYO] decided that it was time that we should actually cross the tribal barriers and mobilise all young people around the area.[513]

SEYO's emphasis on overcoming the 'tribal barriers' of their parents' and grandparents' generations is noteworthy. The UDF leadership in the Northern Transvaal had encouraged organisations to work across ethnic lines, 'so that people would not be fighting "the wrong battles."'[514] In some areas of the region, particularly in the east where Lebowa and Gazankulu territories were in close proximity, this was a real concern.[515] But both Apel and GaNkoane were BaPedi villages, and had no close proximity to other ethnic groups; Sekonya's use of the term 'tribal' indicates something other than ethnic difference between the two. Each fell under the jurisdiction of a different chief, and it is this authority that the youth of Apel-GaNkoane identified as the root of the old conflict. In an adaptation of UDF policy, they decided to 'cross the tribal barriers' that separated them; though these were not ethnic disputes, it was recognized that they could easily distract from the business of fighting apartheid and the Bantustan system.

The youth who formed SEYO had already been politicized beyond local disputes and inter-village conflicts. In addition to coming from GaNkoane, Sekonya attended a training college in Marble Hall, where he had come to politics through involvement with the SRC. He met Maurice Nchabeleng around 1985, when the two were both interested in forming a youth

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[513] Author's interview with Richard Sekonya.
[514] Quoted in van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p.124.
[515] Gazankulu, in particular, had seen an influx of Mozambican refugees from that country's civil war between FRELIMO and RENAMO, beginning in the early 1980s. By 1987 there were an estimated 30,000 Mozambican refugees in Gazankulu. These refugees, ethnically similar to the Tsonga/Shangaan of Gazankulu, sometimes experienced attacks from local South Africans, though these were likely due to increased competition for scarce resources as opposed to ethnically motivated tensions. [Susan Pleming, 'SA sends back thousands of war refugees', *The Star*, 9 December 1986; and 'Mozambican refugees get "identity cards"', *Weekly Mail*, 20 – 26 February 1987.] In fact there were many efforts by locals to aid the refugees in Gazankulu, in spite of competition for work and resources. [Peter Goldsmid, 'Those who have so little welcome those with nothing', *Weekly Mail*, 20 – 26 February 1987.] [SAHA ANCYL AL2451]

organisation in the villages.[516] From its outset, then, SEYO comprised a body of students from different areas and different schools, but in its earliest days most members were still students.

They were also predominantly boys and young men. This was less a distinct shift than an exacerbation of the male domination that existed in the ranks of student organisation. Educational organisations like COSAS and AZASO provided a forum for young women to participate, though broadly leadership was dominated by men. In contrast youth congresses, which existed outside the networks of education, had much less female representation. In SEYO, one of the only female members, Sauwe Maditsi, became involved through her interest in politics developed at Madithame High School where she went on to be a member of the SRC. 'And it was so strange, because you find yourself the only woman among men. […] When we started I was the only woman within the group, and then later on I also recruited my friend and then she joined.' But these young women remained notable exceptions in a realm of youth politics dominated by their male counterparts. Part of this gender bias can be explained by significant social pressure on young girls in rural Sekhukhuneland. Maditsi noted that her involvement in politics caused concern among her family and the community as a whole, particularly due to her gender:

> They [my family] also used to fight with me in terms of attending meetings. By then it was not easy to host the meeting during the day; we have to do it at night and I'm a woman, and I have to get out of the house at night, you see? […] It was [difficult] because as I'm telling you - especially in terms of our culture, you also have to cook, and fetch wood, and fetch water. And you also have the other commitments. […] And if you aligned yourself with men, the community will think of you somehow - not necessarily that you want to achieve a certain goal, they will think that you are having relationship with more than five men, because you are the only woman within that group.[517]

[516] Author's interview with Richard Sekonya.
[517] Author's interview with Sauwe Maditsi, Polokwane, 18 April 2012.

In spite of the pressures she faced to stay out of politics, Maditsi recalls being invigorated and entertained by the discussion-oriented format of SEYO meetings, which were often held at the Nchabeleng household. The father, Peter, and older brother, Elleck, provided ideological direction for these discussions. According to Maurice,

> So [Elleck] used to come [from the Community Resource Information Centre] with material, reading material and the Freedom Charter. So what we were doing is, we were discussing around the Freedom Charter which had a number of clauses, so we will have somebody coming from Johannesburg, or coming from the same organisation to come and take us through the Charter, so that we understand what are we doing, the demands that were on the Freedom Charter.[518]

This adherence to and study of the Freedom Charter as a document locates SEYO firmly in the Charterist political camp, in a more profound than nominal way. Though they were, as a UDF affiliate, at least nominally Charterist, acquaintance with the contents of the Charter itself was at the fore of SEYO's politicization methods. Richard Sekonya describes the focus on the Charter itself, and its relationship to other political tracts:

> [Elleck] would give us the literature, we would read this literature. And from our readings we would organize workshops, saying this person would talk about the Freedom Charter – what the Freedom Charter says – this person would read… you know from very foundation politics up to hardcore Marxist literature. […] But the ones that link [SEYO to the urban areas of the Rand] – you see people like Elleck would get the literature and bring it here at home.[519]

As Maurice Nchabeleng and Richard Sekonya describe above, SEYO members would discuss the contents of the Freedom Charter, and its implications for understanding political theories like Marxism. In this way SEYO sought to establish a strong political ideology within its ranks. They would often be led in their discussions by Elleck Nchabeleng or another activist who had come from Johannesburg, and often from the Community Resource Information Centre (CRIC).

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[518] Author's interview with Maurice Nchabeleng (a).
[519] Author's interview with Richard Sekonya.

CRIC, which had been founded by white activists from NUSAS, formed an important link between the urban centres of Johannesburg and Pretoria that produced and distributed political literature and the rural villages of the Northern Transvaal. As Sekonya notes, '[T]hrough organisational efforts like CRIC I think that's where [SEYO] found […] that linkage.'[520] Using go-betweens like Elleck Nchabeleng and on-the-ground youth groups like SEYO, CRIC disseminated ANC/Charterist literature across large rural areas. It became an important centre for student activists to access organisational and political materials, and attracted prominent activists. Deacon Mathe, who went on to play an important role in the development of the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO), which is discussed in chapter six, was one of Elleck's coworkers at CRIC.[521] They worked with COSAS in schools, as well. Mpho Nchabeleng recalls that CRIC partnered with Ephraim Mogale, the founder of COSAS and, by this time, a high profile student leader:

> [CRIC] started to interact with the youth movement of the organisations in Moutse District, which already had powerful people who were involved, like Ephraim Mogale and Jabu Mahlapo. They spent almost all their time there.[522]

In addition, CRIC helped to fund SEYO's outreach to other schools and villages, fostering the growth of youth congresses across Sekhukhuneland. Members worked through personal networks and through schools, particularly SRCs, to create interest in forming new groups.

> We would actually have planning meetings and say, "Who in the next village do we know? Who are the most relevant guys we can start speaking to on an interim basis?" I think that's how it all happened. And we went into this area, spoke to a number of contacts, tried to show them our intention, and you know we would actually sit with them so they would bring other guys that might be of importance. Picking various SRCs from various high schools; I think that's how we identified our target guys.[523]

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[520] Ibid.
[521] Author's interview with Richard Sekonya.
[522] Author's interview with Mpho Nchabeleng (a).
[523] Author's interview with Richard Sekonya.

As well as SEYO's links to groups like CRIC, and branches of COSAS, the organisation maintained links to the branch of AZASO at the University of the North, where Mpho Nchabeleng was a member. Turfloop's branch of AZASO was heavily involved in outreach throughout the region, connecting with other student and youth groups.

> That was actually AZASO's strategy at that time, to go to high schools, to mobilize high schools and even training colleges. I think it was also discussed as a plan in our meetings at that time. To actually go there. It was sort of a base, mobilizing students, and the targets were training colleges like CN Phatudi, Sekhukhune Training College, and even high schools. So we just became part of it, and with us we were concentrating on our area, with mobilizing youth around Sekhukhuneland, because we held these side meetings […] to concentrate on Sekhukhuneland youth. Youth generally - whether students or youth, we concentrated on them.[524]

Due to such concerted efforts at politicization throughout the villages and towns of the Northern Transvaal, groups like SEYO quickly multiplied and by 1986 youth congresses were a common feature in villages throughout Sekhukhuneland and other parts of the region. They captured politically active school students who were members of COSAS or AZASO, or involved in local SRCs. But in an important shift, which Mpho Nchabeleng alludes to above, they also began to attract non-student, unemployed youth. Historically these young men had been alternately neglected by or at odds with their student counterparts who were involved in the struggle. Clive Glaser has written about the adversarial and sometimes violent relationship that existed between students and young *tsotsis* on the streets of Soweto in the 1960s and 1970s. The middle of the 1980s marked a shift in the adversarial nature of the relationship between students and youth: in urban areas Franziska Rueedi has written about the recruitment of a new cohort of unemployed youth during and after the Vaal Triangle uprising of 1984.[525] As I have argued here, the rise of groups like the Sekhukhune

[524] Author's interview with Mpho Nchabeleng.
[525] F. Rueedi, 'Political Mobilisation, Violence and Control in the Townships of the Vaal Triangle, South Africa, c.1976-1986' (University of Oxford, DPhil, 2013).

Youth Organisation also changed that relationship in the villages where it had branches and brought unemployed youth into the fold of student politics.

Violence

Violence came to be a key characteristic in political expression for youth during the 1980s. From the campus of Turfloop to rural villages throughout the Northern Transvaal, heightened aggression and physical confrontation were frequent occurrences. In the comrade movement that swept rural villages from Sekhukhuneland to Venda, young men used violence to enforce new social parameters within their communities, policing domestic relationships, schools, and eradicating accused witches. As I will explore in a subsequent section, at Turfloop violence between students and staff in confrontations with the army (which was garrisoned on campus), and even between rival political groups, sent many people to hospital, and even left some students dead. In part this reflects the ungovernability that was sweeping the country in the mid-1980s; violent techniques used in witch-hunts in the Northern Transvaal reflected the tactics that comrades in the townships used to deal with state informers and collaborators. The importation of the violent necklacing technique, whereby a tyre doused in petrol was put around the shoulders of an accused witch and set alight, was borrowed from townships where it had been used on suspected state informants; as Ineke van Kessel has said of the execution by necklace of witches in Apel and GaNkoane, 'thus an urban innovation had come to Sekhukhuneland'[526], and indeed to other parts of the Northern Transvaal.

Youth congresses also struggled to create ideological diffusion through their ranks, and consequently had to grapple with the use of generally uncontrolled violence as a form of

[526] van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p. 127.

political expression. Though these groups were affiliates of the UDF, and associated themselves with the ANC, the national organisations failed to exert control over the local youth congresses; this became especially evident during the witch-hunts of the late 1980s.

The turn to violent revolt marked a change in the way that youth were confronting state repression – a similar though more dramatic shift towards confrontation as the 1974 viva-FRELIMO rallies – but also in the way they were confronting other social structures and the world around them. As noted above, in the Northern Transvaal it drew on techniques and methods from the urban areas of the Rand, where the 1984 Township Revolt, sparked in the Vaal Triangle, had catapulted violent resistance to the fore of a rent boycott. In her study about the rhetoric around contemporary violence on the Rand, Monique Marks has pinpointed, among other justifications, that youth believed that the root of the violence they used 'lay in the direct and structural violence of the apartheid state' and that youth, as defenders of their communities 'should be involved in public acts of violence'; they also 'perceived themselves as having responded in the mid-eighties to the call of the ANC in taking up armed struggle as a strategy for change'.[527] This call was the summons to ungovernability, which had become the watchword of youth activism after the ANC in exile called for the country to be made 'ungovernable'.[528]

In 1984 and 1985, Oliver Tambo, the exiled president of the ANC who was based in Lusaka, Zambia, made calls on the party's Radio Freedom network for the youth inside the country to make South Africa ungovernable. This was echoed in the UDF's platform for 1986: 'From

[527] M. Marks, '"We are fighting for the liberation of our people": Justifications of youth violence by activist youth in Diepkloof, Soweto' *Temps Modernes* 585 (1995), pp. 133-158, p. 134.
[528] 'Make South Africa Ungovernable' Broadcast on Radio Freedom by OR Tambo, 10 October 1984 [http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4457] and 'Address by Oliver Tambo to the Nation on Radio Freedom', 22 July 1985. [http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4470] Accessed 6 September 2013.

governability to ungovernability'.[529] Young people throughout the country enthusiastically pursued their own understandings of that strategy. The appeal of inverting the existing power structures – both political and generational – and the release of embracing a type of chaos in the face of strict legal and, in rural areas, social constraints may help explain the appeal of ungovernability for young comrades. In this section I will analyse the ways in which ungovernability manifested itself in several villages in the Northern Transvaal – through witch-hunts and generational inversions of power - and will consider issues of violence and its inverse relationship to ideology, the appeal of ungovernability, and the creation of moral communities.

Comrades and Witch-hunts

In spite of strides made by COSAS and later youth congresses, including non-student youths in congresses that had essentially risen out of student politics was not a smooth process. There were often struggles within the congresses over ideology and appropriate forms of political expression, and generational divides were emerging among activists. By early 1986 the youth of Sekhukhuneland were articulating generational grievances that put them in opposition to chiefs, parents, and village elders, and no longer just the apartheid state. By February 1986 this discontent had erupted into the Sekhukhune Youth Revolt.

As youth across South Africa answered calls for ungovernability with violence, and 'liberated zones' were established in some townships, the situation grew increasingly tense, and parts of the country fell under a state of emergency imposed in July 1985. In rural Sekhukhune, the nascent SEYO began to recruit all local youth into membership. Parents

[529] van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p. 118.

alleged that their tactics involved cooptation and forced recruitment. 'In 1986, the youth invaded our houses to take our children. They said all children must come; they were forced.'[530] Isak Niehaus has described similar coercion by the comrades of Bushbuckridge, nearly 200 kilometres to the east of Sekhukhuneland. One of his informants, Henry Mohale, 'claimed that marshals regularly forced youths to attend political meetings at night. Before adjourning, the marshals whipped all "non-liberated" boys who did not come to the meetings voluntarily […].'[531] Such tactics were just one facet of a larger blurring between politics and crime. According to Ineke van Kessel: '[S]hops were raided, cars hijacked, and money extorted in the name of the "struggle". Since all youth were considered members of the youth movement it could be difficult for the politically motivated comrades to disassociate themselves from the thugs.'[532]

This dichotomy between activist and thug is at the heart of the struggle to define what exactly SEYO was. Van Kessel's quote suggests these categories were distinct (if not easily distinguished by outsiders): the student political activists were adhering to a UDF-led agenda, while the youth thugs brought criminal elements into the movement. But these categories could be and often were entangled. Political leader Maurice Nchabeleng also chaired a meeting to determine why a young activist had been struck and killed by lightning, an event frequently attributed to witchcraft and which usually received swift and violent retribution.[533] And violence and coercion were used by 'thugs' in the name of the struggle, as Van Kessel notes. As I will argue in this section, anti-apartheid politics provided motivation and justification for youth comrades to undertake unusual and unsanctioned activities, sometimes

[530] M.W. Makgaleng quoted in van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p. 119.
[531] Niehaus, *Witchcraft and a Life*, p. 66. This treatment and other violent confrontations with the ANC-aligned Charterist comrades eventually prompted Henry to join the rival Pan-Africanist Congress.
[532] van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p. 122.
[533] Ibid., p. 126.

outside an overtly political scope. Though its young activists interpreted their actions as political, often the broader community did not, and sometimes even SEYO's leadership struggled to exert control over its members. This tension - over what was appropriately political and what was not - is one of the core issues addressed in this section.

At its heart SEYO was an ideological movement, but it struggled to create deep ideological diffusion throughout its ranks, in spite of the political education that was organized through the networks cascading out from the Nchabeleng and other activist households and despite its relationship with CRIC. SEYO's ideology was shaped by local beliefs as well as the political doctrine of the Freedom Charter and the UDF. Its activists were primarily concerned about the struggle against the apartheid system, but within that struggle they articulated grievances against their parents' politically 'timid' generation, and the existence of what they perceived as evil within their communities, typically expressed in the form of witches.

For a period of two months in 1986, the youth of Sekhukhuneland asserted themselves in opposition to the authority of their parents' generation, articulating a range of grievances, some of which fell outside the political agenda of the UDF. They protested against traditional rites of initiation, favouring, as Ineke van Kessel has argued, the groupings of their own age sets through the youth movement.[534] This recalls the shared generational consciousness that Bundy argued characterized young people in the townships of the Cape Flats, and which I contend linked student and youth activists in the Northern Transvaal. The youth of Sekhukhuneland also appropriated social and communal functions previously organized by more senior members of the community – chiefs or heads of households. Among these, 'people's courts' – often mass meetings led by a core of youth – were set up to

[534] van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p. 107-8.

arbitrate in domestic and communal disputes in order to 're-establish harmony and to effect reconciliation'.[535] This they typically accomplished at the end of a *sjambok* (whip). In Bushbuckridge, Niehaus has even described three youth comrades taking over a local high school: 'They regularly interjected when the principal spoke in the school assembly, virtually suspended all school rules, and carefully scrutinised the behaviour of teachers [particularly for sexual impropriety]. Comrades whipped one teacher who had sexual relations with a married student, and they left him for dead.'[536]

Yet in addition to this inter-generational conflict, the Sekhukhune Youth Revolt and its fellow comrade movements in other parts of the Northern Transvaal did succeed in making large parts of the region ungovernable by the South African state, and by the Bantustans of Lebowa, Venda, and Gazankulu. The young comrades employed the language of liberation, even within their efforts at social restructuring. In an interview in 1986 Peter Mokaba, who had helped establish the AZASO branch at Turfloop and was now a prominent regional youth leader and member of the UDF's Northern Transvaal executive, said, 'We intend removing tribal chiefs as soon as possible. We have called on them to resign. Our ultimate intention is to allow the people to govern themselves. We have already established people's courts in some areas and are in the process of forming our own militia which will carry out the orders of the courts.'[537] Mokaba's position as a high-profile youth activist involved in the UDF, and his invocation of a language of self-governance by the people, both tie the liberation struggle to the generational upheaval that parts of Sekhukhuneland were experiencing. The struggle against the chiefs and the struggle against the state became intertwined in youth rhetoric, and in this they were at least partially supported by UDF policy: chiefs and tribal

[535] SEYO Activists quoted in van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p. 143.
[536] Niehaus, *Witchcraft and a Life*, p. 64.
[537] *Sunday Times*, 11 May 1986 quoted in van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p. 116.

authorities were often 'equated with Bantustan structures' and the National Working Committee of the UDF resolved in 1986 that they 'should be replaced with democratic organisations'.[538] The youth were successful, at least temporarily, in displacing the old authorities. Apel and GaNkoane, the centre of SEYO activity and once heavily policed by both Lebowa and South African police, became no-go areas for law enforcement during the revolt.

But in early April 1986 the uprising came to an end, after a rash of witch-killings over the course of one week. In Apel and GaNkoane alone, thirty-two people were burned alive.[539] In a similar usurpation of traditional mechanisms of arbitration, the youth dispensed with consulting *dingaka*[540] about witches' guilt, and instead adopted a sort of mob justice to purge the villages of Sekhukhune of the perceived evil. They used the necklacing method, which had been adopted from the urban township revolts where it was a common tactic for punishing suspected *impimpis,* informers or collaborators with the apartheid state. There was sometimes conflation between these political accusations (which were rarely specific) and the more traditional activities of witches (which were much more often specific): bewitching people and enchanting zombies for economic gain and prosperity, for example. In Venda, suspected witches were often accused of selling traditional medicine, or muti, as a form of protection to members of the homeland government. Van Kessel has argued that in Sekhukhuneland witch-hunting represented an attempt to 'construct a new moral community' and to supplant the failures of traditional structures and older generations. Though the youth

[538] van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p. 80.
[539] van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams;* Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power, and Politics*; Author's interview with Maurice Nchabeleng (a).
[540] *Dingaka* is the plural of *ngaka*, the BaPedi/Northern SeSotho word for a diviner or 'witch doctor', a person who employs techniques like bone throwing and 'medicine' to identify witches and performs other social functions in mediating the unknown realm in which witches are perceived to exist. It is analogous to the Zulu *sangoma*, and the TshiVenda *vhangome*.

may have perceived their innovations as building a new moral community, their legitimacy did not extend beyond the group itself. I contend the new moral community was a hybrid of principles gleaned from the liberation struggle and local systems of belief. As with the people's courts and coerced political activism, which parents and elders saw as a usurping of social power, the youth were overlaying their social activism with political justifications. The new 'moral community' of youth prized education and activism over age and status, but it also remained deeply concerned about the power of evil within communities. Similar attacks spread throughout the Northern Transvaal, to Gazankulu and Venda, as well as to other parts of Lebowa.[541]

Just after the killings in Sekhukhuneland, in April and May of 1986 similar purges began to take hold of the villages around Bushbuckridge. Young comrades, led by the Brooklyn Youth Organisation, 'attacked more than 150 suspected witches in Mapulaneng [a district of the Bushbuckridge area near the Lebowa-Gazankulu border] killing at least 36.'[542] Niehaus has noted that in the majority of these cases, though young men did the actual witch-hunting, adults had often made the accusations beforehand. Many of the targeted victims of the hunts had previously been accused or suspected of being witches. In one case, one of those executed had previously been accused at the local chief's *kgoro* (court) of bewitching children, but had been acquitted. The retrial, of sorts, of such previous accusations is another example of young comrades usurping the social function of village elders. It also echoes youth frustrations with older generations' failure to combat evil in their midst: this associated and sometimes conflated their inability to excise witches from their communities with their cooperation with or impotence in the face of apartheid repression. Interestingly, Niehaus

[541] N.V. Ralushai *et al*., *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Witchcraft Violence and Ritual Murders in the Northern Province of South Africa,* (Pretoria, 1996).
[542] Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power and Politics*, p. 149.

points out that this power may not have been taken from adults entirely unwillingly: 'By delegating this responsibility [of witch hunting] to youth, adults could sustain anonymity and preserve their moral integrity.'[543] But for youths in Bushbuckridge, as for the comrades of Sekhukhuneland who ran people's courts, appropriating these social functions actually enhanced their own legitimacy as arbiters and enforcers of moral good in their communities, at least in their own self-perception.

