

**THE DESTRUCTION AND REMAKING OF 'COMMUNITY': A CASE
STUDY OF THE MAGAZINE BARRACKS RESIDENTS' RELOCATION
TO CHATSWORTH**

By

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DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM

I,, declare that

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Signed

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Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ABH	Aryan Benevolent Home
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BPC	Black People's Convention
CBD	Central Business District
CFA	Chatsworth Football Association
CHAC	Chatsworth Housing Action Committee
DCC	Durban City Council
DIMES	Durban Indian Municipal Indian Employees Society
DMIEU	Durban Municipal Indian Employees Union
FOSA	Friends of the Sick Association
GAA	Group Areas Act
ISSC	Indian Social Services Committee
LAC	Local Affairs Committee
LRTB	Local Road Transportation Board
MBRC	Magazine Barracks Remembrance Committee
MOH	Medical Officer of Health
NED	Natal Education Department
NP	National Party
NPA	National Provincial Administration
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NIO	Natal Indian Organisation
NRB	Native Resettlement Board
NTC	National Transport Commission
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress

SABS	South African Bureau of Standards
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAIC	South African Indian Council
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SAR	South African Railways
SDILAC	South Durban Indian Local Affairs Committee
SDCF	Southern Durban Civic Federation
TIC	Transvaal Indian Congress
TUCSA	Trade Union Council of South Africa
USA	United States of America

ABSTRACT

The forced removals resulting from the implementation of the National Party Government's Group Areas Act (1950) have had drastic implications for millions of South Africans across the country. Not surprisingly, there is a rich body of research on the motives, as well as the political and economic consequences, of this destructive piece of legislation. This study sought to move beyond these broader approaches which examined Group Areas from at a macro-level, by focusing specifically on the subjective experiences of one particular social group, who were affected by forced removals and how they rebuilt their lives. It focuses on South Africans of Indian decent (hitherto referred to as Indians) who were employed by the Durban Corporation, and lived in the Magazine Barracks which was one of several labour barracks located around the city of Durban during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From the 1880s, low-paid Indian municipal employees lived in overcrowded conditions in the poorly built barracks. However, they adjusted to this lifestyle and devised mechanisms to cope with their daily challenges through voluntary networks and a strong culture of sharing and self-help. During the 1960s, the approximately 10 000 residents of the Magazine Barracks were displaced and relocated to Chatsworth, where they were split up and accommodated in different sections of the mammoth housing scheme. This has had drastic implications for former residents of the barracks and this study probes into the ways in which they responded to laws which were impose upon them.

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INTRODUCTION

The Group Areas Act (GAA), passed by the National Party (NP) dominated South African government in 1950 and amended in subsequent years, resulted in the destruction of many established, mainly black,¹ communities throughout South Africa. Group Areas was one of the key instruments used by the NP to enforce its ideology of apartheid, which aimed to categorise all South Africans into one of four racial groups and to then segregate them as far as possible.² The act aimed to achieve complete residential segregation by empowering the state to demarcate areas for specific racial groups and to enforce this through forced removals.

An estimated three and a half million South Africans were displaced from their homes and many were resettled in state created housing projects.³ The three largest, most famous, and well documented freestanding black townships destroyed by the GAA were District Six, Sophiatown, and Cato Manor. Iain Edwards explains that these have consequently ‘become political metaphors for urban dispossession and resistance’ in South Africa.⁴ Described as an ‘unparalleled example of state directed socio spatial structuring’ in shaping the ‘physical, social, cultural, political, and economic’ landscape in South Africa, Group Areas and its consequences were far reaching and multifaceted.⁵ For around four decades South Africans lived in a landscape shaped by a policy which separated them, and promoted and entrenched inequality and unequal access to resources.