In Venda, in the far northeast of the Northern Transvaal, witch-hunts began slightly later – around 1990 – but they followed remarkably similar patterns to what had happened in Sekhukhuneland and Bushbuckridge. Young comrades who identified themselves with the liberation struggle and the ANC through the vehicle of local youth congresses had undertaken to purge their communities of witches, and in February 1990 the villages of Venda experienced mob attacks very much like those four years earlier in Apel-GaNkoane, Sekhukhuneland and Mapulaneng, Bushbuckridge. The mobs were led predominantly by young men; in one trial of thirteen defendants, who had pursued and attacked three accused witches in the village of Ha-Maduwa, most were in their late teens.[544] They were inspired and mobilized by the change sweeping through South Africa, by the campaign for ungovernability in the townships, and by the liberation movements, to whom they were self-referential, singing freedom songs and often claiming membership of Charterist youth congresses. These youth were moved by generational power shifts, and by the legal and social marginalization of traditional authorities (chiefs and *vhangome* or diviners).

[543] Ibid., p. 149.
[544] A. Heffernan, 'The Ralushai Commission and a South African Witch-hunt in Legal and Historical Perspective' (University of Oxford, MSc, 2008), p. 31.

Witch-beliefs were a dynamic and mutable, if violent and divisive, analysis of local authority and expression of political mobilization.[545] The Venda witch-hunts represented a melding of old and new similar to those experienced in other parts of the Northern Transvaal; they arose from the culmination of increasing social and political pressure in South Africa at a particular moment in the last years of apartheid.[546] They articulated concern over the local economic situation, which was a failing agricultural economy with a youth bulge (due to rapid increases in population over the previous two decades and the increasing restrictions on recruitment for mining and industrial work), and disaffection with traditional authorities, particularly concern over corruption among chiefs. Unemployment escalated at this period. Moreover, the chronological proximity to Nelson Mandela's release recalled the political change marking all aspects of contemporary South African life, and the use of necklacing associated the comrades with those taking part in township revolts and their 'witch' victims with *impimpi* collaborators. By articulating such contemporary issues through a rhetoric of witch-finding I contend that the young comrades of Venda demonstrated their own version of radical politics and their own search for a new moral order.

Elsewhere I have argued that changes in South African law beginning in the late 19th century resulted in increasing constraints on the legal space in which witchcraft accusations could be adjudicated.[547] With the passage of the Witchcraft Suppression Act (No. 2) in 1895, and the Witchcraft Suppression Act (No. 3) in 1957, both colonial and apartheid authorities made incursions into the realm of controlling the threat of witches (and threats against them). A product of this legal expansion was diminished space and authority for more traditional measures of addressing witchcraft. Chiefs and *vhangome,* who had previously played central

[545] Heffernan, 'The Ralushai Commission', pp. 33-4.
[546] Ibid.
[547] Heffernan, 'The Ralushai Commission'.

roles in arbitrating witchcraft accusations, were marginalized as these traditional processes were made illegal. A central argument of my masters thesis is that this marginalization of traditional structures made witchcraft uniquely compelling to young comrades during the generational upheaval of the late 1980s: 'The extra-legality of witchcraft made it an ideal tool of rhetoric for the marginalised youth of Venda, Lebowa, and Gazankulu, and enabled the witch-hunts to function both as an expression of traditional beliefs and of dissatisfaction with the state, in a modern struggle for political legitimacy.'[548] I extend that argument here to suggest that traditional structures associated with the chieftaincy – like the mechanisms for addressing witchcraft - were also undermined by the homeland system. As I will demonstrate through analysis of several witch-hunts in Venda in 1990, the association of chieftaincy structures with homeland representatives marked chiefs and headmen as impotent and ineffectual, and was used as a justification for young men to usurp their authority to identify and punish witches.

The events that unfolded on the evening of 21 March 1990 at Ha-Maduwa, a village to the south of the Venda capital at Thohoyandou, began innocuously enough with a gathering of local youths in the yard of the Madihadzuli Primary School. Although the meeting was relatively formally convened (as word of it passed by mouth among the villagers), and a crowd of approximately one hundred people turned up, its explicit purpose was unclear before it started.[549] Though this was the thirtieth anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, no one mentioned that as a reason for the meeting. One participant professed to be under the impression that it was to be a meeting about football, and other witnesses claimed to have

[548] Ibid., pp. 50-1.
[549] Supreme Court of Venda: Case No. CC 36/91, p. 194. [SANA]

turned up not knowing what to expect.[550] This may have been a strategy to prove their own innocence, but the lack of articulation of an overtly political reason for the meeting (like the Sharpeville anniversary) is also revealing of the lack of diffusion of political ideology amongst the group. Once the meeting got underway, however, it became evident that at least a small group of the young men had a particular agenda in mind. Speakers began to address the crowd about the necessity of burning people who were allegedly practising witchcraft (*vhuloi*) in the area. According to the testimony of a witness, Michael Mudau, at the trial of thirteen of these young men (as related in the final judgment by Justice Van der Byl), 'Accused no.3 […] said they should go and burn the people practising witchcraft and particularly referred to Petrus Maimela as a person who must be so burned. Thereafter accused no. 12 […] addressed the meeting and said that his neighbour, the deceased [Nyamavholisa Maduwa], should be burned.'[551] Another witness, Thomas Matshivha, reported a sense of urgency amongst the young men at the meeting, noting particularly that he had heard accused no. 3 'saying that time was running out and that they must go'.[552]

This method of public and popular judgment was highly unusual for witchcraft cases in Venda; like the cases of Sekhukhuneland and Bushbuckridge it was typical for accusations to be made by men of standing within the community, formally to the local chief. This shift was enabled by the exclusion of the subject of witchcraft from the realm of legitimate authority, but it also reflected disillusionment with the structures in which that authority was vested.[553] By the time the group in Ha-Maduwa was on their way to the kraal of Petrus Maimela, they were linking their cause to disgruntlement with the inability of the local

[550] Supreme Court of Venda: Case No. CC 36/91, p. 203, 211. [SANA]
[551] Supreme Court of Venda: Case No. CC 36/91, p. 199. [SANA]
[552] Ibid., p. 199. [SANA]
[553] Heffernan, 'The Ralushai Commission', p. 50.

headman to address their concerns about witchcraft. Samuel Magoro, who met and joined the crowd on the road, explained,

> Yesterday we were from the headman and we were assaulted severely and that is why today we are deciding to burn the witches because the headman didn't accept our grievances.[554]

Those grievances were that people in the village were dying; the suspected cause was witchcraft, but the local headman had failed to execute his duty and bring in a *mungome* to identify witches, though money had been collected to do so. In his application for amnesty to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Magoro also accused the local headmen of corruption – misappropriating the funds that had been collected to consult the *mungome*. Such explanations offer another layer of nuance to the actions of the young people of Ha-Maduwa; attempts had been made to act through the traditional channels, but in the face of their failure – and indeed, the suspicion that those very structures were complicit in the problem – the youth appropriated the task of identifying witches and restoring moral order to the community by purging it of them.

As I have suggested, this process was an unusual departure from local traditional methods of dealing with suspected witches among the Venda. When a person suspected the bewitchment of him/herself or others, it was usual to seek a *mungome* from sufficiently far enough away to ensure impartiality, who would determine whether bewitchment had occurred, and if so, who the culprit was.[555] The system strove for fairness to all parties and included fail-safes to discourage false accusations: it was customary for cattle to be placed in the kraal of the chief by both the accused and the accuser as a sign of good faith before visiting a diviner for

[554] Truth and Reconciliation Commission Amnesty Hearings, Mutshutshu Samuel Magoro, Thohoyandou, 10 May 2000. Case AM2714/96. [SAHA SABCTRC]
[555] A. Kirkaldy, *Capturing the Soul: The Vhavenda and the Missionaries* (Pretoria, 2005), p.189.

judgment. Whoever lost the judgment forfeited their cattle to the injured party.[556] The accused also had recourse to appeal the initial decision: 'Anyone accused of *vhuloi* had the right to defend themselves before the council and the right to demand a second opinion from another *mungome*.'[557] This was traditionally the case among the Vhavenda during the latter half of the nineteenth century, as noted in Alan Kirkaldy's work on missionaries in the area, and it shares commonalities with later ethnographic studies of the nearby Tsonga and Northern Sotho speaking people, who inhabit Bushbuckridge and Sekhukhuneland.[558]

In light of such traditional, measured recourse in cases of alleged bewitchment, the witch-hunts in Venda in 1990 (and in other parts of the Northern Transvaal) take on even more significance. They mark a distinct departure from the traditional use of diviners, *dingaka* and *vhangome*, to adjudicate on matters of witchcraft. These practices had become constrained by the institution and restriction of witchcraft laws and their enforcement by the middle of the twentieth century. But they were also predicated on trust in the structures of chiefly rule by the people, which had been deeply damaged - in the eyes of the youth, at least - by association with the homeland government. Delius and Lekgoathi point to similar erosion of trust in chiefs over the first half of the twentieth century in other areas of the Northern Transvaal: Sekhukhuneland and Zebediela, respectively.[559]

In an application for amnesty to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Samuel Magoro, one of the Ha-Maduwa defendants, drew a direct line between witchcraft and the Venda

[556] Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power and Politics,* p.138.
[557] A. Kirkaldy, *Capturing the Soul,* p.189.
[558] See H-A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe,* (New Hyde Park, NY, 1962).
on the Tsonga during the 1940s, or E.J. Krige and J.D. Krige, *The Realm of a Rain-Queen: a Study of the Pattern of Lobedu Society* (London, 1965) on the Lobedu during the 1920s.
[559] Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle*, pp. 71-2, 115-7, 218; Lekgoathi, 'The United Democratic Front in Lebowa and KwaNdebele', p. 631.

homeland government: 'those witches take medicine and give it to the people in the highest office in the [Venda] government so that they could remain intact, their place, and then they cannot be removed.'[560] He further complained that structures of the chieftaincy were collaborating with the government and preventing 'the people' (led by the Maduwa Youth Congress) from addressing the problem presented by witches. Similarly, in her own amnesty hearing, Mmabatho Mulaudzi, a youth activist from the nearby village of Shinga, accused the Venda government of using ritual murder:

> Because something had to be done with that government, I started engaging myself in a campaign to explain to the youth about the situation at the time, political situation at the time. I think I indicated to them as to how the then government was oppressing us, the manner in which they were engaged in ritual killings, nepotism, killings of the comrades who were in support of politics and also the perpetual detention of those who used to give us political advise [sic].[561]

Magoro and Mulaudzi both associate the homeland government with the use of forms of *vhuloi* – muti and ritual murder – but they also, as Mulaudzi's statement makes clear, associated these transgressions with the very specific political circumstances of the time. In the perception of youth activists, the government used witchcraft to oppress political expression in intangible ways.

Another significant change is the adoption of witchcraft accusation - which had traditionally been the province of village elders in conjunction with chiefs - as a tool by young, politicized men (and in the very unusual case of Mulaudzi, a young woman).[562] Among the Ha-Maduwa defendants, all were male and the oldest was 35 years old at the time of the commission of

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[560] Truth and Reconciliation Commission Amnesty Hearings, Mutshutshu Samuel Magoro, Thohoyandou, 10 May 2000. Case AM2714/96. [SAHA SABC TRC]
[561] Truth and Reconciliation Commission Amnesty Hearings, Mmabatho Popular Mulaudzi, Thohoyandou, 10 May 2000. Case AM3280/96. [SAHA SABC TRC]
[562] Niehaus has written about the prominent role of low-level and loosely affiliated ANC comrades in the witch-hunts. He has argued persuasively that this is a 'response to their marginality in the new political context' in the 1990s. (Niehaus, *Witchcraft, Power, and Politics*.)

the crimes. His fellows, however, were far younger, averaging in their late teens and the youngest being only fourteen at the time the crimes were committed.

Despite this unorthodox method of accusation, the claims of the organizers were unchallenged by the crowd they addressed. This may point to the fact that, as Van Kessel has argued in the case of Sekhukhuneland, the young comrades had created a new moral community and achieved some legitimacy through it, but it is equally important to remember that that authority was maintained through violent force. To challenge the mob would have been taking a great risk.

As a group they left the schoolyard and proceeded to the kraal of Petrus Maimela, the first accused witch, collecting other community members along the way so that they arrived at Maimela's kraal with 200 or 300 people. Upon finding Maimela away, the crowd set the buildings in his kraal alight, and, left to seek him elsewhere. After they were unable to locate Petrus Maimela, the original object of their intended burning, the crowd proceeded to the kraal of Andries Thovhala, who was a *mungome*, in order that he should divine for them the location of Petrus Maimela. Once there, one of the comrades entered the kraal and asked Thovhala's wife where Thovhala was. After she said that he was still at work, he ordered her to bring the divining bones. She brought them and put them on the mud wall where he poured petrol over them and burned them. Another of the young men poured petrol over the hut and the first set it alight.[563]

It is at this juncture that the crowd seems to have finally given up on locating Petrus Maimela. The seeking out of Thovhala is particularly interesting; it is representative of the line between

[563] Supreme Court of Venda: Case No. CC 36/91, p. 212. [SANA]

vigilante and traditionalist that these young men tried to straddle. In seeking the advice of a *mungome*, and even more basically by choosing to mobilise and organise around a rhetoric of witch purging, they demonstrate an affinity for and claiming of 'traditional culture', and this is supported by Magoro's contention that money was gathered to consult a diviner. But by manipulating those same cultural norms and – in a very tangible and symbolic way – by burning the divining bones of Andries Thovhala when they were unable to put them to use, it is evident that they were not only reclaiming aspects of such cultural practices, but reshaping them as well.

In its third attempt to find a suspected witch, the crowd moved to the kraal of Nyamavholisa Maduwa, an elderly woman. They found her at home, and the crowd chased and set her alight as she ran from her kraal into the mealie fields. The use of fire to kill Nyamavholisa Maduwa recalls the technique of necklacing that other witch-hunts had borrowed from townships. Her death points clearly to the discontent with local power structures that I have already described: she was the widow of a local headman and as such represented the very authorities that the youth of the village felt had failed to address the issue of witchcraft. As explained in one of the hearings for amnesty for her death, 'the institution [of headmanship] is in the family and it's not vested in a person. That authority will still continue because people will continue bringing their problems to [her] family which means in this particular case, after the death of her husband, she's now occupied that position as pedi headman of the area […].'[564]

[564] Truth and Reconciliation Commission Amnesty Hearings, Salani Phillemon Baloyi, Thohoyandou, 10 May 2000. Case AM2534/96. [SAHA SABC TRC]

But while some youth in the Northern Transvaal were fashioning a 'new moral community' and reshaping traditional practices, the organisations to which they publicly associated themselves were scrambling to address this perceived atavistic embarrassment. Both the UDF and ANC structures in the province spoke out against the witch killings as un-modern, and as unacceptable in relation to the political struggle. During the Sekhukhuneland youth revolt of 1986 Peter Nchabeleng held a meeting with SEYO youth to try to convince them to stop attacking accused witches. Richard Sekonya, a leading member of SEYO at the time, describes the struggle of the leadership to control these elements within the youth groups:

> There were certain quarters of young men, particularly in GaNkoane/Apel who took advantage of – you know, now I'm saying people were ready for any action. These young men started mobilizing people around witchcraft, saying there are people that they said, they alleged, they are witches. And then all hell broke loose; they burned many people. But you see what the police at the time did was try to link the political struggle with this isolated incident of witch-burning. As a result they harassed everybody, they arrested local people, they tried to link this burning of people with the organisation at the time. And we totally rejected that, because it wasn't anything that was discussed at the formal meetings of the youth formation at the time. I think after it went loose we called communities, we said no, no, no – this is not a program of the ANC. This has nothing to do with the ANC.[565]

Sekonya alludes to the fact that the police were drawing direct links between the witch-hunting violence and the political struggle, and though he acknowledges that the violence was perpetrated by members of SEYO, he is also at pains to note that it was not sanctioned by the leadership of the group. In fact the SEYO leadership struggled, and largely failed, to quash the streak of witch-hunting in their midst – although it abated in particular locations after reaching a crescendo.

[565] Author's interview with Richard Sekonya.

In Venda as well, formal political structures struggled to control the reactions of the young comrades. Godfried Dederen, an ANC supporter and lecturer at the University of Venda at the time, recalls:

> They [the ANC's armed wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*] couldn't stop it. That was terrible, man. A really depressing time, 1990. The one hand, you know it's [liberation is] done – it's just a matter of a few years – and on the other hand now they're really spoiling it completely, tarnishing the whole liberation thing by burning [witches].[566]

In the cases of Venda, Bushbuckridge, and Sekhukhuneland, the outbreaks of witch-hunting stopped when the police and army cracked down and reasserted control over the areas. In Sekhukhuneland, where the youth had achieved some degree of success in establishing 'liberated zones' this was a major political setback. The security police arrested much of the SEYO leadership: Peter Nchabeleng was taken on the night of 11 April 1986. He died in police custody twelve hours later in the Schoonoord Police Station, having been severely beaten. The police interventions also ended the reign of youth in Sekhukhuneland and SEYO as an organisation. The leadership who had avoided arrest fled into hiding in the nearby mountains and even on campus at Turfloop.[567] Maurice Nchabeleng and SEYO's vice chair, Silas Mabotha, were eventually arrested at Turfloop in June 1986.

The sweeping arrests and crackdowns accomplished what neither Nchabeleng and the UDF leadership, nor the ANC and MK, had been able to do: by and large witch killings in the Sekhukhuneland area subsided, though of course witch-beliefs persisted and the pattern of killings erupted a few years later in Venda. As Niehaus argues,

> For villagers witchcraft has less to do with civilization and African identity than with their experiences of misery, marginalization, illness, poverty, and insecurity in South Africa's overcrowded former Bantustan areas.[568]

[566] Author's interview with Godfried Dederen, Thohoyandou, 4 September 2012.
[567] van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams,* p. 129.
[568] Niehaus, 'Witchcraft in the New South Africa', p. 193.

It is also most often articulated in local, personal situations. Witchcraft is a phenomenon rooted in the complex maze of personal relationships, and the crimes that witches are accused of committing are most often crimes of familiarity; accused witches and their victims are rarely strangers – they are family, friends, and neighbours. As such, it is a phenomenon that has most currency in the social networks of tightly knit communities. Ashforth argues persuasively that these communities need not be rural, though this has typically been a bias in the literature on witchcraft,[569] but whether in Soweto or Sekhukhuneland, accusations of witchcraft almost always arise in the context of local, personal relationships. This, perhaps, is one reason that it found political currency in villages at the same time that politics in the Northern Transvaal became more locally rooted and moved beyond institutions like Turfloop.

Factional Violence: AZASO vs. AZASM, and Turfloop in the 1980s

The violence experienced during the comrade movements in the rural villages of the Transvaal was not isolated. As has been mentioned, in its form and language it sometimes mimicked the violence that was sweeping South Africa's urban townships during the township revolts. It also found a counterpoint nearer to home, on campus at Turfloop where violent confrontations between students and the police, and between differing student groups, were becoming more frequent and more severe. As I argued in chapter three, the 1974 Viva-FRELIMO rally on campus marked an important turning point in Turfloop students' confrontation with both their administration and with the security police. Prior protests, though tense, had never resulted in physical violence, and the willingness of the police to use force against protesting students – and of the students to return it by throwing rocks and

[569] Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy*, pp. 20-1.

bottles – brought unprecedented aggression to the relationship between the two groups. A decade later, the situation had changed drastically.

By the mid 1980s Turfloop was under the administration of its second black rector, Professor P.C. Mokgokong. His selection, after the sudden death of Rector William Kgware in 1980, came after an outcry from the student body and black academic staff when it was mooted that the 'controversial [white] rightwing academic registrar' Professor J. C. Steenkamp might take over as rector.[570] In protest at the very suggestion, 'the entire black academic staff threatened to resign' and insisted Kgware be replaced by a new black rector.[571] Mokgokong, a senior member of Kgware's administration, got the post. He inherited a campus in some conflict, and faced early challenges with the student body over the detention of two female students in late 1980 and celebrations of Republic Day in 1981.

On-campus protest had become a hallmark of life at Turfloop, and this continued through the late 1970s and early 1980s, but by 1985 life on campus was coloured by a marked increase in violent forms of expression.[572] Early that August 'a heavy police contingent arrived on campus and conducted a three-hour raid' which resulted in the detention of three students.[573] Within days more raids, arrests, and confiscation of documents followed. '"The whole campus was surrounded by Lebowa police while the SAP [South African Police] and members of the Security Police searched the residences," the SRC said.'[574] One of the raids left one student in hospital, fearing he might lose the sight of one eye; another was injured in

[570] 'Turf Prof to Go', *Sunday Times* 20 June c. 1982. [WHP AD1912/258.16]
[571] Ibid.
[572] For brief descriptions of incidents of unrest on Turfloop's campus from 1969-1989, see Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 in Appendix B (pp. 313-15).
[573] 'Students flee boycott campus', *Weekly Mail,* 27 September 1985. [WHP AD1912/258.17]
[574] Ibid.

a police assault allegedly over a poster of a 'semi-naked white model' in his room, and a third sustained a fractured ankle 'after jumping from his third floor room.'[575] Nine more students were detained. A week after the raids, a student was shot and killed on campus, leading to student protests over the inability of controversial and unwanted security guards to ensure student safety while at the university.[576] Less than two weeks later, five students were charged in court with 'pouring acid over a Law lecturer'.[577]

These events speak to the violence that was becoming ever more commonplace on Turfloop's campus in the mid 1980s, most prominently in confrontations between students and police, but also in interpersonal relationships between students (as with Nash Mogane, the student who was shot) and between students and university staff.

Violence also erupted between on-campus political groups in 1985. In late April the student wing of AZAPO, the Azanian Students' Movement (AZASM), held a meeting at Turfloop to discuss its upcoming national convention. The meeting was interrupted when 'a group of students shouting support for the Freedom Charter marched into the hall' carrying an assortment of weapons and 'a fracas broke out'.[578] In the fray several members of AZASM and AZAPO, including the latter's former president (and former Turfloop student and Black Consciousness activist) Lybon Mabasa, were assaulted and later hospitalized. As Mabasa described the incident:

> Thami [Mcerwa, AZASM's vice-president] and I were caught in the toilets. I saw the students chopping and stabbing him. They knocked Thami unconscious and then came for me. They said I had been confusing a lot of people with the Black Consciousness philosophy and

[575] Ibid.
[576] Ibid.
[577] Ibid.
[578] 'Students beat up ex-Azapo leader', Paper unknown, 22 April 1985. [GPP]

> socialism. They beat me up with hammers and stones. I received a knife wound in the arm when I tried to block the attack. They told me to chant 'Mandela'. I refused and they beat me up until I lost consciousness.[579]

The attackers, who were 'shouting support for the Freedom Charter' and sought to make Mabasa chant support for imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela, were members of AZASM's on-campus rival, the Azanian Students' Organisation. (For a full discussion of the founding and divergence of these two organisations, see chapter four.) Such conflicts between members of AZASM and AZASO were increasingly frequent, and even dissuaded some students from joining either group for fear of the violence. Jimmy Mohale, a Turfloop student in 1985 and 1986, later recalled in an interview with Isak Niehaus:

> There were many political organisations at the university and I sympathized with all of them. All of the student organisations fought for liberation, so I could not understand why they were fighting each other. […] The big rivals were AZASO and AZASM. There was no tolerance. At one stage all the AZASM students had to leave our residence because their lives were being threatened. There were about six of them. AZASM then tried to kill my floor-mate – Andrew Dipela – who was a member of AZASO. The ASAZM members came one night to attack Andrew. They broke his door and he had to flee. I did not understand this in-fighting. That is why I never wore a T-shirt of any organisation.[580]

Violent confrontations between supporters of Charterist organisations, like AZASO and the UDF, and supporters of Africanist ones like AZAPO were becoming prevalent beyond Turfloop, as well.[581] A month before the attack on Mabasa and Mcerwa at Turfloop, a UDF affiliate, the Port Elizabeth Youth Congress (Peyco), had forcibly barred local AZAPO members from attending a mass funeral for victims of unrest in Uitenhage, in the Eastern Cape.[582] In the wake of this, '[t]here were attacks and counter attacks, hostages were taken

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[579] Ibid.
[580] Jimmy Mohale, quoted in Niehaus, *Witchcraft and a Life*, p. 58.
[581] Seekings, *The UDF*, p. 146.
[582] 'AZAPO flays UDF action', *Sowetan*, 15 March 1985. [GPP]; It was later revealed that the AZAPO-UDF clashes were sometimes instigated and even framed by the security police. [Truth and Reconciliation

and houses burnt out, and there were assassination attempts on local leaders.'[583] In September of 1985 prominent clergy, including Bishop Desmond Tutu, intervened to start 'peace talks' between AZAPO and the UDF.[584]

The situation at Turfloop was to become even more tense during the following academic year. In June 1986 the South African government issued a state of emergency, granting itself expanded powers. Around 2 o'clock in the morning on 12 June, the first day of the state of emergency, Turfloop students were awakened by 'the police accompanied by a large contingent of soldiers' conducting raids on student rooms in the hostels and confiscating 'subversive' materials, including the SRC constitution. They also arrested people who were using Turfloop as a haven from the police, hiding amongst the students, among them Maurice Nchabeleng and Silas Mabotha, two of the SEYO leadership. In the course of these raids, '[s]ome students were *sjambokked* and others were bitten by dogs.' According to some reports as many as 200 students were initially detained, while the majority of other students left campus.[585] Several days later the university was officially closed.[586] When Turfloop reopened weeks later in late July, however, the situation had not improved; police and soldiers remained on campus, and students boycotted the first four days of lectures in protest, demanding the unconditional release of those students still in detention, and the removal of security forces from campus. Rather than concede these demands, however, the university administration, under Rector P. Mokgokong, seems to have devolved more authority to the police and army. They went on to oversee registration for the following semester. Students

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Commission Amnesty Hearings, Johan Martin Van Zyl, Port Elizabeth, 23 February 1998, Case 5637/96 [SAHA SABC TRC]]

[583] Seekings, *The UDF*, p. 146.

[584] 'AZAPO smoke peace pipe', *Sowetan*, 5 September 1985. [GPP]

[585] 'Lips are shut tight at Turfloop', *Sowetan*, 5 March 1987. [WHP AD1912/258.17]

[586] 'The situation at the University of the North', undated memo to the South African Council of Churches, c. late September 1986; also 'The Army Occupation of the University of the North (Turfloop) 1986', memo by the Concerned Democratic Students – Turfloop, c. June 1988. [WHP AC623/31.16]

who successfully registered were issued with an ID bearing the emblems of the South African Police, the Lebowa Police, and the South African Defence Force, which had to be produced on demand when on campus.[587] One student group even alleged that the university authorities had so little control over the process that the army and police 'were further given powers to determine who must be admitted or not'[588]. (I have been unable to verify this.) Another student from Atteridgeville, near Pretoria, told a reporter, '[A]uthorities here are an extension of the government. They do as the government tells them and ask no questions. There is no university autonomy; the Sadafs [South African Defence Force] and Lebowa police run the campus, not the constituted staff.'[589]

It is clear in any case that the national state of emergency had the by-product of effectively bringing Turfloop under control of the security forces, either through the complicity or impotence of the university administration. Beginning around September 1986, and lasting through 1989, South African Defence Force (SADF) troops were garrisoned on Turfloop's campus, and played roles in corralling students and ushering them to class, as well as raiding rooms, confiscating banned materials, and disrupting gatherings.

For some students, particularly those who were not overtly political, the presence of the police presented a dilemma. Jimmy Mohale, who recalled the clashes between AZASO and AZASM but was not affiliated to either organisation, greeted the arrival of troops positively: '[The army] protected us and escorted us to class. The army even sent us "Good Luck for the Exams" cards, and the soldiers monitored the exams. There was ambiguity. I wanted them

[587] 'The situation at the University of the North', undated memo to the South African Council of Churches, c. late September 1986. [WHP AC623/31.16]
[588] 'The Army Occupation of the University of the North (Turfloop) 1986', memo by the Concerned Democratic Students – Turfloop, c. June 1988. [WHP AC623/31.16]
[589] 'The alternative university', *Sunday Times*, 8 November 1987. [WHP AD1912/258.16]

there because I wanted my degree. I wanted them to protect us.'[590] But though Mohale initially saw the soldiers and police as providing protection from the violence that had swept through campus, he also objected to their use of violence against the students, and came to decide that the occupation actually caused more insecurity than it prevented:

> The police caused more shit and they added fuel to the fire. They came onto campus to shoot people, not to police crime. The situation was almost like a concentration camp. […] The police once dispersed a gathering of students and randomly started firing at the students. They shot and killed one student as he was mounting the fire escape steps of our residence. […] When he died I wondered why the life of a black person should be so cheap. I could not understand why the campus security allowed the police onto our campus.[591]

As Mohale alludes, the university had allowed the police and soldiers onto the campus; in fact, Rector Mokgokong had enlisted them to control student protests over registration in the winter of 1986. But in doing so, the university administration had, perhaps, gotten more than they bargained for. By abdicating power and responsibility over some of the daily running of the university – registration, issuing IDs, controlling students' class attendance, and even monitoring exams – the administration helped to enshrine a kind of aggressive force into those procedures, making overt violence not only permissible but common on Turfloop's campus. Students describe being 'stormed' by police if they gathered in the open square between buildings[592], and individual instances of violence like those described above continued to be the norm on campus through the end of the decade.

[590] Jimmy Mohale quoted in Niehaus, *Witchcraft and a Life*, p. 61.
[591] Jimmy Mohale quoted in Niehaus, *Witchcraft and a Life*, p. 61
[592] 'The alternative university', *Sunday Times,* 8 November 1987. [WHP AD1912/258.16]

Conclusion

In this chapter I've argued that the period of the early 1980s marked an unprecedented regionalization of student and youth politics, as well as an ideological shift back to Charterism, and that critical groups in these models arose in the rural northern Transvaal.

With the advent of COSAS, in 1979 Charterism once again became the founding ideology of a student group in South Africa, the first time it had been so since the banning of the ANC Youth League in 1960. This ideological shift coalesced around the breakaway of AZASO from AZAPO, and finally can be seen to have reached fruition in the Education Charter Campaign, in which COSAS and AZASO collaborated with white liberal organs to campaign for education reforms based on the ANC's Freedom Charter. The trend to Charterism was more than the result of a single factor – it happened incrementally, spurred by the presence of some ANC organizers like Joe Gqabi in Soweto, and by the ANC's superior exile organisation and ability to absorb new recruits, but it did not fully begin to take hold until the Black Consciousness Movement had been crippled by state repression and its own failures of organisation, both within South Africa and in exile. The growth of Charterism in student politics was a combination of germinating ideas planted by ANC activists, and the space that the absence of the fully-fledged BCM provided for those ideas to flourish.

The founding of COSAS in 1979 marked a shift back towards Charterism after a decade of student politics dominated by Black Consciousness, but it also brought the struggle more effectively to the local village level than any of its predecessors had previously done. No longer was Turfloop the only centre of resistance in the Northern Transvaal. Ephraim Mogale's work organizing youth groups and politicizing existing student bodies across the

region culminated in his founding of the Congress of South African Students, and his later imprisonment. COSAS became a major force in national student politics, bringing the struggle to classrooms across South Africa. What's more, its model inspired the incorporation of non-student youths into the political struggle through the establishment of youth organisations in villages throughout the region in the mid 1980s. Analysis of these organisations, like the Sekhukhune Youth Organisation and others, demonstrates some of the difficulties that this expansion of youth politics faced – notably in establishing discipline over ideology and political practices among members. Political violence became enmeshed with generational disputes, economic discontent, and close social relationships, erupting in witch-hunts by young men in Sekhukhuneland, Bushbuckridge, and Venda. But nonetheless youth congresses like SEYO brought the anti-apartheid struggle to a generation of rural students and youths who would have been largely neglected just a decade earlier. The period from 1979-1986 marks the most significant period of expansionism for local student politics of the anti-apartheid struggle.

But the latter part of the 1980s also brought about widespread violence, often as a by-product of the increased regionalization – and weakened hierarchy – of student and youth politics. The witch-hunts that swept Sekhukhuneland, Bushbuckridge, and Venda, are examples of the way that politically couched violence was used to reorient social systems in many villages and districts. At Turfloop violence came to define the way that students interacted with staff, with the security forces, and with one another. With the garrisoning of troops on campus, aggressive force became routine at the University of the North during the last years of the 1980s.

Increased localization, then, brought about greater variety in the expression of political activism among youth and students - incorporating cosmology like witchcraft – and brought new actors to the struggle, but it also failed to exert organisational discipline over its new comrades, which would be a challenge for youth political organizers into the next decade.

Chapter 6:

The ANC Youth League Reconstituted: Mokaba, Malema, and Youth Politics in the New Limpopo

Introduction

The mid-1980s were a critical period for Charterist youth organisations across South Africa. The rapid growth of local youth congresses in schools and villages discussed in chapter five resulted in unprecedented expansion of the movement amongst secondary school students and non-student youth alike, against the background of repressive states of emergency imposed by the South African government from July 1985 to March 1986 and again from June 1986 to June 1987. Amidst this second state of emergency in 1987, the birth of the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) made important strides in uniting all the Charterist youth groups under a single banner. Though many of these had been allied through their mutual affiliation to the UDF, SAYCO provided the first opportunity to organise around the common identity of youth.

Meanwhile, on university campuses like Turfloop, Charterism was becoming the dominant political ideology amongst student activists. The Azanian Students' Organisation (AZASO) was consolidating its position against its Africanist and Black Consciousness-adherent competitors, most notably the Azanian Students' Movement (AZASM). As Saleem Badat and Shaun Johnson have each argued, by 1986 AZASO was characterized by high levels of 'organisational confidence'[593]and a renewed impulse toward ideological purity[594]. By late

[593] S. Johnson, '"The Soldiers of Luthuli": Youth in the Politics of Resistance in South Africa' in S. Johnson (ed.) *South Africa: No Turning Back*, (Basingstoke, 1988), pp. 109-10.
[594] S. Badat, *Black Student Politics: Higher Education and Apartheid from SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990* (Pretoria, 1999), p. 261.

1986 AZASO leaders took the decision to change their organisation's name to the South African National Students' Congress (SANSCO) to bring it more firmly into the Charterist fold by including congress in the name, and to jettison the last nominal tie to their Black Consciousness roots: the use of 'Azania' rather than 'South Africa'. As we have seen in the debates around the naming of COSAS, naming was an important aspect for any youth organisation and it was the first and most public declaration of a group's political affiliations. In the case of AZASO, the renaming to SANSCO sought to do just that, but it did not signify any changes in policy, which had already been consolidated after its break with AZAPO in 1980. In fact, the change was explicitly in name only. In an article for the *Weekly Mail* at the time of the name change, Shaun Johnson wrote, 'The significance of the decision to change AZASO's name does not lie in any alteration of the organisation's ideology, structure, approach – or, indeed, prominent personnel. The content of the organisation will not change at all.'[595] AZASO had been a firmly Charterist organisation since its break with AZAPO; now its name finally reflected those affiliations.[596] That the decision to change its name came so long after their shift in ideology is interesting. By late 1986 AZASO was the senior Charterist student organisation in the country; and after the 1985 banning of COSAS, it was also the most prominent. Its change of name came at a time when it was consolidating this position and its role on university campuses. But a great deal of student and youth organisation continued to exist outside AZASO's scope: with younger students and with non-student youth. As discussed in the previous chapter, these young people were frequently mobilized through local youth congresses. When the matter of uniting them arose, it was to be the new SAYCO, rather than its student-run counterparts, that took the lead.

[595] S. Johnson, 'AZASO becomes SANSCO', *Weekly Mail*, 18 December 1986, quoted in Badat, *Black Student Politics*, p. 261.
[596] For a complete discussion of this break see chapter four (pp. 181-5).

This chapter will consider the role played by the South African Youth Congress in uniting disparate Charterist youth organisations under one, sometimes contentious, banner, and the ways in which that structure became critical to the early formation of the ANC Youth League in 1990. In particular, it considers the impact of Peter Mokaba as president, and of regional structures in the northern Transvaal on the SAYCO-ANC Youth League transition. Finally, it juxtaposes the legacy of Mokaba and his successor as president of the Youth League, Julius Malema, as two of Limpopo's most famous sons, to reveal something about the state of youth politics in the province.

The South African Youth Congress and the Re-building of the ANC Youth League

Just as groups like AZASO and COSAS gained traction with students and young people, they began to experience harsh government repression under the states of emergency in 1985 and 1986. COSAS was banned outright in 1985, and other groups and leaders were increasingly harassed by the security forces. Despite this repression, overall the period from 1985 to 1987 was one of important growth and development for Charterist youth political structures. In March 1987, perhaps the most significant change yet affected youth congresses across the country: the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) was launched. As its president Peter Mokaba said days after the launch, 'We have been able to launch Sayco despite numerous roadblocks, police harassment and the use of the vigilantes. That is because Sayco is a direct product of long suffering – politically, socially and economically.'[597] It was also the product of the already extant broad network of local and regional youth congresses across South Africa: SAYCO operated primarily as a coordinating body for these disparate youth congresses that had emerged during the 1980s. It adopted the ideals of the Freedom Charter,

[597] Peter Mokaba, quoted in 'A toughened prison veteran at just 25', *Weekly Mail*, 3 April 1987. [GPP]

aligned itself with the ANC (even seeking the approval of the party in exile), and worked to unite the disparate, localized congresses that had come to characterize youth politics across the country. In this SAYCO was different from the student and youth movements that had preceded it: it gathered together a vast constituency that had already organized itself into units. With this foundation, SAYCO started from a position of demographic strength: initially it comprised ten regions with '1200 affiliates, over half a million signed-up members, and a support base of two million', according to Jeremy Seekings.[598] Estimates of SAYCO's size vary widely, due to the lack of consistent record-keeping and membership requirements among its affiliates, but even the smallest estimates put its numbers in the hundreds of thousands. Uniting this vast base around a common ideology and exerting organisational cohesion and discipline was to be the primary challenge for SAYCO's new executive committee.

Peter Mokaba, a former Robben Island prisoner from the Northern Transvaal, who had been politicized during the 1976 uprising, led the new organisation. Mokaba was born in Pietersburg in January 1958, but soon after his family was forced to move 30 kilometres away to the peri-rural township of Mankweng, when their township of New Look Location was declared a black spot in a whites-only area. The Mokabas lived in the poorest area of Mankweng. In Peter Mokaba's own words,

> In Mankweng we lived as squatters in shacks, and moved from one yard to the next in the township. The township was divided into three sections. Baruting was where NGK [*Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* or Dutch Reformed Church] students, officials, and priests lived. Then there was Lecturer's Estate – popularly known as Malectshareng – where lecturers from the University of the North, teachers, nurses and other middle-class people lived. Then there was a bantustan, which is where the poor lived. My family established itself there.[599] [For clarification, all of Mankweng lies in what

[598] Seekings, *The UDF*, p. 210.
[599] K. Mamaila, 'Mokaba's deathbed memories', *The Star*, 13 June 2002. [GPP]

was the Lebowa Bantustan at the time; what Mokaba refers to here is a nicknamed section of the township.]

Young Peter Mokaba attended a variety of primary schools before graduating into Mankweng's Hwiti High School in the early 1970s.[600] It was at Hwiti that he first became involved in politics. The school had a history of political involvement through its close proximity to the University of the North. It was not unusual for activists from the university to influence and politicize Hwiti students through political schools and programmes both on and off campus. While a teacher there in the 1960s and 1970s, Winifred Kgware, the first president of the Black People's Convention and wife of Turfloop Rector William Kgware, exposed her students to anti-apartheid politics through her links to the University Christian Movement and SASO. Years after Kgware's tenure, political involvement remained a key facet of the school. In a biographical article on Mokaba, Paul Bell has noted that Hwiti 'obviously bred in its students an outspokenness'.[601]

During the 1976 student protests that began in Soweto and spiraled across the country, Mokaba became one of the local leaders of the student movement and helped organize school boycotts in the Northern Transvaal, until police pressure during the uprising forced him into hiding.[602] During this period, Mokaba was inspired primarily by Black Consciousness leaders. In an autobiographical article written shortly before his death in 2002, he identified 'Onkgopotse Tiro and various black consciousness poets as role models'.[603] He was finally arrested on charges of public violence in November of 1977, but was acquitted when all

[600] African National Congress Mission to the United States (April 1994), Peter R. Mokaba Biography. [GPP]
[601] P. Bell, 'Full Yellow Jacket', *Leadership* vol. 16, no. 4 (1997), p. 40. [GPP]
[602] African National Congress Mission to the United States (April 1994), Peter R. Mokaba Biography. [GPP]
[603] T. N'wa Mhangwana and J. Arenstein, 'The guerilla who loved a good waltz', *Mail and Guardian*, 25 June 2004. [GPP]

twenty-eight state witnesses refused to testify against him.[604] Following this incident, both the South African government and the government of Lebowa refused to allow him to re-enroll in school, and Mokaba completed his matric at home in 1978.[605] In 1980 he enrolled at the University of the North, and participated in founding the campus branch of AZASO (which was still affiliated to AZAPO and Black Consciousness), but before the year was out he was expelled for political activities and forced to leave campus after police raids.