While the local state had long instituted segregation measures in Durban, Group Areas intensified this process.⁶ Thousands of mainly African and Indian residents were removed from long settled communities and resettled in townships such as KwaMashu and Umlazi for Africans, and Chatsworth and Phoenix for Indians. The predicament of Indians in Durban and coloureds in Cape

Town was different from that of Africans as, historically, Indians and coloureds had settled in larger numbers on the fringes of cities, which ultimately resulted in a larger percentage of these groups being displaced during the implementation of Group Areas.⁷ Indeed, Indians as a group were proportionally the most affected by forced removals with around 80 per cent of Indians in Durban being relocated.⁸ Some scholars believe that the Durban City Council's (DCC) desire to rid the city of Indians who were perceived as an economic threat to whites, played a crucial role in the development of legislation that culminated in the GAA and that the DCC utilised this Act for this very purpose.⁹

Indians who were relocated to Chatsworth came from various places in and around Durban where they and their families had settled after completion of their indenture. This study focuses specifically on the destruction of the Durban Municipal Magazine Barracks (henceforth Magazine Barracks), which was built in the 1880s to house Indian municipal workers. Between 6 000 and 10 000 people were moved from the Magazine Barracks, situated in Somtseu Road, a couple of kilometres north of the Durban central business district (CBD), between 1963 and 1965. It is currently the site of the police headquarters and magistrates' courts.¹⁰

Those that were forcibly removed from the Magazine Barracks faced many social and economic challenges as they made the transition to Chatsworth. This study explores how, over the long term, Group Areas relocations influenced the lives of these individuals and their families. It thus seeks to deepen our understanding of how broad structural changes in South Africa's complex history during the middle decades of the twentieth century are reflected through the subjective experiences and agency of ordinary people, rather than examining historical change only at the macro-level.

Equally important, the study brings into the equation the agency and subjectivity of the ‘victims’ of Group Areas through its focus on the choices that people made and the ways in which they rebuilt ‘community.’

A particularly interesting issue that emerged during the research process was that despite it being more than half a century since the destruction in the 1960s of the Magazine Barracks, some former residents continued to refer to it as their ‘home’ and many contended that a Magazine Barracks ‘community’ still exists today in 2015. Although the buildings that made up the Magazine Barracks have been destroyed, the name still has intrinsic value in the lives of its former residents and their identities. This is maintained through webs of friendships and social practices. Katja Uusihakala who examined the memories of white former residents of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), who emigrated to South Africa after British colonial rule came to an end in 1980, wrote that ‘social practices connected with processes of remembering together are constitutive of how the community understands itself.’¹¹

Like many other communities who experienced displacement, commemorative memory, or the act of remembering together, features strongly amongst former residents of the Magazine Barracks. This was evident during oral interviews with former residents and is illustrated in the efforts of bodies such as the Magazine Barracks Remembrance Association (MBRA) which holds meetings from time to time to find ways of preserving the memory of the Magazine Barracks, and the Durban Municipal Pensioners’ Club which organises weekly meetings where former residents socialise. At the Club’s weekly meetings and mass meetings organised by the MBRA, former residents often reminisce about their time in the Magazine Barracks. At the time of writing, the most recent mass

meeting of former residents had taken place on 8 November 2014 at the Chatsworth Youth Centre and was attended by more than 700 former residents of the Magazine Barracks.¹²

Whereas people from the Magazine Barracks see themselves as having constituted a ‘community’ in the past and constituting a ‘community of memory’ in the present, it is important to highlight that their experiences were different as they did not constitute a homogenous group, a theme that is taken up in this thesis.¹³

Literature review and justification for the choice of the topic

Given South Africa’s complex urban history since the first Europeans arrived in the seventeenth century, but more especially since the country’s industrialisation in the late nineteenth century, and the GAA and the massive residential restructuring it caused, it is hardly surprising that this has spawned a vast body of literature.¹⁴ During the 1960s and early 1970s, when forced removals were implemented countrywide, there was little literature that aimed to concisely examine the urban history of South Africa.¹⁵ A few historians ventured into this field during the 1970s.¹⁶

By the 1980s, a burgeoning body of literature was developing and this gained momentum over the next two decades.¹⁷ This work, which was largely interdisciplinary, examined many aspects of the GAA and the legislation that preceded it, which also aimed to restrict the movement of black people countrywide. Challenging assumptions that the GAA was uniquely South African and exclusively about race, some scholars have seen it as developing in tandem with concerns about sanitation, the supply of labour, and the growth of capitalism, and have related it to international literature on the development of the modern city.¹⁸

Comparisons with cities in Europe and the United States of America (USA) point to similarities and differences with South Africa's complex urban history in the global context. There is a vast literature on the council estates built in England during the inter-war period.¹⁹ Secondary literature on African cities is also relevant. In spite of their racial heterogeneity, comparisons with cities in other parts of Africa are uncommon in South African urban historiography.²⁰ This comparative literature can help us understand the ways in which Group Areas and forced removals were unique or not so unique in urban history.