Equally interesting are the tales of Mokaba's life that may be at least partially myth. In 1976 and 1977 he infamously fled into the mountains of Lebowa where he hid in the bush and evaded arrest for nearly eighteen months. Residents in Mankweng tell stories of SADF helicopters scouring the area looking for the local hero. In addition, two years separate the end of Mokaba's university career and his next arrest in 1982: he claims to have gone into military training with the ANC's armed wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, in Angola and Mozambique. This is likely true: when he returned to South Africa he was arrested on charges of terrorism, membership of MK, attempting to recruit for the ANC, and having undergone military training.[606] While each of these stories is rooted in truth, they have been expanded and exaggerated, contributing to the myth of Mokaba as another 'Black Pimpernel', the name attributed to Nelson Mandela when he was on the run before his arrest in 1962.

After returning to South Africa, in 1982 Mokaba was detained under section six of the Terrorism Act, was subsequently tried and convicted of furthering the aims of the ANC, and

[604] 'Tussle for leader of the youth', *Weekly Mail*, 12 June 1991. [GPP]; T. N'wa Mhangwana and J. Arenstein, 'The guerilla who loved a good waltz', *Mail and Guardian*, 25 June 2004. [GPP]
[605] African National Congress Mission to the United States (April 1994), Peter R. Mokaba Biography. [GPP]
[606] Ibid.

was sent to Robben Island to begin serving a six year sentence. After a successful appeal and retrial in 1984 reduced his sentence to three years, suspended for five years, Mokaba returned home to the Northern Transvaal in March 1985. By this time the predominant force in student politics had shifted from the Africanism of Black Consciousness to Charterism. AZASO, with which Mokaba had been involved at Turfloop in 1980, had severed its ties with the BC-affiliated AZAPO and dedicated itself to Charterism in 1981. Mokaba's own military training with the ANC prepared him to re-enter a political arena dominated by the ideals of the Freedom Charter. He quickly became involved in the nascent structures of the UDF locally. He also continued to clash with the security police, and was detained three separate times after his return home from Robben Island.[607] Within days of his release from one such detention on a suspended sentence for being in possession of a Marakov pistol Mokaba attended the March 1985 conference of the UDF, which took place at the University of the North.[608] Here the decision was taken to form a regional branch of the UDF that would separate UDF administration of the Northern Transvaal from the urban areas to the south. Peter Nchabeleng, who would later be the patron of the Sekhukhune Youth Organisation, became the regional president of the UDF in the Northern Transvaal, and Mokaba joined the interim regional organizing structure. He went on to become patron of the Mankweng Youth Congress, helped to set up the Mankweng Civic Association, and eventually became the regional publicity secretary for the UDF. In 1986, he became the Education Officer of the Northern Transvaal Youth Congress, which went on to become SAYCO's largest affiliate, with reportedly over 200,000 members in 1988.[609] From late 1986 until its launch in March 1987 he was instrumental in the founding of SAYCO, and became its first president.

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[607] African National Congress Mission to the United States (April 1994), Peter R. Mokaba Biography. [GPP]
[608] S. Gastrow, *Who's Who in South African Politics*, 5th edn (Johannesburg, 1995), p. 194.
[609] 'SAYCO Refuses to Surrender', *South*, 7 April 1988. [GPP]

Talks of founding a national youth organisation began as early as 1985, but the wheels of motion were more fully engaged in mid-1986, when Mokaba and Deacon Mathe, another youth leader, traveled outside South Africa to meet with the ANC leadership in exile to discuss the plans for the new youth body.[610] In Harare, Zimbabwe they discussed direction and political content of the new organisation with the ANC leadership there, arguably linking SAYCO more closely to the ANC than any youth organisation had been since the ANC Youth League, which became defunct after the state banned the ANC as a whole in 1960. The ANC's support may have been motivated by the need to keep South Africa's youth onside and under a semblance of control, as well as the desire to unite groups under the Freedom Charter. The violence that became a key characteristic of the political expression in the mid 1980s is discussed in some depth in the previous chapter. In 1986, under the state of emergency, youth in South Africa's townships and rural villages were rioting to make the country ungovernable. Hugh Macmillan has noted that the ANC in exile had long been concerned about harnessing the political potential of the youth inside South Africa, particularly in the wake of the Soweto uprising. A 1979 presidential report worried that 'we will fritter away the considerable talent of our youth and lose it to reactionary politics and wasting life styles'.[611] Their support for building a national structure to organize youth under a Charterist banner demonstrates that this was still a priority a decade after 1976. Later in 1986 Mokaba, Mathe, and other youth leaders inside South Africa participated in a series of planning meetings for SAYCO: In July 1986, Mokaba became education officer of the interim National Youth Organisation (NYO) at a consultative youth conference in Cape Town. In late October, he organized a workshop in Pretoria under the auspices of the NYO,

[610] Gastrow, *Who's Who,* p. 193.
[611] 'President's draft report', May 1979 (ANCL 1/149/58), quoted in Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years*, p. 136.

which then organized the consultative conference that eventually drafted the SAYCO constitution.[612] The extended process of these consultations was, in part, due to heavy state repression that made it difficult for representatives from the various youth organisations to attend, but Seekings notes that 'the ANC's backing seems to have facilitated progress'.[613] SAYCO's first conference in 1987 was held under quiet, if not precisely secret, conditions. Approximately 250 delegates attended the launch in Cape Town on 28 March. There, Mokaba was unanimously elected president with Rapu Molekane as vice-president, and Ephraim Nkwe as education officer.

The new organisation took an aggressive and sometimes militant line from the outset in their struggle against apartheid. The slogan 'Freedom or death: victory is certain!' which Mokaba claimed to have coined,[614] clearly set out SAYCO's political stance. In this it followed a pattern of increasingly militant protest epitomized by the use of violence under the states of emergency, discussed in chapter five. Whereas COSAS had sheltered, to some degree, under the cover of student and educational issues, SAYCO took its attack to the heart of apartheid politics, challenging policies of detention and execution, and vocally supporting *Umkhonto we Sizwe*.[615] It engaged directly with the ANC in exile, as well as being one of the UDF's largest affiliates.

Though the ANC was not explicitly mentioned in any of SAYCO's founding documents - it was still banned in 1987 and public affiliation would have been dangerous - its imprint is evident on SAYCO's constitution, which advocates adherence to the Freedom Charter and

[612] Gastrow, *Who's Who*, p. 195.
[613] Seekings, *The UDF,* p. 210
[614] M. Gevisser, 'Of politics and hairdressing', *The Weekly Mail,* undated, c. 1995. [GPP]; It is unlikely that Mokaba is the origin of the phrase, but he adapted it for SAYCO's slogan.
[615] SAYCO Pamphlets, c. September 1987 [SAHA ANCYL AL2451]

the Mass Democratic Movement (the alliance between the UDF and COSATU (the Congress of South African Trade Unions)). In their preamble, SAYCO's founders declared themselves dedicated to the creation of 'a free, unitary, non-racial and democratic South African culture'.[616] But SAYCO was also deeply concerned with asserting its independence amidst the swell of liberation organisations of the late 1980s. As I will argue, its emphasis on the non-racialism espoused in the Freedom Charter was mostly nominal; in its demographics and its emphasis on African self-reliance, SAYCO exhibited a streak of Africanism at odds with its declared ethos of Charterism. This marks an important reintegration of Africanism into the mainstream of liberation politics, which had been sidelined in the youth and student movements since the split between AZAPO and AZASO in 1980. The focus on self-reliance can been seen in SAYCO's founding documents. A great deal of its constitution is devoted to spelling out the new organisation's autonomy, stressing that 'The central administration of SAYCO rests in its own decision making structures alone […].'[617], even while affirming SAYCO's connection to other 'fraternal organisations' with which it might share membership:

> Those members who take an active part in fraternal organisations such as civics, organisations of women, workers, students, unemployed and in Fronts and alliances such as the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM); those of us who are in constant contact with the masses of our people and serve in the committees and structures […] have a duty to set an example of loyalty, hard work, iron discipline and zeal in the performance of their duties and are obliged to carry out decisions without endangering the independence of SAYCO.[618]

The tension between SAYCO's autonomy and its place amongst a wide array of movements pushing for democratic change in South Africa shaped the movement. It straddled a constant

[616] SAYCO Constitution, 1.1 Preamble [SAHA Collection AL2457 J7.3.2]
[617] SAYCO Constitution, 2.4 Independence [SAHA Collection AL2457 J7.3.2]
[618] SAYCO Constitution, 2.3 Rights and Duties of Members [SAHA Collection AL2457 J7.3.2]

dilemma between independence and belonging, something that its progeny, the ANC Youth League, would come to inherit.

Indeed, autonomy at all levels, offset by an emphasis on organisational adherence, was an early priority for SAYCO: the youth congresses that affiliated to it retained their autonomy and names at the local level (so, for instance, local branches of the Sekhukhune Youth Organisation, like the one in Apel-GaNkoane, retained that name). However, zonal, regional, and national structures were branded with SAYCO titles and programmes (so the Sekhukhune Youth Organisation as a regional coordinating structure ceased to exist). In an interview with the ANC's journal *Sechaba* Joe Nkuna, a member of the SAYCO executive in 1987, said of organisation at the local level:

> The [SAYCO] street committees are where democracy is exercised fully. We take decisions in the street committees, where everyone is participating. Then to the area structures and to regional structures where those decisions are implemented or are reviewed. But the people who are very important and are playing a leading role are the masses, who are participating from the street committees to the highest levels.[619]

Faye Reagon, another member, agreed about the importance of being connected to the grassroots level: 'SAYCO is not structures "up there". SAYCO is not leaders "up there". SAYCO is street committees and defence committees. In fact the top leaders are streetwise, they are in community organisations; these leaders are in our communities.'[620]

The local congresses were expected to support SAYCO's national and regional structures in so far as 'the National Political Education Programme, National Mass Campaigns, Finance and accounting policy and general political ideology, policies, and programmes are

[619] 'SAYCO Has Shattered the Dream of the Apartheid Regime', *Sechaba,* September 1987, p. 7. [WHP AK2117/G3.8.1.2]
[620] Ibid.

concerned'[621]. But as Nkuna and Reagon imply above, they also 'retain[ed] their autonomy in as far as local campaigns and administration are concerned, respecting the principles of democratic decentralization which allows creativity, initiative, ingenuity and imagination in furtherance and pursuance of SAYCO's Aims and Objectives'.[622] These conflicting imperatives would have real implications for SAYCO's organisational coherence from the national to the local level, and would also influence the trajectory of national youth politics after unbanning in the 1990s.

Though SAYCO protected the autonomy of its Youth Congress affiliates to act in their own local areas, as discussed above, it also began to pursue a national agenda. This focused in part on youths already in detention or prison. In late 1987 they launched their 'Save the South African patriots' campaign, and attempted to pressure the state to release young political prisoners who were on death row.[623] They also collaborated with other organisations, including with COSATU on a rally commemorating the 16 June Soweto Uprising.[624] And SAYCO played a crucial role as one of the UDF's most significant affiliates. A UDF National Working Committee in 1987 described SAYCO as 'inspiration, not only to the hundreds of youth congresses around the country, but to the Front as a whole'.[625]

But the relationship between the UDF's organizing body and one of its largest affiliates did not remain so close for long. The UDF had been dogged by criticisms of being controlled by an internal cabal of activists who dominated resources and decision-making during the

[621] SAYCO Constitution, 2.3 Rights and Duties of Members [SAHA AL2457 J7.3.2]
[622] Ibid.
[623] 'Save the 32 South African Patriots' SAYCO Flyer, undated c. 1987. [SAHA AL2451]
[624] 'Umhla Ka – June 16 Usuku Lwethu', undated c. June 1988 or June 1989. [SAHA AL2446]
[625] UDF National Working Committee 1987 Secretary's Report, quoted in Seekings, *The UDF,* p. 210.

middle of the 1980s, particularly during the states of emergency in 1985 and 1986.[626] According to Steve Tswhete, a UDF chairman from the Border Region of what is now the Eastern Cape, 'They use what is known as CM (control and manipulation) strategy. Because the cabal has resources at its disposal which people in townships do not have, it is easy for them to use these advantages to control organisations.'[627] Along with Tshwete, other high profile figures within the UDF also criticized the cabal, among them Peter Mokaba. Their criticisms were implicitly tinged by race, as the prominence of Indians leaders like Azhar Cachalia and Valli Moosa in the UDF reinforced the idea of a cabal that marginalized African leaders, who were its most vocal opponents. Regionalism was at issue as well; the alleged cabal was based in the regional structures of the UDF in Natal. It also reflected the complicated internal politics within the UDF, which encompassed a wide breadth of ideologies among its activists and organisations, from socialist to capitalist, to Africanist. Increasingly, SAYCO was falling into this last category; though it paid lip service to non-racialism, it was deeply enmeshed in the racialized politics of the UDF, with its leadership firmly in the Africanist camp.

The most vocal critic of the UDF's leadership was Aubrey Mokoena, the former Black Consciousness activist who had become politicized through SASO while at Turfloop. After the Black Consciousness bannings of 1977 Mokoena was detained several times in the late 1970s; in the 1980s he shifted his political allegiances to Charterism and assumed leadership of the Release Mandela Campaign in 1983. Jeremy Seekings has argued that the Release Mandela Campaign acted as 'a base for Charterists who were critical of the UDF's moderation, its reticence about openly championing the Charterist cause, and the prominent

[626] Seekings, *The UDF,* p. 219; van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*, pp. 63-5.
[627] Quoted in 'Inside the UDF's secret society', *City Press,* 25 November 1990. [GPP]

role of TIC [Transvaal Indian Congress] and NIC [Natal Indian Congress] activists.'[628] Mokoena personified this frustration within the UDF. He had been a prominent leader in the organisation and member of the National Executive Committee for most of the 1980s, but he was also part of a fringe within the Front advocating a more aggressively nationalist platform. Seekings has said that Mokoena even initiated plans 'to build a national Charterist network outside and alternative to the UDF.'[629]

Shortly after the ANC was unbanned in February 1990, Mokoena's break with the UDF was essentially complete. In an open letter to the ANC in June 1990, he criticized the UDF for becoming an organisation in itself, rather than a front for other organisations. He strongly advocated for the UDF's dissolution in light of the ANC's unbanning, feeling that the newly unbanned movement could better lead the Charterist cause.[630] But he also addressed some very specific concerns about the so-called cabal within UDF leadership. Mokoena's letter was actually in response to an internal UDF document, which 'allegedly set out the cabal's position on negotiations [to dismantle apartheid], [and which said] Popo Molefe, Terror Lekota, and [Peter] Mokaba had to "be isolated as soon as possible".'[631] All three of these were prominent African leaders in the UDF, and Mokaba in particular had ruffled feathers among the UDF's more moderate leadership with his fiery populist rhetoric at the helm of SAYCO.

By 1990, at the time of Mokoena's letter, SAYCO was the most significant youth structure within South Africa. Though its organisational cohesion had been tested by the pull between

[628] 'Inside the UDF's secret society', *City Press,* 25 November 1990. [GPP]
[629] Seekings, *The UDF,* p. 249.
[630] Seekings, *The UDF,* p. 269.
[631] 'Inside the UDF's secret society', *City Press,* 25 November 1990. [GPP]

national and local priorities, it boasted mass membership and representation in all corners of the country. It had achieved this feat in spite of the state repression that made mass meetings so difficult that, after its initial conference in March 1987, SAYCO did not have a national conference again until the fall of 1990. That second conference also marked the first time that SAYCO's national executive, a group of leaders under close government surveillance, had all met publicly.[632] It was, according to Peter Mokaba in his presidential address, 'a victory congress'.[633] And indeed, 1990 was a victorious year for SAYCO. Not only had the South African government begun the process of unbanning activists like Nelson Mandela and organisations like the ANC, SAYCO had also triumphed in the internal conflict within the UDF.

One such indication of SAYCO's successful sidelining of the UDF was in its cultivation of a relationship with Winnie Mandela in the late 1980s. Upon the February 1990 release of Nelson Mandela, South African papers reported that the couple were guarded by 'fierce Sayco youths': '[Mandela's] personal bodyguard of suited "young lions" prowl about public events, assessing crowd situations, and appear to be armed. They are also much in evidence at the ANC leader's home.'[634] In addition, reports said that 'members of the Mandela household have since been directing media queries to Sayco general-secretary, Rapu Molekane, for comment'.[635] This high level of involvement with the Mandelas brought SAYCO into some conflict with the Mass Democratic Movement's National Reception Committee over who would manage the Mandela press campaign, and even raised questions about the youth organisation's ability to challenge the policies of the MDM and the UDF.

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[632] P. Mokaba, SAYCO National Congress Presidential Address, 1990. [SAHA AL2425]
[633] Ibid., p. 2
[634] 'Fierce Sayco youths guard Mandelas', *The Star,* 17 February 1990. [GPP]
[635] Ibid.

This position had not come about by chance: SAYCO had allied itself closely to Winnie Mandela before her husband's release from prison. Mokaba, in particular, was a political protégé of hers, and the two frequently appeared at public events together. SAYCO as an organisation defended Winnie against criticism from various quarters during the early 1990s.

SAYCO's increasing autonomy from the UDF and proximity to the ANC proved strategic. The ANC succeeded in overtaking the UDF at the forefront of the anti-apartheid struggle. Though many UDF members straddled allegiances to the Front and the newly unbanned ANC, others, like Aubrey Mokoena, shifted their membership entirely. Positions in ANC leadership were key to maintaining influence as apartheid was dismantled. As Seekings has noted, criticism of the cabal by Mokoena and others, 'had some effect' on leadership choices, particularly at the regional level in Natal. '[T]he ANC's new REC [Regional Executive Committee] included many ex-Islanders, and key "cabalists" […] failed to gain election.'[636]

Meanwhile, SAYCO was making the most of the relative freedom that unbanning had given them to operate, and was preparing for the ANC to lead South Africans into a post-apartheid era. The pressing task of the April 1990 conference was to define SAYCO's role in this future. In his presidential address, Mokaba said

> The unbanning of the ANC and the SACP [South African Communist Party] is undoubtedly the most significant development in the history of the liberation struggle. As a victory we ourselves have won in all-round struggle, we must then be responsible for taking it forward.[637]

[636] Seekings, *The UDF*, p. 270.
[637] P. Mokaba, SAYCO National Congress Presidential Address, 1990. [SAHA AL2425]

The clear way to take it forward, as far as Mokaba and other youth leaders both inside and outside the country were concerned, was to reconstitute the moribund ANC Youth League. SAYCO was keen to be at the forefront of this initiative. Mokaba said,

> The ability of Sayco to exist and grow in conditions of concentrated enemy fire is the history and experience that the new organisation the ANC Youth League cannot do without. The need is to create one youth political centre and the ANC Youth League must become such a centre.[638]

He further exhorted the SAYCO members,

> Although the ANC has still to take a decision as to how best we can found the ANC Youth League, we must not wait for formal contact. Make preparations for the undertaking of this task.[639]

The urgency with which Mokaba pushed SAYCO towards the formation of the ANC Youth League is revealing on several counts. It indicates the degree to which SAYCO had distanced itself from the UDF by 1990. Mokaba makes no mention of the Front, or even the MDM in his speech, though both are clearly mentioned in the SAYCO constitution. Instead he pays considerable attention to the ANC and its alliance partners, the SACP and the newly merged union bodies SACTU (South African Congress of Trade Unions) and COSATU outside their role in the MDM. In a very public display of support, Nelson and Winnie Mandela attended the April 1990 congress, underscoring the close relationship of the ANC and SAYCO, as well as the importance of youth as a constituency for the ANC. But Mokaba's expediency also hints at the politics behind the reformation of the ANC Youth League itself. Though SAYCO was by far the largest youth movement within South Africa, it was going to have to merge with other internal youth groups, and the ANC's Youth Section, which had managed youth issues for the party while in exile, in order to form the ANC's new youth wing. Jackie Selebi, the head of the ANC's Youth Section, was also the chairman of its repatriation committee, and was organizing the return of young exiles, many

[638] P. Mokaba, SAYCO National Congress Presidential Address, 1990. [SAHA AL2425]
[639] Ibid.

of whom were MK cadres.[640] A resolution adopted at the 1990 congress endorsed pursuit of such a merger. 'The unbanning of the ANC has made it important that we consider merging with the movement's youth section in order to have one strong Youth League,' Mokaba told a reporter in attendance.[641] Competing for influence in this process was going to require political machinations, and Mokaba knew it. To get SAYCO engaged in the process early, particularly with such dominant numbers, was a savvy move.

Unlike the more narrowly defined COSAS and SANSCO, SAYCO's membership stretched across the breadth of youth including students, young workers, and unemployed youth. The ANC Youth League sought to emulate this catholicism in its launching manifesto, addressing specific constituencies including young workers, unemployed youth, youth in rural areas and Bantustans, young traditional leaders, students, young women, white youth, youth in the army and police, religious youth, young sportspersons and young cultural workers.[642] They made a clarion call for all of these groups to unite: 'In our classrooms and campuses; on the factory floor and in our communities; through our actions as caders [sic] of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the People's Army; on the sportsfield and and [sic] through our creative works we have earned ourselves a place of honour in the fight for national democracy.'[643]

Mokaba's gambit to leverage SAYCO into the formation of the Youth League early paid off. COSAS and SANSCO had elected to remain independent and retain their focus on educational issues, leaving SAYCO and the ANC Youth Section to vie for position within the new organisation. In the negotiations and plans surrounding the October 1990 launch of the

[640] Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years*, p. 269.
[641] 'Sayco will merge with ANC for new Youth League', *Weekly Mail*, 20 April 1990. [GPP]
[642] Launching Manifesto of the ANC Youth League, 27 October 1990. [SAHA AL2451]
[643] Ibid.