Also crucial to this literature referred to above was the development of social history and oral history as historiographical traditions, which gave voice to marginalised people whose experiences would have not otherwise have been documented. While social history was crucial in uncovering the impact of forced removals on South Africans, the task of fully capturing the impact of such a far-reaching phenomenon is difficult due to the multifaceted ways in which South Africans experienced it. Most scholars depicted Group Areas in terms of what was lost, and how it created powerlessness and victims. They concentrated on the loss of homes and the hardship of displacement; however, given the heterogeneity of the people affected by forced removals, these broad generalisations do not represent the impact in its entirety.

The interdisciplinary work that emerged by the late 1980s was largely uncoordinated. Writing in 1995, Paul Maylam argued that there was a need to examine the origins and motives for the GAA and the complex interaction between local and central state departments in effecting policy and removals. During the early 1990s, scholars undertook this task. Some of the work that examined

the motives behind the GAA argued that Durban, and particularly its ‘Indian question,’ served as a model for urban segregation and Group Areas implementation in the 1950s.²¹

Despite the importance of Durban and the drive to keep Indians out of the city from the 1880s, Group Areas’ destruction of long-established communities has not been systematically explored, unlike in other parts of the country where the multifaceted ways in which Group Areas impacted on individuals and communities have been better studied.

The first major work to examine what forced removals meant to ordinary people over the long term was *Outcast Cape Town* by social geographer John Western. Western’s focus was on coloureds in Cape Town, mainly in District Six and the predominantly white suburb of Mowbray, who were relocated to the Cape Flats, and became ‘outcasts’ in their own city.²² Although this study provided many, especially in the international community, with crucial insight into how the ‘outcast in South Africa lived,’ it was confined to one group and one city.²³ Subsequent studies examined what was lost through forced removals in Cape Town and in different contexts.²⁴ Located on the outer edge of the Cape Town CBD, District Six was predominantly inhabited by the descendants of the slaves who were brought to meet the labour requirements of the Dutch Cape Colony. It is one of the iconic examples of forced removals. By the time of the GAA, more than 60 000 residents had been uprooted and displaced to other areas where they encountered various problems.²⁵ Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie’s study of Rylands on the Cape Flats offered contrasting perspectives which challenged stereotypes. Rather than focusing on how people became outcasts on the periphery of cities, she shows that they made their homes into a ‘centre’ which entrenched a sense of Indianness.²⁶

Sophiatown on the other hand, was more multiracial than District Six, as it included Africans, Chinese, Indian, coloured, and even some white residents.²⁷ The township was established in 1905, a few kilometres northwest of the Johannesburg CBD and was home to 40 000 residents by the 1950s.²⁸ Pastor Desmond Sheik's recollection is of a

very close-knit group ... mixed but there for one another. This is part of what connected them here, a spirit of belonging – the spirit of Sophiatown. That spirit was a commitment to people being there for one another, sharing one's issues, protecting one another and so on. It was a spirit of community.²⁹

When the NP came to power it declared that Sophiatown was to be evacuated and in 1955 the Native Resettlement Board (NRB) was created to formulate and implement operational plans to remove residents from the area and resettle them in different parts of Soweto. Soweto was designated for Africans and the NRB failed to provide areas for the resettlement of Indian, Coloured and Chinese residents.³⁰ Indian families in Sophiatown were temporarily and forcefully moved to a military base in Lenasia (Ammunition Depot 91) where they shared the premises with soldiers. Coloured and Chinese people were moved to what is known today as Westbury, a township which is located near Westdene.³¹