Youth League, SAYCO was able to dominate the formation of a league with real political weight in the ANC, while the ANC's Youth Section, which advocated a much more limited youth desk, was sidelined.[644] These positions reflect the situations of both organisations – SAYCO had been a major national force for three years, with a great deal of autonomy from and criticism of the UDF, in spite of its affiliation to the Front. The Youth Section had been a small corner of the ANC's exile machine, and acted very much in the service of the main party. In addition, though there were young people in exile awaiting return to South Africa, they were a small fraction of the size of the SAYCO membership, and the repatriation process – especially for rank and file – was a remarkably slow one. Most would not be back in South Africa for SAYCO's preliminary launch in October 1990.[645] Aware of its relatively strong position, SAYCO did not disband until 1991, a full year after the launch of the ANCYL, when it was clear that the new organisation would follow its mould.[646] The ANC Youth League that emerged from the negotiations resembled SAYCO far more than the Youth Section, and that similarity made a natural transition for its hundreds of thousands of members. This was implicitly referenced in the launching manifesto, which noted that 'the present situation places an even greater responsibility on the youth. It demands of us: the building of organisations throughout our country which are deeply rooted amongst the people […].'[647] In this SAYCO's advantage was clear – it *was* rooted amongst the people throughout South Africa. It had structures and leadership in place from the village to the national level, and it had loyalty among its mass base.

[644] C. Glaser, *A Jacana Pocket History: The ANC Youth League* (Johannesburg, 2012), p. 100.
[645] For discussion of the process and speed of repatriations, particularly for the ANC community in Lusaka, Zambia, see Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years,* pp. 268-71.
[646] Glaser, *The ANC Youth League,* p. 100.
[647] Launching Manifesto of the ANC Youth League, 27 October 1990. [SAHA AL2451]

Mokaba, in particular, inspired great devotion among the youth of SAYCO throughout the country. After unbanning and SAYCO's first public congress he became a highly sought after speaker for youth congresses across the country, from the Western Cape to the Northern Transvaal. In his old home province Mokaba was especially in demand: letters from SAYCO branches in Sekhukhuneland, Phalaborwa, and at the University of the North came in asking him to speak on the current political situation in South Africa, to preside over the launch of new branches, and, in the case of the philosophical society at Turfloop, to address 'Transformation – Turning internal organs of apartheid (Bush Colleges) into Mass weapons for peoples Power' [sic].[648] His was the acknowledged voice of South Africa's youth on a wide array of topics. For the youth in the rural Northern Transvaal, the connection was even deeper: Mokaba was their famous son, a self-proclaimed freedom fighter who had risen to national standing. Rural areas had often been overlooked or neglected by national leadership, sometimes simply due to practicalities of access, and the rush of groups in the Northern Transvaal to claim ownership of Mokaba reflects this feeling. In September 1990 the Apel-GaNkoane Youth Congress, the reformed remains of the local branch of SEYO (discussed in chapter five) which had affiliated to SAYCO and maintained its own name, wrote to invite Mokaba to speak at the launch of a new local civic organisation. The chairman, Lucas Mokgalaka, wrote that

> Members of the SAYCO in this area have been longing for the moment when they will be listening to the voice of their leader Comrade Peter Mokaba and we strongly believe that this is the moment that long cherished ideal should be realised. […] Comrades in the rural areas have always lost the benefit of being addressed by their leadership due mainly to the lack of resources to reach places like FNB [the stadium on the edge of Soweto where the new ANC Youth League was launched in 1990].[649]

[648] Correspondence from the University of the North Philosophy Society 'Crito' to the SAYCO Head Office, September 1990; and from Namkgawe SAYCO Branch to the Secretary, SAYCO NEC, 25 September 1990. [SAHA AL2425]
[649] Correspondence from the Apel-Nkoane Youth Congress to the National Secretary of SAYCO, 18 September 1990. [SAHA AL2425]

Here Mokgalaka makes a special claim to Mokaba's leadership as a representative of a neglected rural area. The enthusiasm, even 'longing', of the youth congress' membership that he describes reflects the depth of feeling for Mokaba in SAYCO's varied and far-flung youth congresses, particularly in the hard-to-reach corners of the Northern Transvaal. It was a dedication that also helped bridge the transition of youth politics from SAYCO to the ANC Youth League; Mokaba became a transformational figure, bringing the constituency of SAYCO into the fold of the ANC.

As much as Mokaba was the undisputed leader of the youth, he was also a deeply controversial figure, among the white politicians and farmers offended by his singing of the 'Kill the farmer, kill the Boer' struggle song, but also within the ANC itself. An editorial in the *Weekly Mail and Guardian* alleged that during the negotiations between SAYCO and the Youth Section over the shape of the Youth League,

> At the time, ANC intelligence officials were investigating allegations that Mokaba had links with the security police. Youth section members were asked to sideline him during the building of the League, but Mokaba retained his support and was elected, unopposed, as president at the first Youth League congress.[650]

He achieved this victory against opposition from the Youth Section, and even from within SAYCO itself: SAYCO's vice-president, Rapu Molekane, was expected to contest the ANC Youth League presidency but 'failed to receive the necessary one-third support from the house to make his candidacy possible' in the first round of nominations.[651]

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[650] 'Why can't the ANC get rid of Mokaba? He's too powerful', *Weekly Mail and Guardian,* 20 August 1993. [GPP]
[651] 'Tussle for leader of the youth', *Weekly Mail*, 12 June 1991. [GPP]

One point of contention during the merging and creation of the Youth League in which SAYCO was victorious was the age limit of members: 'While the ANC has ruled that membership for the Youth League should be from 12 to 30 years of age, Sayco has recommended that it should be from 14 to 35.'[652] Many SAYCO members, and most of its leadership, were over 30 at the time of negotiations. 'Mokaba said practical conditions on the ground had shown that some people just above 30 years were still suitably placed in youth congresses.'[653] He was 32 at the time of the conference. In the end, membership age limits were set from 14 to 35, giving the Youth League access to a larger pool of the general population, and reinforcing SAYCO's dominance in the negotiations. The older members also became members of the ANC itself: the Youth League accepted members from the ages of 14 to 35, but all Youth League members automatically also became members of the ANC at age 18. Mpho Nchabeleng, who had been a law student and AZASO member at Turfloop, remembers the importance of this transition for the youth:

> SEYO, what actually became SEYO became branches of the Youth League and the ANC. And [the] majority of those people were no longer the youth, like me. We were actually transcending this thing of being youth to become members of the ANC.[654]

This dual membership technique enabled a seamless flow of young members directly into the ANC, while maintaining the primacy of the Youth League for inducting members below 18. But from the beginning, the Youth League was an important vehicle for its older members, as well. Mokaba was elected president of the ANCYL in 1990, a post he held until he 'aged out' of it, turning 35 in 1994. Even at this early stage the Youth League was already becoming a platform by which ambitious young members might rise through the ranks and position themselves for leadership positions in the party proper when the time came. At the

[652] 'Sayco will merge with ANC for new Youth League', *Weekly Mail*, 20 April 1990. [GPP]
[653] Ibid.
[654] Author's interview with Mpho Nchabeleng.

end of his tenure as president, Mokaba was at the head of the Youth League's list of nominees for inclusion as ANC candidates in the 1994 election and then went on to become an MP and a government minister.[655] This platform for upward mobility was to be an important facet of the post-apartheid Youth League, and is discussed further in the second half of this chapter.

In spite of Mokaba's remarkable success bridging the transition from SAYCO to the ANC Youth League, that process was neither smooth nor uncontroversial. Mokaba, as alluded above, was a firebrand who quickly acquired a reputation for inflammatory rhetoric during the delicate process of negotiations between the ANC, the National Party, and other political stakeholders in the final years of apartheid. The early 1990s, during which negotiations under CODESA (Conference for a Democratic South Africa) were taking place, were a period of intensified violence and conflict. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) engaged in a bloody struggle, primarily against the ANC, for control of KwaZulu and Natal, which spilled into urban areas on the Rand. In addition, there were accusations and suspicion of a 'third force' who were undermining the negotiation process on the side of the government.[656] High profile massacres in 1992 at Boipatong, near Vereeniging, and at Bisho in the Eastern Cape, as well as the April 1993 assassination of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* commander Chris Hani, set the country on the edge of what many watching thought could be full-blown civil war.

As Glaser has noted, 'much of SAYCO's constituency was immersed in [the] culture of township violence and militarized defence'[657] that characterized the mid-to-late 1980s and

[655] 'Youth League puts up 22 for ANC poll list', *The Star*, 23 November 1993. [GPP]
[656] S. Ellis, 'The Historical Significance of South Africa's Third Force', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24(2) (1998), pp. 261-299.
[657] Glaser, *The ANC Youth League*, p. 104.

early 1990s. In this tense atmosphere, Peter Mokaba, rallied his constituents with fiery speeches, and sometimes violent language. In August 1993, he was rebuked by ANC President Nelson Mandela and censured by the party for a controversial speech he made at a Tembisa funeral, in which Mokaba called on mourners to demolish hostels 'brick by brick' and to 'direct (their) bullets against (President) De Klerk.'[658] The ANC and its ally, COSATU, were both quick to distance themselves from the statements, saying that '[The ANC] completely distanced itself from any statement, or alleged statement, that may indicate that we will condone attacks on President De Klerk or any other person.'[659] COSATU said that Mokaba's words 'played into the hands of those who orchestrated the present violence, [and that] it also gives carte blanche to those who are using the hostel dwellers to wage war.'[660] In the early 1990s hostels were one site of the bloody conflict between ANC supporters, and supporters of the ethnically Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party. Mokaba also vocally opposed amnesty for those in the apartheid state, and declared he hated De Klerk. He became well known for singing the inflammatory struggle song, 'Shoot the Boer, Kill the Farmer' (and was censured for it by the ANC in May 1993[661]), and for leading crowds in the protest dance, toyi-toyi. In a period of unprecedented tension, Mokaba's heated words to a loyal and impressionable youth base had the power to ignite further violence. He walked a fine line, making incendiary statements and following later with coerced apologies. A *Weekly Mail* editorial after the Tembisa funeral noted, 'Mokaba's retraction this week of the remarks he made at a funeral in Tembisa is more likely the product of tactical consideration

[658] E. Waugh, 'Mokaba: A-G set to make decision', *The Star*, 16 August 1993. [GPP]; 'Mokaba is read riot act by ANC', *The Star,* 14 August 1993. [GPP]
[659] 'Mokaba is read riot act by ANC', *The Star,* 14 August 1993. [GPP]
[660] Ibid.
[661] P. Mokaba, '"Kill the Boer" is merely a chant', *The Star,* 15 May 1993. [GPP]

than genuine repentance.'[662] Even Mokaba's more moderate statements sometimes had an ominous edge, managing to satisfy militant youths, without crossing party lines. Of the negotiations process he said, 'The implementation of one method should not exclude other methods. When the ANC adopted armed struggle, we did not say it should abandon mass struggle. Our position is clear that we will always opt for the shortest possible route to freedom.'[663] Mokaba's implication that, as it was embarking on negotiations (of which he had been highly critical), the ANC should not – and the Youth League perhaps *would* not – abandon armed struggle flouted the party's authority and Nelson Mandela's new agenda of national forgiveness, but it appealed to his youth base.

But in spite of the quick back-pedaling from both the ANC and COSATU after the Tembisa funeral speech, and other examples of the ANC leadership's exasperation with their hot-headed youth leader, in his masters thesis Raphaël Botiveau has argued that Mokaba's incendiary rhetoric was actually useful to the party: 'By going "too far" Mokaba served the will of the ANC not to negotiate in a completely peaceful climate: it was a question of renouncing the use of armed struggle while simultaneously showing the government that the population remained mobilised.'[664] The ANC was able to cast itself as a 'reasonable alternative' to the radicalism espoused by the Youth League, in spite of the fact that the Youth League was a constitutive part of the ANC itself.[665] This highlights the high level of autonomy that the Youth League maintained under Mokaba, extending to the ability to

[662] 'Why can't the ANC get rid of Mokaba? He's too powerful', *Weekly Mail and Guardian,* 20 August 1993. [GPP]
[663] 'Sayco will merge with ANC for new Youth League', *Weekly Mail*, 20 April 1990. [GPP]
[664] R. Botiveau, 'The ANC Youth League, or the Invention of a South African Youth Political Organisation' *Les Nouveaux Cahiers de l'IFAS (Institut Français d'Afrique du Sud),* 2007, p. 52.
[665] Glaser, *The ANC Youth League*, p. 107.

articulate policy differences from the main party, and even to flout clear party directives about public statements. Of the founding of the new Youth League, Clive Glaser has said,

> It was decided that the new ANCYL would, like the Youth League of old, have substantial autonomy. It would have its own branches and internally elected leadership, its own conferences and resolutions. […] While the Youth League had to accept ANC constitutional principles and work within the ANC's disciplinary framework, the extent to which the League could step out of line publically with ANC policy was never clearly resolved.[666]

Mokaba's rhetoric and political maneuvering during the negotiations period established a precedent of public autonomy and rebelliousness in the Youth League's relationship to the ANC. For both the ANC and the Youth League this situation was advantageous, but also somewhat precarious. As Botiveau has argued, the ANC benefited from the perspective of moderation that its more fractious youth arm cast on the main body; and the Youth League retained a good deal of power to chart its own course in terms of rhetoric, if not necessarily policy, that its branches had had under SAYCO. But it was equally critical to present a united front during the negotiations, to ensure that the ANC kept both the militant youth, and more moderate sections of the South African public onside. Deborah Posel has pointed to this legacy of autonomony in the ANCYL as a key factor in opening 'a space of ideological and political unruliness […] within the ANC' that has endured well beyond the period of negotiations.[667] The breadth of its appeal to different constituencies is a key aspect of the post-apartheid ANC. It is often called a 'broad church' signifying the number of divergent groups and perspectives within its scope. This room within the party for dissent and opposition, but the imprecation for unity in the face of division, was a hallmark of the ANC's

[666] Glaser, *The ANC Youth League,* p.101.
[667] D. Posel, 'The ANC Youth League and the Politicization of Race' in *Thesis Eleven* 115(58) (2013), pp. 58-76, p.64.

relationship to the Youth League in the early 1990s. In a June 1990 interview with *The Washington Post*, Nelson Mandela noted that

> [T]he ANC has never been a political party … the ANC is a coalition … Some will support free enterprise, others socialism. Some are conservatives, others are liberals. We are united solely by our determination to oppose racial oppression. That is the only thing that unites us.[668]

In *The Idea of the ANC*, Anthony Butler has discussed unity as a key organisational motif for the party: 'The ANC has developed a complex system of alliances that allow diverse class, ideological, gender, and generational differences to be expressed and yet at the same time remain incorporated into a wider project.'[669] The Youth League of the early 1990s, much like the ANCYL of 2013, when Butler was publishing, represented a distinct set of generational issues within the ANC. In some cases, as with its tacit dismissal of negotiations and a tendency towards violence, the Youth League found itself outside the pale of party support. But always before such strains could become breaks, the Youth League and the ANC would come together again, united in their shared cause. In this vein, in an op-ed sent to *The Star* newspaper in the wake of the controversy over his singing of 'Shoot the Boer, Kill the Farmer', Peter Mokaba said an ANC meeting to clarify the issue of the song 'resolved that the ANC and the Youth League will always and everywhere present a united front in order to defeat the aim of the regime to depict us as a divided house – which we are not.'[670]

A Tale of Two Leaders

The Northern Transvaal, now Limpopo Province, has not typically been renowned for famous sons and daughters, or for its contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle. In some

[668] Nelson Mandela interview with *The Washington Post*, 26 June 1990, quoted in Butler, *The Idea of the ANC* (Athens, OH, 2013), p. 77.
[669] Butler, *The Idea of the ANC*, p. 70.
[670] P. Mokaba, '"Kill the Boer" is merely a chant', *The Star,* 15 May 1993. [GPP]

cases activists coming from the area have been overshadowed by peers from other areas, written out of struggle history, or have come to prominence after migrating to the urban centres on the Rand, disassociating their legacies from their roots in the north. Some of these activists have been discussed in the preceding chapters, in an attempt to highlight their contributions, and the contribution of Limpopo, to the history of student and youth politics in South Africa. It is instructive to consider their omissions from regional struggle history – the way in which prominent national figures like Cyril Ramaphosa and Frank Chikane are now mostly divorced from their political roots at Turfloop in popular memory – but it is equally important to consider who *is* remembered in association with their regional roots.

Two men have been intimately linked with the politics of youth in Limpopo Province, as well as on a national scale in post-apartheid South Africa, and it is instructive to consider them both here. One, Peter Mokaba, founder of SAYCO and the first president of the 1991 Youth League, has already been discussed in some detail. The other, Julius Malema, who eventually succeeded Mokaba as the head of the Youth League, has not yet been mentioned. These two youth activists, separated by a generation, bear a good deal of comparison. Both came from poor townships near Pietersburg, were politicized relatively young through school structures, and rose to national prominence through their immense populist appeal to their youth constituency. Both occupied a rhetorically radical space within the ANC, eliciting rebukes and censure from the main party, while exciting their base. The production of such leaders, and what they share with earlier activists from the province, has important implications for understanding youth politics in Limpopo, and its impact on youth politics nationally.

When we left Peter Mokaba in the first section of this chapter, he was a firebrand, immensely popular with his constituents, but notoriously hard for party structures – either those of the UDF or of the ANC – to control. It is a measure of his political weight amongst the vast constituency of young South Africans that he weathered and survived not just charges of insubordination, but of disloyalty. In the early 1990s rumours flew that Mokaba had been an informant for the security police. An investigative report in the *Weekly Mail* alleged this had been discovered in interrogation by the ANC in Lusaka in 1989. Hugh Macmillan has written in detail about the unruly and often violent behaviour of the ANC's National Intelligence and Security Directorate (NAT) in Lusaka during the late 1980s. Alleged to participate in the kidnapping and torture of suspected 'agents' of the apartheid state, the organisation underwent restructuring in 1987 to address accusations of corruption, embezzlement and theft, and 'its reputation for being extremely repressive and brutal'.[671] As Macmillan notes, 'It is an open question whether there was any significant improvement in the performance of NAT after the change of management in 1987.'[672] But though Mokaba is purported to have admitted to informing during his interrogation, ANC President O.R. Tambo made the decision to 'allow him to return home on condition he cut all links with the security police [because] O.R. felt it would be very disillusioning for the youth, for whom he was a hero.' Put more bluntly in a 1993 editorial,

> South Africa's youth, representing the majority of the ANC's support, is Mokaba's stamping ground. He is one of the few ANC leaders who have the unreserved respect of township militants. "With the collapse of their internal structures, the ANC needs Mokaba to keep the youth in line," said [Eugene] Nyati [a political scientist].[673]

[671] Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years,* p. 232.
[672] Ibid., p. 232.
[673] 'Why can't the ANC get rid of Mokaba? He's too powerful', *Weekly Mail and Guardian,* 20 August 1993. [GPP]

Gavin Evans, who was an operative for the South African Communist Party and involved in internal ANC politics at the time, suggests there may have been more machinations behind the scenes to keep Mokaba in the fold of the ANC: Evans alleges that a faction of 'several prominent anti-Zuma communists' helped keep Mokaba on the National Executive Council, and 'with Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's muscle, he hung on as youth leader.'[674] But this last point, at least, does Mokaba a disservice. As evidenced in Mokaba's ability to sway the founding of the Youth League to the advantage of SAYCO over the Youth Section, and his unanimous election to the presidency in which no other candidate even secured a place on the ballot, his popularity among the youth was unparalleled, and not simply a result of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's own popularity, or coercion. Indeed, Mokaba and Madikizela-Mandela shared a close and mutually politically beneficial relationship: in the wake of the break-up of her marriage to ANC president Nelson Mandela, with allegations of abuse and kidnapping against her, and her removal from leadership positions within the ANC, Mokaba said of Winnie, 'We are going to confound those who are biting behind her back. She has the support of all those who support me.'[675] This was true, broadly speaking: the two shared a constituency among South Africa's militant youth, for whom Mokaba was their leader and Winnie was a mother figure. Her biographer, Emma Keller, has pointed out that this was not unusual for the woman who came to be known as the mother of the nation: speaking of Winnie's banishment to the Free State in the late 1970s, Keller writes, 'As always, Winnie's popularity base was with those younger than herself.'[676] Like Peter Mokaba, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was also rumoured to have been a police informant, though journalist-

[674] G. Evans, 'Two faces of Mokaba', *Mail and Guardian*, 14 June 2002. [GPP]
[675] E.G. Keller, *The Lady: The Life and Times of Winnie Mandela* (London, 1993), p. 285.
[676] Keller, *The Lady*, p. 123.

turned-spy Gordon Winter has attested that, at least in the 1970s, the Bureau of State Security planted false rumours against her.[677]

Mokaba himself unfailingly denied the charges that he had collaborated with the security police, and publically considered suing the state in 1992 following disclosures that Military Intelligence may have aimed to discredit him by fueling speculation around the allegations, as they had done with Madikizela-Mandela.[678] This was a common tactic employed by the security services to sew distrust inside the liberation movements.[679] Evans, though, citing sources within the ANC including Jacob Zuma and Joe Nhlanhla, insists the allegations are true.

For its part, the ANC's defense of their youth leader was somewhat ambiguous; their Publicity and Information Department said 'With regard to Comrade Peter Mokaba, the ANC places on record that we regard him as a fully-fledged member of the ANC, in good standing. The ANC does not doubt the bona fides of Comrade Peter Mokaba.'[680] Given the use of violence, torture, and misinformation employed by both the South African Secret Service, and the ANC's National Intelligence and Security Directorate, and the conflicting evidence, it is difficult to say whether the allegations against Mokaba were true. In a profile of Mokaba published some years after the scandal, Mark Gevisser concluded, '[T]he only thing of lasting significance about these allegations is that, while they have never been conclusively denied by the ANC, they have not even slightly dented Mokaba's ambitions.'[681]

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[677] G. Winter, *Inside BOSS* (London, 1981), p. 237.
[678] 'Mokaba considers lawsuit', Paper unknown, 19 November 1992. [GPP]
[679] 'Mokaba issue still on the boil' *Weekly Mail*, 30 May 1991. [GPP]
[680] Ibid.
[681] 'Peter Mokaba, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in the Mark Gevisser Profile', c.1995. [GPP]

The allegations did not dent Mokaba's ambitions, nor his subsequent achievements; once he was too old to lead the ANC Youth League any longer, he ran with the support of the League on the ANC's ticket for parliament, became an MP and the deputy minister for Environmental Affairs and Tourism. He remained a popular figure in his home province, leading political rallies there as late as 2000, and he was rumoured to be challenging Ngoaka Ramathlodi for the provincial premiership in 1998, though in the end he did not.[682] He remained in government until he fell too ill to continue working, in 2002. He returned to Mankweng and, after a brief undisclosed illness, he died in June of that year.

Two years after his death, Limpopo unveiled its first major public memorial, on the site of Mokaba's grave in Mankweng cemetery. The black granite tower is decorated with an ANC flag and topped with a defiant clenched fist. It looms over everything else in the otherwise sedate and unremarkable graveyard. At its erection on Youth Day 2004, the new provincial secretary of the ANC Youth League in Limpopo spoke of the importance of Mokaba and his legacy in the province: 'The tombstone and planned museum are both the first of their kind in Limpopo. The tombstone is also meant to be the biggest yet for a struggle hero,' said Julius Malema, at the unveiling. 'The fist will remind us all that the person below died fighting.'[683]

According to his biographer, Fiona Forde,

> If there was anyone Julius Malema wanted to be like, it was the late Peter Mokaba, who led the ANCYL after it was unbanned in 1990. As he stood at

[682] 'Livening things up with populist humour', *Sunday Times*, 23 July 2000; 'Hold your horses – I'm back in the saddle', *Sunday Times*, 1 July 2001; and 'Ramathlodi in all-out battle to regain top ANC post in Northern Province', *Star*, 23 June 1998. [GPP]
[683] T. N'wa Mhangwana and J. Arenstein, 'The guerilla who loved a good waltz' *Mail and Guardian*, 25 June 2004. [GPP]

> the gates of history, Mokaba seemed to dislike much of what lay ahead, not least a peaceful transition, and whenever the opportunity presented itself he challenged the status quo. […] It was his defiance that Malema loved him for. It was Mokaba who turned the struggle song "Shoot the Boer" on its head when he changed its words to chants of "Kill the Boer, Kill the farmer" at the same time as his party leadership was trying to negotiate an end to apartheid with the white regime. When Mokaba sang it, millions sang with him, and when Malema trotted it out in its less radical form twenty years later, it was a curtain raiser all over again.[684]

This passage from Malema's biography, *An Inconvenient Youth*, hints at the political common ground between Julius Malema and Peter Mokaba. But there are some important biographical similarities as well. Malema also grew up very poor, in the Masakaneng section of Seshego, the sprawling African township on the northwestern outskirts of Pietersburg (now Polokwane), not far from Mokaba's birthplace in New Look Location. Malema was born in 1981 and first became involved in politics in the early 1990s, during South Africa's tense transition period from apartheid to democracy. Perhaps as early as 1990, but more likely at the age of 12 in 1993, he became involved with the local ANC, running errands and doing small jobs for more senior members of the local party branches. Thabo Makunyane, who had helped Ephraim Mogale found COSAS and was imprisoned on Robben Island (see chapter four) had been released from prison in 1989, and was the ANC's coordinating figure in the region around Pietersburg. In the preparations for the 1994 elections, Makunyane remembers Malema as being practically ubiquitous: 'By then we all knew him. […] He was everywhere. And he was a popular youth.'[685] He hung posters, helped with registration, and did odd jobs. He also began to make a name for himself with local leaders in the ANC. As Forde described it,

> Malema was in his element, as any child of his age would have been. In his mind, these people were heroes. He was in awe of them and could hardly believe his luck. From a fairly hellish life and humdrum township upbringing, Julius Malema woke up one morning to find himself in the thick

[684] F. Forde, *An Inconvenient Youth: Julius Malema and the 'New' ANC*, 2nd edn (London, 2012), p. 60.
[685] Forde, *An Inconvenient Youth,* p. 70.

> of a liberation movement that was no longer outlawed, a political party that was the talk of the country, and which was on a steady march towards victory in the elections of 1994. It couldn't get much better than this in the young boy's mind. And there was no going back.[686]

Here Forde overstates the suddenness of Malema's political engagement, while perhaps underplaying his uniqueness. Rather than a sudden awakening, he became involved in politics unusually young, the only one of his cohort to do so, gradually ingratiating himself to older party members and working his way into the ANC fold. As Forde indicates, he did so at a pivotal moment in South Africa's political history, when the country was moving steadily towards a democratic transition and the ANC was leading the charge. Malema associated himself with the party at this critical time, and went on to join its youth and student structures. He became further involved in politics, joining COSAS as a young high school student at Mohlakaneng High School, and officially joining the ANC Youth League as soon as he turned fourteen in 1995.

Though apartheid was officially over, the student movements that had been founded to combat it remained, and many continued what they saw as the struggle legacy: COSAS continued to advocate for the creation of Student Representative Councils and better learning environments for school students. Malema became the provincial chairperson of COSAS in Northern Province (now Limpopo) in 1997, following his growing prominence in his own school and around Seshego as an advocate for students. Thomas Namathe, a teacher at Mohlakaneng at the time, recalls 'Malema would never allow anyone else to speak in his name or in the name of the students. If the media came to cover a story and we, as the staff, tried to give our point of view, he would be the first to speak up on the side of the

[686] Forde, *An Inconvenient Youth,* p. 71-2.

learners.'[687] His ascension to the COSAS regional executive in 1997 gave him a much broader platform than he had previously had, and led to higher ambitions. In 2000 he contested the COSAS presidency, but after a disbanded conference he was forced to renew his quest the following year. He was successful, and became COSAS president in 2001 at the age of 20.

The circumstances surrounding the June 2000 conference of COSAS are indicative of Malema's growing political ambitions and the lengths to which he would go to achieve them. In June 2000 the sitting president of COSAS, Lebogang Maile, was stepping down from the position. As the provincial chair for Limpopo, Malema had worked on the National Executive Committee (NEC) with Maile, and was supported by him and many other NEC members when he decided to run for the presidency.[688] But another candidate, Kenny Morolong, the chairperson of COSAS in Northwest Province, was the favourite in the race; he had wider support among the branches than Malema did, and was backed by six of the provinces to Malema's three. '"But just a few days before the conference, rape charges mysteriously surfaced out of nowhere," Morolong remembers.'[689] Kenny Morolong had been accused of raping Mosa Molale, a member of his own Provincial Executive Committee. Charges were never officially brought, and Molale denied the allegations, but the rumours were devastating to Morolong. The COSAS NEC suspended him, effectively banning him from the upcoming conference. When he decided to attend anyway and was denied entrance by security, 'The delegates, whose support he still enjoyed, went wild.'[690] Fiona Forde has described how figures outside COSAS were brought in to try to broker a negotiation: Fikile

[687] Forde, *An Inconvenient Youth,* p. 74.
[688] Ibid., p. 76.
[689] Ibid., p. 76.
[690] Ibid., p. 77.

Mbalula, then secretary-general of the ANCYL, failed to persuade the delegates to accept a negotiated settlement with Morolong as president and Malema as his deputy. Eventually Winnie Madikizela-Mandela was 'called in and briefed about what was going on. She quickly assessed the matter for herself and a short while later disbanded the conference.'[691] When it resumed the following year, Morolong had been effectively driven out of COSAS, and Malema comfortably won election to the presidency.

Several months later, under Malema's leadership in late 2001 and again in May 2002, thousands of COSAS students turned out in the streets of Johannesburg for two protest marches in support of free education. The marches turned violent and destructive, resulting in looting, theft, and damage to property. In a statement condemning the December 2001 march, Nelson Mandela said '[The COSAS students] went on a rampage and destroyed property belonging to hawkers. They had no reason to behave like this.'[692] The Gauteng Department of Education threatened to suspend the COSAS leadership, including Malema who was ostensibly studying for his matric in a Soweto school (in spite of his continued enrolment at Mohlakaneng in Seshego), as a disciplinary measure. But Malema and others in the COSAS executive refused to be cowed. In a press statement he said:

> If there is no alternative [to the suspension] then we will ask for a school stay-away. We cannot force people to stay away from school, that is not how we operate, but we will let them know what has happened and they will support us. How can we be held responsible for a few who misbehaved when there is no proof that those hooligans were even part of our organisation? We are being victimised.[693]

Eventually the situation was resolved without suspending the COSAS leadership from school, but the incident reveals that, under Malema, COSAS was willing to buck the ANC

[691] Forde, *An Inconvenient Youth*, p. 77.
[692] 'Mandela hauls COSAS over the coals', *Mail and Guardian,* 1 January 2002. [*Mail and Guardian* archives]
[693] Ibid.

and other party allies, much as the ANC Youth League had been under Mokaba. Malema graduated from COSAS into the ANC Youth League leadership, becoming, as mentioned above, the provincial chairperson for Limpopo in late 2003, and holding that position for several terms, consolidating his base of power in the province, before finally becoming the national ANCYL president in 2008.

Conclusion

Malema has been, and continues to be, the subject of much political discussion since his rise to the national stage, but analysis of his roles as the national head of the Youth League, and more recently, the founder of his own party, are outside the scope of this thesis. However, the consideration of his early political years at the helm of COSAS, and then as Provincial Chair for the Limpopo Youth League, provide a fruitful comparison with Mokaba; the two are arguably the province's most famous sons. As I have noted, it is significant that they, and not other activists, continue to be associated with the region. Their shared populism has come to define youth politics in the post-apartheid era, associating Limpopo with radical – and even racist (thanks largely to their use of 'Kill the Boer, Kill the farmer') – politics in the minds of many. In addition, the province is subject to some of South Africa's worst cases of graft, corruption, and in-fighting between political factions. Some of this is not particularly new: in the late 1990s Peter Mokaba 'was at the centre of selecting and setting up an interim leadership to lead the ANC after the formal provincial structures were dissolved due to incessant factional and ethnic battles'.[694] And Limpopo is no stranger to intervention by the central government in dysfunctional provincial affairs: in 2011 five of its eleven provincial departments were brought under national administration by order of Finance Minister Pravin

[694] 'Hold your horses – I'm back in the saddle', *Sunday Times*, 1 July 2001. [GPP]

Gordhan due to bankruptcy.[695] Several of the departments at stake were headed by key allies of Malema and his patron in regional politics, Cassel Mathale. Press speculation at the time suggested that the removals were a blow to Mathale's personal power in the province[696]; it came at a time when Malema was fending off attacks on the national stage, and was in the midst of suspension hearings from the ANC itself. Politics in Limpopo works essentially on a patronage basis, depending on party and personal connections to access lucrative government tenders. In the later 2000s, Malema in particular came to dominate provincial politics, mixing political power with business dealings, which has subsequently led to his 2013 indictment on charges of fraud, corruption, money laundering, and racketeering.

But in spite of the controversies surrounding both Malema and Mokaba, their appeal is deep among both youth and students alike, thousands of whom rally loyally around Malema, much as the previous generation had with Mokaba. Both men came from poverty, and in spite of having 'made good' – Mokaba as the proprietor of a string of hairdressing salons, and Malema in the murkier world of government tenders – maintained a deep popularity among the poor, especially in their home areas. Both were also political protégés of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, who adopted Malema much the way she had Mokaba twenty years earlier: supporting him and appearing by his side at political rallies. Through her association with these young men, 'Ma Winnie' has become a sort of matriarch for the ANC Youth League – arguably even more than for the main body of the ANC. Often decried as 'buffoons', both Mokaba and Malema were actually keen political strategists, though their formal educations were interrupted in high school by their political involvements: Mokaba

[695] 'Five Limpopo departments under administration', *City Press,* 5 December 2011. [*City Press* Online Archive: http://www.citypress.co.za/news/five-limpopo-departments-under-administration-20111205/ Accessed 19 December 2013.]
[696] Ibid.

adeptly maneuvered the reconstitution of the ANC Youth League to privilege SAYCO over the ANC Youth Section, and to position himself as its first president. In the COSAS elections of 2000, Malema so thoroughly buried his opponent, Kenny Morolong, in scandal, that the entire conference had to be disbanded and Morolong eventually left COSAS.[697] A combination of political savvy and ruthlessness has attached itself to the reputations of both men.

But their distinctions are important as well: though both Mokaba and Malema rebelled against the ruling party at times, Mokaba was better able to toe the line when absolutely necessary: 'he was disciplined enough to never actually criticise the ANC itself.'[698] In contrast, Malema's feud with President Jacob Zuma eventually resulted in his expulsion from the ANC in 2012.

These two figures, arguably the most high-profile that are associated with Limpopo, can tell us a good deal about the state of politics in the province at the end of apartheid and the early years of South Africa's democracy: Provincially, youth occupied a powerful political space, able to challenge other political structures, including the UDF in Mokaba's era, and even the ANC itself in Malema's. The dominance of youth politics in the region accelerated the national rise of its youth leaders; none of Limpopo's older politicians experienced comparable rises to Mokaba and Malema, though they also benefited from its lucrative patronage networks. This may be due in part to Limpopo's demographics. It is an

[697] Forde, *An Inconvenient Youth,* p. 77-8.
[698] Gevisser, M. 'Peter Mokaba, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in the Mark Gevisser Profile', c.1995. [GPP]

uncommonly young, poor, and rural province,[699] and rabble-rousing, harbingers of change like Mokaba and Malema appeal to those apparently left behind by South Africa's transition. They also join a tradition of less well-known, but similarly radical students at the forefront of the struggle in Limpopo: Abraham Tiro, Ephraim Mogale and Thabo Makunyane, the young men who founded the Sekhukhune Youth Organisation and other youth congresses like it, all pioneered important shifts in youth politics that changed the trajectory of national movements. Malema and Mokaba joined this tradition, continuing Limpopo's role as being a driver of national youth and student politics.

[699] Figures from 2007 from the Trust for Community Outreach and Education, note that 37% of Limpopo's population was below the age of 14 [http://tcoe.org.za/areas-of-operation/42-limpopo-province/71-limpopo-province.html], and a PROVIDE Project Background Paper on regional demographics notes that while 86.8% of inhabitant reside in rural areas, only 12.4% live in strictly defined agricultural households, suggesting that in most rural households agriculture does not 'present an important source of income for the household.' ['A Profile of Limpopo Province: Demographics, Poverty, Inequality, and Unemployment', August 2005. http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/15607/1/bp050009.pdf; Downloaded 23 December 2013]

Chapter 7: Epilogue and Conclusions

Polokwane, 2007

In December 2007 Turfloop, which had been renamed the University of Limpopo[700], was back in the national spotlight once more. In contrast to the student protests and boycotts with which it had been associated in the 1970s and 1980s, when it was on the physical margins of life in South Africa, it was now at the very heart of power. The ANC's fourth post-apartheid conference – often referred to simply as 'Polokwane' for the nearby host city – was actually held on campus at the university, thirty kilometres outside of town. It marked an important moment in ANC history, when the party confronted its own image as a 'broad church' holding together a coalition of varied groups and opinions, and nearly tore itself apart.

The Polokwane conference has sometimes been described as a war within the ANC.[701] Two factions came to the party conference at Turfloop that December – one led by incumbent president Thabo Mbeki, and the other by his challenger and former deputy, Jacob Zuma. The Zuma coalition was a mixed bag of delegates, held together by their frustrations with Mbeki and his austere, technocratic approach to governing. It included powerful factions representing trade unions, the ANC Women's League, the Young Communist League and the ANC Youth League. They were bound by populism, a rhetoric of politics for the common

[700] The renaming was a result of the 2005 merger of the University of the North (Turfloop) and the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA) outside Pretoria.
[701] S. Booysens, *The African National Congress and the Regeneration of Political Power*, (Johannesburg, 2011), p. 41.

man and woman. As one pro-Zuma delegate from KwaZulu-Natal told a reporter at the conference, 'Everything is going to change because Zuma cares about the people.'[702]

Though the group comprised disparate representation from many corners of the ANC and its key allies, COSATU and the South African Communist Party (SACP), a large number of the Zuma supporters had been rallied to the cause and were led by the ANC Youth League, with Julius Malema at their helm.[703] In late 2007 he was the heir-apparent to Youth League president Fikile Mbalula, and had already established himself as one of Zuma's most vocal supporters. In some of his most high-profile national coverage since leading COSAS to protest in the streets of Johannesburg in 2002 (as discussed in chapter six), Malema had been a visible (and voluble) presence outside the Johannesburg High Court during Zuma's trial for rape in 2006.[704] Eighteen months later, when the party conference was held in his own backyard in 2007, Malema was in his element. He was the provincial president of the Youth League, on the cusp of becoming its national leader, and was one of Mbalula's closest associates. He was also becoming a key player in provincial politics,[705] and had come to the attention of national figures: he even shared platforms with Zuma himself in the months of campaigning before the conference at Polokwane.[706]

Though the Youth League delegation at Polokwane was officially only 68, this number belies their influence and importance: as Clive Glaser has noted, '[T]he block vote [of 68] is

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[702] R. Wolmarans and M. Burbidge, 'Zuma is new ANC President', *Mail and Guardian,* 18 December 2007, accessed 24 Feb. 2014 at [http://mg.co.za/article/2007-12-18-zuma-is-new-anc-president].
[703] Booysens, *The African National Congress,* pp. 41-5, 9-51.
[704] Malema and other representatives from the Youth League were criticized by gender equality activists for violent rhetoric about Zuma's accuser during the course of the trial. Zuma was acquitted of the charges. K. Maughan, 'Malema in hot water over rape claims', IOL News, 26 May 2009, accessed 19 Feb. 2014, at [http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/malema-in-hot-water-over-rape-claims-1.444435#.UzF3CYePPcs].
[705] Forde, *An Inconvenient Youth,* pp. 182-90.
[706] Glaser, *The ANC Youth League*, p. 135.

numerically insignificant. More importantly, the Youth League has a massive parallel membership, which cross-fertilises and influences the ANC at branch level.'[707] In fact, in the lead-up to the conference, as factions formed around both Mbeki and Zuma, the Youth League claimed 800,000 members, larger than the ANC itself at the time.[708] Consequently, the Youth League's influence was much greater than its delegation numbers might suggest; at conference it commanded a large degree of support, and succeeded in flexing its muscle from the outset. Youth Leaguers were able to derail the first day's schedule with a heated debate over whether ballots should be counted by computer (as had been pre-arranged by the National Executive Council), arguing that computers were more susceptible to interference and rigging than a manual count.[709] That night the Youth League brought a motion that computer counting be banned, and it passed. In the wake of the 'humiliation' of losing control on the first day, Mbeki's supporters held a rally in the Turfloop sports stadium at lunchtime on the second day of the conference.[710] This 'unprecedented spectacle'[711] was met with defiance as, in response, the Zuma supporters threw an even larger, competing rally on the nearby field, where in 1974 students had confronted police in the aftermath of their Viva-FRELIMO rally. Mbalula addressed the Zuma rally, reinforcing the importance of youth in Zuma's base of support.