In Durban the largest area to be affected with forced removals was Cato Manor, located seven kilometres west of the CBD. This settlement comprised of almost 2 000 hectares and was mainly undeveloped land of which a substantial proportion was owned by the state. Cato Manor was bound by the affluent white residential suburbs of Westville, Sherwood, Queensburgh, Hillary, Bellair, and Berea. It had a population of approximately 120 000 Indians and Africans by the late 1950s

when it was declared an area for white settlement, and Indians and Africans were moved to segregated townships. Brij Maharaj's case study of Cato Manor probes the role of the local state in implementing Group Areas in Durban,³² while Edwards examined the destruction of this area through residents' responses to forced removals.³³

District Six and Sophiatown were thriving areas where black people could own property, while Cato Manor was largely an informal settlement. Despite many attempts by the white authorities to keep black people out of urban areas, these places (District Six, Sophiatown, and Cato Manor) gave them a toehold in urban South Africa. The destruction of these communities had a far-reaching impact on people's social relations and economic lives, as well as their identities as they were moved to racially segregated townships. Paul Greedy writes that Sophiatown during the 1950s 'offered unprecedented possibilities for blacks to choose and invent their society from the novel distractions of urban life.'³⁴ However, just one decade later it was destroyed.

Deborah Hart and Gordon Pirie examined the rich literature produced by the residents of Sophiatown and point out that while government sources portrayed a picture of a run-down slum; the writings of its people show how 'Sophiatown appears to have offered a sense of stature, of belonging, and of individuality in the midst of poverty.'³⁵ Saul Dubow makes the poignant point that Cato Manor, Sophiatown and District Six stand out because they

took place in large metropolitan areas, aroused popular resistance, and have duly been immortalized in countless memoirs and histories. These iconic examples of urban ethnic cleansing were all the more poignant because their cosmopolitan composition was anathema to apartheid's insistence on managed social and spatial order.³⁶

The destruction of such communities also had implications for the economic functioning of the cities from which they were removed. Bill Freund explains that although forced removals of communities from around the city were motivated by notions of modernity and economic progress, which were juxtaposed with small enterprise (associated with backwardness),

with hindsight this may have been a disastrous thrust in terms of the prospects of late twentieth-century capitalism, where heavily protected ‘modern’ industries, imitating those in the most advanced countries and restricted to serving local consumers, are becoming less and less viable and unable to provide many jobs. Economic relationships and forms that once seemed archaic might have been the key to economic development in this context.³⁷

With regard to Durban, there is a developing body of literature that examines various facets of segregation and Group Areas. The presence of African workers who came to the city in search of work, as well as ex-indentured Indians who settled on the periphery of Durban prior to 1932, when the city’s boundaries were expanded, is well documented.³⁸ Given the size of its population and the close proximity in which Indians and Africans lived, as well as their complex relations, it comes as no surprise that Cato Manor has been the main focus of such studies.³⁹

Studies on other areas within Durban are developing. Dianne Scott has examined the devastation wrought by Group Areas on Indians in Clairwood where established temples, schools, halls, and clinics were lost.⁴⁰ Kalviselvum Subramony’s master’s dissertation focused on the formation of Chatsworth, and how the need to create a housing scheme as quickly as possible had negative consequences on the displaced people who had to make it their home.⁴¹ Luxien Ariyan examined

the relocation of people to Phoenix which was established in 1976 to accommodate Indians from the northern areas of Durban who could not be accommodated in Chatsworth.⁴² More recently, in 2012, Thomas Blom Hansen also examined Chatsworth, focusing on its evolution during apartheid to reflect on the anxieties faced by South Africans of Indian descent in the post-apartheid period.⁴³ In 2013, a collaborative study edited by Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai examined many aspects of the social, political, and economic dynamics of Chatsworth, and provided contextual and historical information about the displaced communities who were resettled there.⁴⁴