When all the votes were counted (by hand), Zuma had won comfortably. His candidates for the top six posts in the NEC did the same – with margins of approximately sixty per cent of

[707] Glaser, *The ANC Youth League*, pp. 129-30
[708] Ibid., pp. 129-30; It is important to note that the Youth League acts as a recruitment base for the ANC itself; it recruits a younger membership (starting with membership at age 14) and once members turn 18 they automatically become ANC members as well.
[709] R. Wolmarans, 'ANC conference off to shaky start', *Mail and Guardian,* 16 December 2007, accessed 3 March 2014, at [http://mg.co.za/article/2007-12-16-anc-conference-off-to-shaky-start].
[710] M. Rossouw and M. Letsoalo, 'Zuma, Mbeki camps rally in Polokwane', *Mail and Guardian,* 17 December 2007, accessed 3 March 2014 at [http://mg.co.za/article/2007-12-17-zuma-mbeki-camps-rally-in-polokwane].
[711] Ibid.

the vote. It was a remarkable electoral sweep from a challenger for the party presidency, and it presaged change not just in the party but also in government itself. Less than a year after the conference, Mbeki had been removed from the national presidency. The effects of Polokwane on the ANC and on South African politics more broadly have been discussed widely.[712] But what the conference indicates about Limpopo and the evolution of youth politics in the province has been generally overlooked in favour of national narratives. For this reason, considering the Polokwane conference of 2007 is a useful introduction to the conclusion of this dissertation. It illuminates some of the key issues that have been addressed: questions of marginality and centrality, both of the province and of its young people; of the roles that youth can exercise politically and their use of populism, violence, and rhetoric in that exercise; of the ideologies they deploy and how they mobilize groups; and finally, of the place of Limpopo – and its institutions and actors – in this heady mix.

On the margins: Limpopo's physical and political orientation

One of the key themes of this thesis has been to consider the issue of politics from the periphery. Limpopo is rural and remote, and for this and other reasons it has been largely neglected from South Africa's historiography. The history of South Africa's struggle has focused largely on urban areas, and where rural resistance has been discussed it is often relegated to a supporting role.[713] In spite of its regional focus, this thesis has not been primarily an analysis of rural politics. I have tried to question a narrative that poses a centre/margin dichotomy, and to argue instead that the flow of people and ideas between

[712] For a discussion of the impact of Polokwane on the end of Mbeki's presidency and his removal from office, see F. Chikane, *Eight Days in September: the Removal of Thabo Mbeki* (Johannesburg, 2012); M. Gevisser, *A legacy of liberation: Thabo Mbeki and the future of the South African dream* (New York, 2009), especially the Epilogue; and Booysens, *The African National Congress*, pp.44-9.
[713] For instance, see Seekings, *The UDF,* pp. 180-3; Marx, *Lessons of Struggle,* p.252, and Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa,* Chapter 11: Resistance in the Countryside, pp. 261-94.

rural and urban areas is not one-directional. Though this is not a rural history per se, in this I join the growing historiography on South Africa's rural areas, including Beinart and Bundy on the Eastern Cape, and Delius and van Kessel on Sekhukhuneland. Though parts of Limpopo are physically and economically marginalized, it has played a central role in the development of successive anti-apartheid organisations and movements. These developments have been primarily driven by young political actors – both students and youth. In some cases these have emerged from the province's most remote corners: like Sekhukhuneland, Venda, and Bushbuckridge; and in others they have come from some of its core institutions, like Turfloop.

At its founding in 1959 Turfloop was intentionally isolated. The founding of the University College of the North was part of the larger project of providing tertiary educational institutions in the areas that would soon become South Africa's Bantustans. By design it was meant to be oriented – and to orient its students – toward local institutions, and to contribute to building the Bantustans into self-sustaining entities, by producing a class of homegrown professionals. But over the course of its first fifteen years, Turfloop went from being a sleepy farm where future bureaucrats and civil servants would be trained, to a major centre of student activism, and a critical node of political action in the Northern Transvaal. It became a place of political education and mobilization for generations of young South Africans, who almost entirely rejected the ethos of its founding and became politically active in the anti-apartheid movement.

In chapter two I argued that this shift at Turfloop was a product of the work of several key organisations that affected mobilization both locally and on a national scale. The University Christian Movement (UCM), the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), and the

Students' Christian Movement (SCM) all acted as vehicles of student politicization on campus. For each of these, Christianity was a critical factor in its approach to student mobilization; I have argued that this enabled these organisations to be particularly effective at Turfloop, where the majority of students were Christian and were members of one or more of the religious societies on campus. All three of these organisations also represented local branches of national bodies and served to link Turfloop to other educational institutions around South Africa.

Though the UCM laid important groundwork establishing precedents for student activism on campus, and the SCM later continued that work in an overtly Christian organisation, it was unquestionably SASO that was the primary force in transforming Turfloop into the centre of student politics that it became in the early 1970s. The launch of the organisation on campus in 1969 inspired a new generation of student activists; Abraham Tiro went on to catapult Turfloop to national attention with his provocative graduation speech in 1972. The speech resulted in Tiro's expulsion, and, briefly, the closure of the university, but its implications went far beyond those events. It served as the catalyst for the Alice Declaration, where students from Turfloop's sister 'bush colleges' (the universities of Fort Hare, Zululand, Durban-Westville, and the Western Cape) declared solidarity with the Turfloop student body and participated in a unified student strike. By May 1972, at the time of the Alice Declaration, Turfloop may still have been physically on the margins of South Africa, but it was no longer politically marginal. It was clearly influencing and even leading forms of protest in other parts of the country.

The influence of Turfloop's teacher-activists, discussed in chapter three, is another example of the way that the University influenced political development beyond its classrooms and

walls. After mass expulsions in both 1972 and 1974, many Turfloop students became teachers in secondary schools around South Africa; most went to schools in the conurbation of townships on the Witwatersrand, particularly Soweto. Here they influenced the rising generation of students, bringing Black Consciousness philosophy into their teaching, and working to politically conscientize their students. In chapter three I have documented the effects of these teachers on students who became political leaders and activists themselves, particularly those who were at the forefront of the Soweto Student Uprisings in 1976. This importation of political philosophy and materials from a rural university to urban schools undermines suppositions about the directional flow of political influence being solely from cities to rural areas, which is sometimes implied in the heavily urban-oriented literature on political activism in South Africa. It is an important example of the way that sometimes that flow went in the other direction. But it also demonstrates the broader point that cross-fertilization of ideas hinged not on movement solely to or from cities, but was fostered in the dialogues that emerged from patterns of migrancy back and forth. Student migration, notable for its oscillation and rapid population turnover, was especially influential in this. A large minority of Turfloop's students came from the urban townships on the Rand, and many returned there to work after their education. As students they brought new ideas to the university, and as graduates (or expellees) they took its influence away with them, to jobs and activities around the country.

These patterns of the migration of ideas through networks of people were replicated in the 1980s, when the localization of politics and the rise of student movements in secondary schools moved the nexus of political involvement in the Northern Transvaal out of Turfloop for the first time. The rise of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) brought the struggle into schools in an organized manner, and allowed for rapid expansion beyond

institutions like Turfloop. Later, when COSAS was banned in 1985, youth congresses took up its baton at the village level, and began to incorporate non-student youth into their structures. This fundamentally changed the make-up and agendas of such groups, and resulted in renegotiated forms of political expression. Such congresses moved away from primary emphasis on educational issues and began to address social conflict in local communities, ranging from domestic and inter-village disputes to accusations of witchcraft. But even through these shifts, as the frontier of student politics moved out of universities and into schools, Turfloop remained an important base of political operation, and a critical link for the promulgation of ideas that connected networks in the far reaches of the Northern Transvaal to those on the Rand and beyond. Students in schools and youth congresses maintained contacts with elder siblings or associates at the university, and it became a source of political texts (and even classes for those in nearby Mankweng). Similarly, family and associational links with people employed in Johannesburg and Pretoria also supplied young activists with materials and support. The example of Elleck Nchabeleng, who was employed by the Community Resource Information Centre in Johannesburg and supplied his younger brother Maurice with copies of the Freedom Charter and other political tracts, is discussed in chapter five.

In his work on political 'notables' in the Transkei, Timothy Gibbs has argued that educational institutions in the Eastern Cape (prestigious mission schools and Fort Hare University) facilitated access for many of these figures on the rural periphery to reach the centre – or centres – of political power.[714] Education, particularly through these institutions, formed a key aspect of 'the social hinterland and networks of the ANC leaders in

[714] Gibbs, T. 'Transkei's Notables, African Nationalism and the Transformation of the Bantustans, c.1954-1994' (University of Oxford, DPhil, 2010)., pp. 100-10.

Transkei'.[715] In the Northern Transvaal, Turfloop acted in a similar capacity, but with some critical differences: the students who came through Turfloop, a much newer and less prestigious institution than Fort Hare, were generally less 'notable', and came from more varied and less vaunted educational backgrounds. The Northern Transvaal lacked Transkei's networks of historic and elite mission schools. Turfloop's students came from working and middle class backgrounds, and the ones who went on to become politically prominent did not necessarily represent the elites of their communities. They were also more ethnically diverse, and there is no Pedi, Venda, or Shangaan equivalent of the so-called 'Xhosa Nostra'. It has not been part of the scope of this project to compare enrolment at Turfloop to institutions like Fort Hare, and without such a comparison it is difficult to say if the students of these institutions came from wholly different social classes. It is an important question about the relationship between class and education in South Africa, and one with possibilities for further research. The differences I have pointed to anecdotally here only begin to shed some light on the composition of the Turfloop student body, and its relationship to its peers.

But Turfloop and Fort Hare did share critical features: notably a political significance that outweighed their strictly academic purpose. Where Gibbs highlights Fort Hare's role as a transit point from periphery to centre, I would argue that he loses some of the significance of the university as a political site itself. In the case of Turfloop, rather than simply acting as a staging or grooming point, or even as one link in the network of political activists who went on to other activism (though it did this as well), at key moments in its history, Turfloop *became* a centre of political activism itself. It set precedents for forms of student protest, shaped the course of national movements, and disseminated ideas to rural areas in the

[715] Gibbs, T. 'Transkei's Notables', p. 264

province, and to urban areas on the Rand. It also played a role in politicizing generations of students whose activism went on to change the shape of South African politics.

Youth and Students: Intersecting social categories

A key analytical category for this dissertation has been the concept of youth. I have tried to address the variety of ways the young people in Limpopo have engaged in formal politics, both in opposition to the apartheid state, and later in association with the ANC in government. My analysis has extended across organisations, ideologies, geographic boundaries, and historical periods, but the theme that unites it is its focus on young political actors. I have sought to demonstrate that young people have driven political change and development in the Northern Transvaal and Limpopo since the late 1960s. They have consistently been at the forefront of new forms of political protest and expression, and have been responsible for influencing the spread of such expression within and outside the province.

The University of the North at Turfloop played a critical role in the political conscientization of generations of these young political activists. From the late 1960s to the late 1970s it was the crucible of all major political activism in the Northern Transvaal. This indicates the prominence of student activism at a time of relative political quiescence among other social and generational groups in the province. Through the work of campus groups like the University Christian Movement (UCM), students at Turfloop were exposed to a form of politicized Christianity that inspired small pockets of radical activism in the student body. By the launch of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) in 1969, the UCM had laid building blocks for greater political mobilization on campus, and SASO was able to

capitalize and expand on their legacy. Its technique of mass-affiliation through the Students' Representative Council effectively expanded political action on campus to the entire student body. As I argue in chapter two, both UCM and SASO played critical and interlinking roles in politicizing students at Turfloop during the period from 1967 to 1972, but the rapidity with which their messages were adopted was also due to specific local circumstances. The peculiar hypocrisy under which Turfloop and the other 'bush' colleges, designated as black institutions but run largely by whites, operated inspired outspoken protest from students like Abraham Tiro in his 1972 graduation address. The combination of immediate concerns - like access to books and vacation work, and privileging black parents over white dignitaries - and ideological awakening through UCM and SASO programmes like Black Theology and Black Consciousness was a powerful mix. By 1972 politics was no longer the purview of a few students. When Abraham Tiro was expelled, the entire Turfloop student body protested, and was even supported in their action by the black academic staff. As discussed above, and in chapter two, the Alice Declaration ensured that their protest impacted far beyond Turfloop itself, touching off class boycotts at other universities around South Africa.

In these early days, youth protest in the Northern Transvaal was dominated by activism among university students. This was, in part, an effect of Turfloop's importance as a centre for activism, but it also reflected political trends at the time when a new generation of South Africans were rethinking and remaking ideas about liberation. The development of Black Consciousness ideology in the early 1970s was in part a remaking of Africanism, Anton Lembede's nationalist philosophy that rejected multi-racialism; it shared and expanded an emphasis on psychological liberation with Africanism, and it was also a deeply intellectual project. Black Consciousness thrived on university campuses and in schools because it appealed to the intellectual curiosity that education aims to foster. Its related projects that

were not based in educational institutions, the Black People's Convention (BPC) and Black Community Programmes (BCP), never achieved the scope or depth of impact that SASO and other student organisations did.

Students, then, are one critical category of the young political actors examined here, and university students are a subset of that: in the Northern Transvaal in the early 1970s, they were the vanguard of political protest. But political expression was not to remain contained within universities for long. One of the primary goals of students like Tiro and others politicized through SASO was to expand their influence beyond university campuses. Though BPC and BCP, mentioned above, had limited impact, the South African Students' Movement (SASM), was a major influence in schools, particularly in Soweto. Former university students from Turfloop liaised with this group (Tiro himself even served as an official advisor for SASM, linking it to SASO), and many got teaching jobs that allowed them to influence the political development of secondary school students in a classroom setting. By the middle of the 1970s SASM and some affiliated groups had established a presence in many key Soweto high schools, and in 1976 when the inflammatory issue of using Afrikaans as a teaching medium arose, Soweto's students took to the streets in their thousands. They had been politicized by the ideas and people flowing out of South Africa's black universities – particularly, as I have argued, those from Turfloop. They marked an important turning point as well, when the core of student political action broadened from universities to include schools. This shift meant that school students became another significant category of political actor in South Africa, in addition to their university counterparts.

These two groups are closely related in many ways; their common identity as students gives them shared educational concerns. But they are also distinct: university students have particular patterns of movement between a base at home (wherever that might be) and their university. For those at Turfloop, a large minority straddled centres of identity between home life in the townships of the Rand and university life in the Lebowa bush. The university also gathered students from a wide catchment area and differing backgrounds. The fact of this increased diversity meant that students at Turfloop were necessarily oriented more beyond the boundaries of their own institution than school students, and in an even more pronounced way than the third category of political actors I consider in this thesis: non-student youth.

The 1980s marked important political shifts in South Africa: Charterism re-emerged as the dominant philosophy amongst those involved in the anti-apartheid movement, sidelining Africanism. The birth of the United Democratic Front enabled civic organisations to become more overtly political, linking concrete experiences of oppression with political ideology on a much greater scale than had yet been accomplished. And the incursion of politics into schools at the village level, through the Congress of South African Students, led to the rapid expansion and localization of student politics throughout the country, particularly in the Northern Transvaal. This expansion also facilitated the incorporation of non-student youths into what had previously been almost exclusively student political networks. In the Northern Transvaal this process of incorporation – and the resulting shifts in political expression – happened in localized village youth congresses around the region. Groups like the Sekhukhune Youth Organisation originated in local COSAS branches, but became increasingly autonomous after that organisation's banning in 1985 and shifted away from primarily student and school-related concerns as more non-student youths were incorporated

into their ranks. These young comrades – students and non-students alike – were bound by a generational consciousness, and by shared social and economic challenges. Consequently their political expressions shifted away from practical educational concerns to the social order; they began to adapt and subvert traditional practices like witch-finding and chiefly arbitration, but overlaid these actions with political, anti-apartheid rhetoric. I have argued in chapter five that political violence became entangled in generational disputes, economic discontent, and close social relationships, resulting in subversions of an older social order and empowering youth during the chaotic states of emergency in 1985 and 1986. Despite this temporary social power, the groups wielding it – like SEYO – struggled to exert ideological control over their membership. The comingling of students and youth, and the deeply local orientation of youth congresses, had brought about greater variety of political expression and had brought new actors to the struggle, but it had also introduced new levels of autonomy and local specificity to youth politics.

The founding of the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO), and then later the ANC Youth League, inherited these legacies. SAYCO emerged in 1987 as an umbrella organisation for the many congresses that had emerged in the mid-1980s; it was explicitly protective of their autonomy, and in many cases even the names of the congresses did not change. Their composition continued to straddle both students and non-student youths, and SAYCO adopted the violent rhetoric of some of its constituents, if not necessarily their actions.

Into the post-apartheid period the distinctions between student politics and youth politics have remained contested. At the founding of the ANC Youth League, in which SAYCO was instrumental, it was agreed that the explicitly student-oriented groups, the unbanned COSAS

and SANSCO[716], would remain independent from the League. This permitted them to pursue educationally specific agendas, like the COSAS marches for free education led by Julius Malema in 2001 and 2002, while the Youth League focused primarily on non-educational issues. It was a tacit understanding that SASCO would operate on tertiary educational campuses, and that the Youth League would organize a similar demographic outside of educational institutions. But, in the mid-1990s, the Youth League began to contest Student Representative Council elections on the campuses of universities like Turfloop, causing tension between the two organisations. Mandla Seopela, a Turfloop student and the national president of SASCO in the early 2000s, described the situation:

> [T]he ANC Youth League in 1995/1996 in one of these gatherings took a resolution that it is now going to open branches in the universities of higher learning. So now it meant that now it is going to operate in the same space as SASCO. Because before then the feeling was that SASCO was the one organizing students, and the Youth League was organizing youth in general, students involved. When that resolution was taken, it meant that the Youth League was now going to contest space with SASCO. So that is why in most instances, I must indicate, there are those confrontational relations.[717]

Both SASCO and the ANC Youth League act as feeder organisations for the ANC itself. Their competition and sometimes outright confrontation, described by Seopela, arose from demographic overlap and territorialism, but it also indicates the fluidity of identities in the world of student and youth politics. Who counts where can be a challenge to disentangle; though students are sometimes in conflict or competition with youth, students also *are* youth, and their political agendas overlap and diverge in important ways. Capturing some of those convergences and divergences has been one of the aims of this dissertation.

[716] SANSCO, the South African National Students' Congress, was the new name taken by AZASO (the Azanian Students' Congress) in 1986; it was renamed SASCO, the South African Students' Congress, in 1991 after SANSCO merged with NUSAS, the historically white students' union.
[717] Author's interview with Mandla Seopela, Johannesburg, 17 September 2011.

Who is remembered? Associational legacies in Limpopo

This thesis has chronicled three major periods in the history of student and youth activism in the Northern Transvaal over the latter decades of the twentieth century: from the relatively elite-led, university-oriented ideological protest of the Black Consciousness movement, to the locally-rooted regional expansion of protest politics under COSAS and youth congresses, to the congregation of those once-disparate groups under the banner of the unbanned ANC Youth League. In each of these stages I have recalled the work of important political actors who came from or, in some cases went to, the Northern Transvaal and influenced the development of political expression there. Some of these have been remembered, associated, and memorialized as the province's famous sons; some have been remembered, having gone on to greater political fortunes, but have been divorced from their political roots in the region; and some have been broadly forgotten, as history and politics have moved on from their contributions. It is useful to consider what these associations, and this process of collective memory, indicates about politics in Limpopo, both now and over the course of the years covered in this thesis.

A host of the people mentioned in these pages have gone on to greater political prominence from their days as student activists: Cyril Ramaphosa, Frank Chikane, Mosiuoa Lekota, and Aubrey Mokoena, all nationally recognized figures today, were Turfloop students during the 1970s. As discussed in chapters two and three, they contributed to and participated in the increasingly politicized atmosphere on the campus, through the vehicles of the Students' Christian Movement, the South African Students' Organisation, and the Students Representative Council. Ramaphosa, after his first period of detention at the Mankweng police station for his involvement in the 1974 Viva-FRELIMO rally, spent much of the late

1970s in and out of detention, and then founded the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in 1982.[718] During his involvement with trade unionism, he became involved in the UDF and later the MDM, and was a key negotiator for the ANC during the 1990s. After decades in business, he returned to the heart of politics when he was elected ANC deputy president under Jacob Zuma in late 2012.

Frank Chikane maintained and deepened his involvement in both Christianity and political activism beyond his involvement in the Students' Christian Movement at Turfloop. After leaving the university in 1975 he was ordained as a minister in the Apostolic Faith Mission, but due to his continued and increasingly vocal opposition to apartheid, he was suspended from the conservative congregation. He went on to become involved in the South African Council of Churches (SACC), first through its Institute of Contextual Theology (ICT) and later as the Secretary General of the organisation. While at the ICT, Chikane participated in the founding of the UDF, and spoke at its launch in 1983.[719] After South Africa's democratic transition, Chikane concluded his term as Secretary General of the SACC and later became a member of the ANC's National Executive Committee.

Mosiuoa 'Terror' Lekota remained involved in student politics and connected to Turfloop even after his expulsion during the Abraham Tiro affair in 1972. He went on to become permanent organizer of SASO after two Turfloop alumni (Tiro, and Harry Nengwekhulu) had held the position, and was instrumental in establishing the off-campus branch of SASO in Mankweng, when university authorities had banned the organisation, as discussed in chapter three. Later that year he was arrested for his involvement in planning the Viva-FRELIMO

[718] For a complete biography until 2008, see Butler, *Cyril Ramaphosa*.
[719] For a more complete biography through the 1980s, see Chikane's autobiography, F. Chikane, *No Life of My Own* (London, 1988).

rally in Durban, and became one of the defendants in the trial of the SASO Nine (discussed in chapter three), resulting in his imprisonment on Robben Island. After his release from prison in 1983, Lekota, like Chikane and Ramaphosa, abandoned Black Consciousness ideology and its ties to Africanism for the multi-racialism of the United Democratic Front. He eventually became a National Executive Committee member for the ANC, and Premier of the Free State after the end of apartheid. In 2008, when President Thabo Mbeki was ousted from office after Zuma's triumph at Polokwane, Lekota, an Mbeki ally, resigned his position as Minister of Defense and founded the Congress of the People (COPE), an ANC splinter party.

Aubrey Mokoena, the president of the Turfloop SRC that had invited Abraham Tiro to speak in 1972, was expelled with Lekota in the aftermath of that event. His time at Turfloop had introduced Mokoena to Black Consciousness, and when he left the university he continued his involvement with the Black Consciousness Movement, first through SASO and then as an organizer for Black Community Programmes. He based himself and his family in Soweto during these years, and was a trusted adult advisor to some key student leaders of the 1976 revolt in schools there, as described in chapter four. Eventually in the crackdown against the BCM during 1977, Mokoena was detained and later given a banning order. He was not able to publically participate in political life again until the early 1980s. In 1984 he joined the Release Mandela Campaign (RMC), a UDF affiliate, finding it more organized and a preferable alternative to AZAPO, despite the fact that the latter had been founded by some of Mokoena's Black Consciousness cohort from Turfloop. The RMC was a pocket of more radical Africanism within the multi-racial umbrella (as discussed in chapter six), and Mokoena was eventually the most vocal critic of the supposed 'cabal' of Indian leadership that was accused of dictating UDF decision-making and sidelining African leaders. He has been a member of parliament for the ANC since 1994.

These four men followed similar trajectories out of university, from which they were all expelled for their political involvement in SASO, the SRC, and the Students' Christian Movement. With varying rapidity they left the ideology of Black Consciousness behind in favour of involvement in the compendium of organisations under the auspices of the United Democratic Front. They all became – and most remain – allied with the ANC at the time of its unbanning. In part this was simply pragmatic; the fate of Black Consciousness organisations had been clear since the failure of AZAPO to compete with the rising tide of Charterism in the 1980s, and subsequent splits in that party doomed it to increasing political irrelevance. When Ramaphosa, Lekota, and Mokoena emerged from periods of imprisonment, detention, and banning, the UDF allowed a broad scope of participation in anti-apartheid politics – through trade unions, churches, and civics – and even some space for questioning the fixity of Charterism. But somehow in jettisoning their ties to Black Consciousness, popular memory has also jettisoned their roots at Turfloop, and rather relates them to their entry into Charterist politics: for Ramaphosa, it is the trade unions, for Chikane, the churches, but for all it is through their role in the UDF. They each made an ideological shift that, whether by strategy or happenstance, kept them on the right side of shifting political trends in South Africa, and eventually positioned them in relative proximity to national power. These trajectories also served to divorce them from the radical student politics of their youth at Turfloop.

Compatriots of Ramaphosa, Chikane, Lekota, and Mokoena – those from the Turfloop cohort of the 1970s who did not make that critical shift from Black Consciousness to Charterism – have found their legacies less enduring. Those who championed the cause of Black Consciousness beyond its banning in 1977, like Harry Nengwekhulu, and who founded its

inheritor, the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), like Lybon Mabasa and Ishmael Mkhabela, are among those I argue have been broadly forgotten in the national and regional narratives of struggle.

Nengwekhulu remained in exile in Botswana until South Africa's democratic transition in 1994; he worked as an organizer for the Black Consciousness Movement (later the Black Consciousness Movement of South Africa) until the exile structures of the organisation deteriorated, as discussed in chapter four. He then became an academic at the University of Botswana, withdrawing from political life until his return to South Africa where he has acted as an education consultant to provincial and national structures. Lybon Mabasa and Ishmael Mkhabela continued to face aggressive state repression in the late 1970s and early 1980s; they were among Turfloop's student-teacher activists in Soweto schools in 1976, and in the wake of the crackdown on Black Consciousness organisations in 1977 they pioneered the founding of AZAPO. Mkhabela recalls this as an explicit attempt to preserve space for 'citizen's action':

> Just after the 1977 banning of the organisations, the predominant view of the ANC was that the space for civil disobedience and social action, citizens' action, were over. The only option was military struggle. Those of us who formed AZAPO, we believed there would always be space – a very important space – for citizens' action.[720]

This emphasis on social action is reflected in the turn his political career took; after the expiration of a banning order in the early 1980s Mkhabela became involved in community organizing through the Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre, an ecumenical body founded by the Anglican Church, and later founded his own community development organisation, leaving the world of activism through political parties behind him.

[720] Author's interview with Ishmael Mkhabela.

Lybon Mabasa, his co-founder in AZAPO, took a different path. He was also banned for five years after founding AZAPO, but in his own words, 'After five years I had not learned my lesson – I went back to politics, I went back to AZAPO.'[721] He remained with the organisation through its transition to a political party and when it contested the first national democratic election in 1994. After a schism in AZAPO in 1995, Mabasa left and formed the Socialist Party of Azania (SoPA), which he still heads.

Juxtaposing these two groups of Turfloop alumni – those who have gone on to political prominence through their connections with the ruling party, and those who have been largely sidelined in struggle narratives due to their association with other parties and ideologies - is in part a story of political 'winners' and 'losers'. But it is more than that as well; it may shed light on the way that Turfloop itself has been remembered in recent history. The university rocketed to national attention from rural obscurity in the early 1970s due to its close associations with Black Consciousness and SASO; it was a hotbed of political activism and a centre for the reinvigoration of Africanist ideas. But by the time Charterism came to the fore of student and national politics in the 1980s, another important shift had taken place, moving the nexus of youth political action in the Northern Transvaal outside the university and into schools and villages. Though Turfloop still played an important role in contributing to the development and work of new organisations like COSAS and youth congresses (as discussed above), it was no longer the epicentre of activism in the province, and its public profile reflected this.

If the shift to Charterism in the 1980s is important for how Turfloop is remembered, it can also expose some clues about the third group of political figures I mentioned above: those

[721] Author's interview with Lybon Mabasa.

who are remembered, and whose legacies, importantly, are associated with Limpopo. As discussed in chapter six, the two most significant political figures to be associated with Limpopo today are Julius Malema and Peter Mokaba. Both share an array of characteristics, from their similarly impoverished backgrounds to the adept employment of populism and inflammatory rhetoric that they used to galvanize their youth base. They emerged from a multi-racial, Charterist/ANC tradition (though Mokaba was initially conscientized by Black Consciousness thinkers in the wake of 1976), but were able to maintain a great deal of autonomy over their organisations – SAYCO and the ANC Youth League – within the UDF/ANC fold, and even to challenge dominant ideologies. They share a tendency towards militant politics with their regional counterparts from the 1970s, a legacy that has associated itself with the rhetoric of provincial politics in Limpopo in the post-apartheid era. Many of these traits are also implicitly associated with the politics of youth. It is significant that it was only after Ramaphosa, Chikane, Lekota, and Mokoena ceased to be student political activists that they stopped being associated with the province. Mokaba and Malema's legacies – at least for now – are deeply rooted in the politics of the Youth League, which arguably share some traits with the political culture of Limpopo itself: among them, a tendency to buck authority and to engage in radical and even militant political rhetoric. Limpopo, then, is politically characterized by its youth, making it all the more important to understand the role of youth politics in the province.

What's in a name? From the Northern Transvaal to Limpopo

The region discussed in this dissertation – variously called the Northern Transvaal, Northern Province, and Limpopo over the period that has been covered – has been insufficiently addressed in South Africa's historiography. There are many reasons for this, which I have

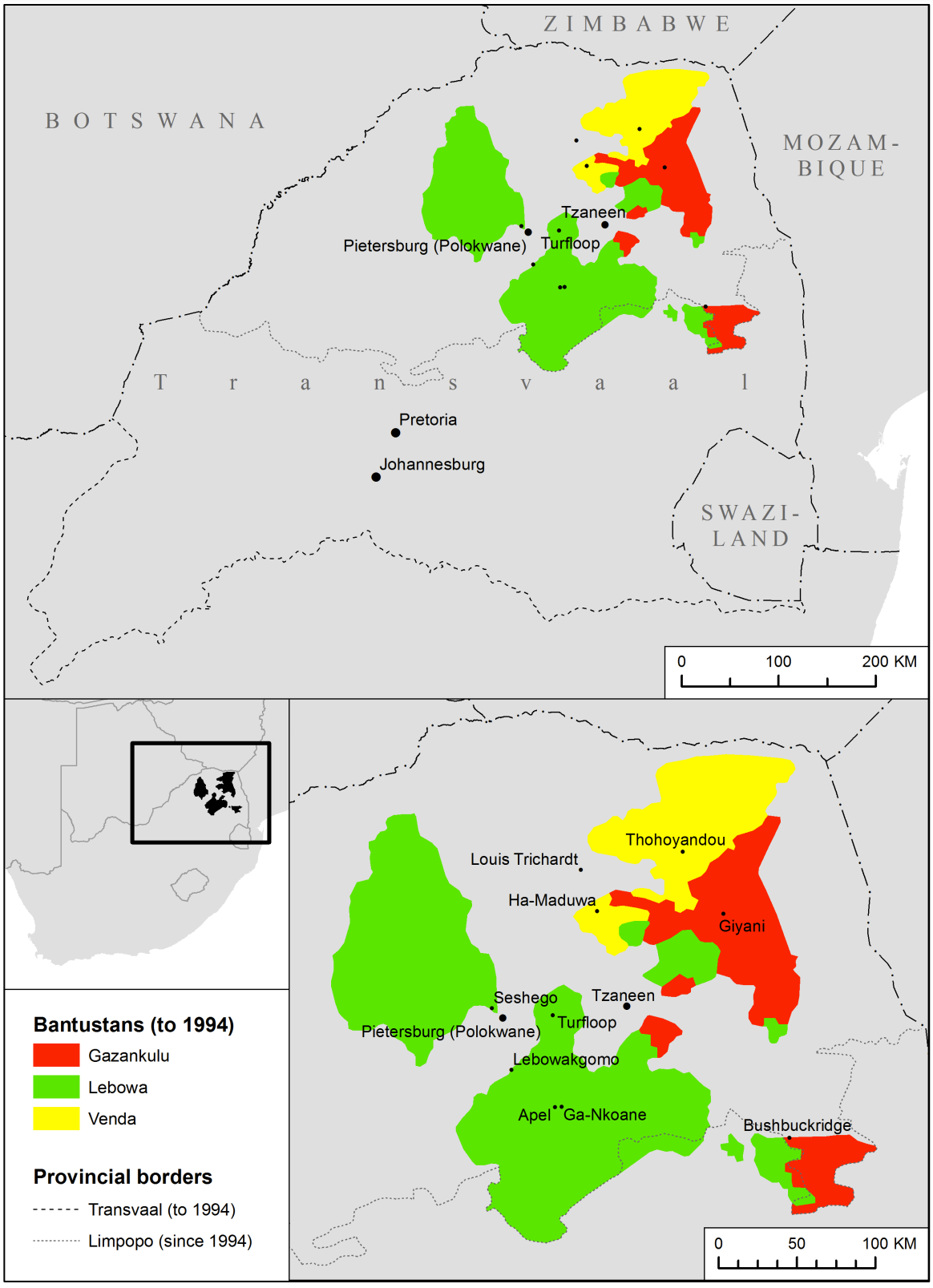
already discussed. One that bears repetition is that, for the great bulk of the period covered in this dissertation, this region was not a political entity. It was simply the northern part of the Transvaal Province, defined more by what it was not – the dense urban landscape of the southern Transvaal – than by what it was: a large, predominantly rural expanse comprised of white farmlands and towns, and three politically distinct Bantustans. Why, then, write a history of its political activism? I contend that, as much as divides this region, from the perspective of student politics there are some key things that unite it.

The most notable of those is its institutions: Turfloop created a centre of activism not just for its students, but for the surrounding communities through political education classes, rallies, and even by providing a hiding place for those fleeing the police. Through networks of students and staff it connected remote parts of the province to the Witwatersrand. It also became the centre of regional UDF activity in the 1980s, when key figures in the regional structures of the Front like Louis Mnguni, Bridgette Mabandla, and Peter Mokaba were based at the university or in nearby Mankweng. It was under the UDF that the northern part of the Transvaal established itself as a separate region in the UDF structure in 1986. Arguably, this is the period when the region began to identify itself as politically distinct from its southern counterpart (though social, cultural, and economic distinctions had long been articulated); it coincided with the expansion of youth politics across the region. Though I have argued that these operated with a high degree of local specificity, the eruption of youth congresses across the region also bear a good deal of comparison in their aims and methods. In chapter five I looked comparatively at youth congresses in Sekhukhuneland, Bushbuckridge, and Venda – across the three Bantustans and much of the geography of the Northern Transvaal. In 1994 these and all Bantustans were reincorporated into South Africa after the end of apartheid, but they remain historically and physically distinct in many ways. Linking institutions, like

Turfloop, and organisations, ranging from the South African Students' Organisation to the ANC Youth League, have enabled me to tell a story of the trajectory of student and youth politics in this area.

One of the minor themes of this thesis has been the politics of naming, and perhaps that is an appropriate note on which to end, as the naming of Limpopo was more difficult than most provinces. In the mid 1990s, the province was first called the Northern Transvaal, and then renamed Northern Province in 1995. Shortly after the turn of the century, a movement to rename the province in accordance with its historical and cultural significance was mounted. Groups lobbied for different names, and public polls were taken. It was not until 2003, at the end of the period covered in my analysis, that the name Limpopo, for the river forming its northern border, was decided. It was selected over the runner-up, Mapungubwe, the site of an ancient kingdom in the province's northwest. In the end, the reasoning was pragmatic: tourists, it was feared, might have trouble saying Mapungubwe, while Limpopo was easily pronounced and recognizable. Though the reasons behind renaming were fairly pedestrian, perhaps this process of contestation and flux is particularly appropriate for the region. It is an area where struggle and negotiation have played out in shifts between marginality and centrality, and between competing ideologies and groups, over the last decades of the twentieth century and the turn to the twenty-first.

Appendix A: Map 1



Appendix B: Tables

Table 2: Student and Staff Leadership at the University of the North, 1960-2003

Year	SRC President	Rector
1960	*No SRC*	EF Potgieter
1961	Gessler M. Nkondo	
1962 – 1966		
1967	Eric Mafuna	
1968		
1969	Petrus Machaka	Acting: Englebrecht; JL Boshoff appointed beginning 1 Dec. 1969
1970	Harry Nengwekhulu	JL Boshoff
1971	Abraham Tiro	
1972	Aubrey Mokoena	
1973	*SRC suspended*	
1974	Isaac Nkwe (Jan.-Mar.) P. Nefolovhodwe (Mar.-Sept.) Gilbert Sedibe (Sept.-Dec.)	
1975	*SRC suspended on campus (along with SASO)*	
1976		
1977		William Kgware
1978		
1979	*SRC rejected by students after university amended its constitution*	
1980		
1981	Mojalefa Mogane	P.C. Mokgokong
1982 – 1984		
1985	M.J. Mokhosi	
1986	*SRC suspended in June 1986, during State of Emergency, reinstated in 1989*	
1987		
1988		
1989	Ernest Khosa	
1990		
1991 – 1993		N.C. Manganyi
1994	Musa Zuma	N.S. Nedebele
1995 – 1997		
1998	Gilbert Kanyago	
1999 – 2000		
2001		Patrick Fitzgerald – brought as external administrator
2002		
2003	Mandla Seopela	M. Mokgalong

*Data predominantly from press reports, and M. Nkomo (2006)

Indicates no data available

Table 3.1: Student Protest and University Response at Turfloop, 1969-1979

Date	Protest/Closure	University Response
May 1969	NUSAS Affiliation Controversy	Refuse to allow students to affiliate to NUSAS
June 1970	700 Students march on Rector's office to protest room raids	Security police investigate those who instigate the march
September 1970	Students boycott university 'independence' celebrations and investiture of new Chancellor W.W.M. Eiselen	All readmitted students in 1971 required to sign a pledge not to participate in any future protests
April – June 1972	A.R. Tiro gives inflammatory graduation speech; students boycott classes to protest his expulsion	Expulsion of Tiro, entire student body and university closure; Jackson Commission of Inquiry formed in March 1973
April 1973	82 of 97 graduating nursing students boycott degree ceremony to protest separation from primary graduation ceremony and university authorities	No action taken; graduation proceeded with fifteen students
25 Sept. 1974	Viva-FRELIMO Rally is staged on campus	Security police suppress demonstration with dogs and teargas; SRC & SASO leadership is arrested – 1000 students sit in at the student centre for 7 days to demand their release; White university staff resign over allegations of violence; Snyman Commission of Inquiry formed in Nov. 1974
February 1975		University authorities suspend all SASO activities on campus following arrests during Viva FRELIMO Rally
5 May 1975	Students attack workers and destroy beer for graduation party and celebration of 5 years of university independence; they paint anti-paternalism slogans in dining hall	
June – August 1976	Students protest in solidarity with Soweto schoolchildren; 168 students charged with public violence and/or arson	Turfloop (and other black universities around South Africa) closed; the 168 students were eventually readmitted
August 1977	Students protest expulsion of theology student; stage boycott and hunger strike to make demands about quality of hostel food	University closed; students required to sign a declaration withdrawing all demands and approving revision of SRC constitution in order to be reinstated
September 1977	After returning to campus, students boycott lectures to protest absence of SRC and rewriting its constitution	1000 students asked to leave campus/not permitted to sit exams; property damage and staff injured in night violence
April 1979	Ngoako Ramathlodi expelled for allegedly participating in Sharpeville Massacre remembrance service; student body walks out of lectures and stages 2 day sit-in to protest	Police armed with rifles and dogs force end to sit-in; university stands by expulsion until it is forced to reinstate Ramathlodi by a ruling from the Pretoria Supreme Court

Table 3.2: Student Protest and University Response at Turfloop, 1980-1989

Date	Protest/ Closure/ Incident	University/Police Response
23 Feb. 1980	2000 students march in support of 161 who were denied readmission for 1980 academic year; mass meeting followed	Refuse to readmit the 161 students
20 October 1980	Most of Turf's 3000 students vacated campus in boycott over detention of two female students (AZASO members) and complaints about two white staff members who facilitated the arrests on campus.	Rector Mokgokong appointed three person committee to decide what action to take – though would not dismiss the two staff members, which students demanded.
November 1983	Students stage 24 hour boycott to commemorate students at the University of Zululand who had been injured and killed in clashes with Inkatha supporters.	First boycott at Turfloop to be held with the university administration's blessing.
12 Sept. 1983	500 students take resolution condemning deaths in detention and forced removals from Katlehong	
April 1985	Demonstrations on campus over the quality of food	
2 May 1985	M. J. Mokhosi, president of the SRC, resigns in face of non-cooperation from fellow council members and allegations of the SRC being "co-opted".	No response, and Mokhosi's resignation was withdrawn
May 1985		Detention of two members of the UNIN women's group, one of whom, Josephine Moshobane, died of brain damage two weeks after her release from detention without trial.
Aug.-Sept. 1985	Sporadic class boycotts after several students were detained during the winter holidays, security guards introduced and protest meetings banned on campus. One student (Nash Mogane) shot and killed on campus; five students charged with pouring acid over Law lecturer.	Police raid on campus resulted in detention of approx. 13 students; students responded with total boycott until forced to go to class by police.
12 June 1986		National state of emergency declared; contingent of soldiers "invaded" Turfloop, conducted raids, confiscated "subversive" materials (including SRC constitution); students sjambokked, bitten by dogs; as many as 200 students detained, according to *Sowetan*. Most other students left campus and university was officially closed on 17 June. SRC subsequently suspended.

(Cont.) Date	Protest/ Closure/ Incident	University/ Police Response
21 July 1986	Turfloop reopens and students return; 4 others detained over holiday/return period. Students boycott four days of classes demanding unconditional release of (19) detained students, and that police and soldiers leave the campus.	University authorities threatened to close university, force students to resume lecture attendance.
11 – 13 Aug. 1986	Students boycott registration for second semester classes, demanding release of detained students and SRC members, and decrease of R1000 registration fee.	At 5pm on 13 Aug. Rector issued orders for students who could/would not register to leave campus at 9am the following day; police arrived on campus and began room raids at 11:45pm.
14 -18 Aug. 1986		Police and soldiers brought onto campus to monitor registration. Students who successfully registered were issued with an ID bearing the emblems of the South African Police, the Lebowa Police, and the South African Defence Force.
2 Sept. 1986	Students respond to police/army control of university function with a sit-in, demanding the release of detained students, the reinstatement of expelled students, and the withdrawal of troops from campus.	More police arrived on campus and enforced class attendance from 3 September, by corralling all students in the great hall every morning and moving them into classes from there.
Sept. 1986 – 1989		SADF garrisoned troops on campus at Turfloop, who impose tight restrictions on students' movements.
March 1988		University authorities shut hostels and force students to move off-campus while continuing classes, after raids reveal students to have hot plates in rooms.
15 March 1989	Students hold demonstration on campus to protest exclusion of 472 students who failed exams, presence of SADF on campus, the presence of the head of the Northern Transvaal's Conservative Party, who is the head of the Business Economics course.	Police and army personnel open fire – three students shot: Klaas Puane is shot in the eye and loses his sight. University closed residences and required students to vacate campus.
August 1989	Students boycott, call on administration to pressure police to stop harassing students	University closed for a week; students refused to attend lectures after their return.

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