Given their strong urban roots, links to indenture, conspicuous presence in the heart of Durban, working class status, and enthusiastic support for the Communist Party, trade unions, and the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), it is surprising that the experiences of the residents of the Magazine Barracks have been neglected. At one time referred to as the ‘invisible men,’ the study of the role and experiences of workers and the nature of worker housing has gained much momentum in North America and Europe.⁴⁵ However, these issues have been less examined in South Africa and the other former British colonies, where barracks type accommodation was widely used. As Brian Kearney pointed out a decade ago with regard to Durban ...

the urban poor and their condition has not been a specially popular theme in local history. This is surprising given that they were in so many ways the direct result of other significant events and policies of nineteenth century Natal.⁴⁶

A few case studies have examined these themes with regard to Durban.⁴⁷ Rooksana Omar’s honours thesis was the first to specifically look at Indian municipal workers and it provides

empirical information on living conditions at the Magazine Barracks, drawing mainly on Durban Municipal archives and newspaper reports.⁴⁸ Vahed, who focused on worker radicalisation in the 1930s and 1940s, studied the Magazine Barracks where the majority of Indian municipal workers resided.⁴⁹ Pushpan Murugan, a former resident whose family played an important role in cultural activities at the Magazine Barracks, carried out a series of interviews and recorded some noteworthy personalities and the history and role of the voluntary bodies that were established at the Barracks.⁵⁰ However, hers is more a commemorative work. Hannah Carrim's honours dissertation focused on gender by drawing comparisons between the Indian women of the Magazine Barracks and African women of the Baumanville Barracks.⁵¹

The destruction of the once vibrant Magazine Barracks community under the GAA has not been studied systematically, nor has their unique experiences of forced removals been captured. Whereas Kearney argued for the importance of worker housing as a reflection of nineteenth century Natal, the experiences of municipal workers during the twentieth century are important to illustrate lived experiences of the GAA and its consequences, which are only tangentially referred to in general studies dealing with the operation of Group Areas in Durban.⁵²

While the story of the GAA has been told under the broad themes of dispossession and loss of identity, we cannot flatten out experiences. Recording the uniqueness of the Magazine Barracks will broaden our understanding of the impact of the Act. In calling for research that examines the evolution of preceding segregation legislation and exactly how it transformed into the GAA, Alan Mabin noted that most studies concentrated on strict dichotomies of 'before' and 'after' forced removals, emphasising that the results were 'often horrible in personal terms.'⁵³ Mabin believes

that the focus should, instead, be on the relationship between the motives, development and implementation of legislation, in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the impact of Group Areas on people and to go beyond ‘victimhood.’⁵⁴

This study contributes to our knowledge and understanding of how Group Areas operated in Durban and its impact on communities. The working hypothesis is that Group Areas led to the destruction of the long-established Magazine Barracks community through forced removals, with devastating but multifaceted social, cultural, and economic consequences for its residents. Instead of merely seeing the GAA as a destructive force, this study addresses the agency of former residents and how they interpreted and responded to forced removals. The case study focuses on a specific place and group of people, and explores the lives of those who were affected by the movement from the Magazine Barracks. According to Leslie McCall, case studies can provide a deeper sense of how people lived and experienced change, and through this we can reflect on broader developments.⁵⁵

Research problem and objectives: Key questions addressed

The decades from the 1950s to the 1980s were witness to rapid social, economic, and political changes that affected the lives of the residents of the Magazine Barracks. This included the tightening of racial boundaries, the growth of anti-apartheid protest, opening of factories, expansion of education and the emergence of a professional class, and with it economic mobility. While apartheid structural barriers limited people’s life chances, this study focuses on what these ‘victims’ of apartheid did within the context of these constraints. An important component of this study is life histories and memories which allow us to track changes across generations. Due to

the political situation in South Africa and resistance to racial oppression, most historical material on Indians in South Africa focuses on political and economic struggles pre-1960.⁵⁶ While situated in the literature on Durban's urban history, this study also examines questions of identity and the influence that the move to Chatsworth had on various aspects of being South Africans of Indian descent.⁵⁷

The first concern of this thesis is the experiences and memories of its former residents when they still resided in the Magazine Barracks. Most former residents speak nostalgically about the 'community' that they built and experienced which was shattered by Group Areas. What were their living and working conditions like in reality? In what sense and to what extent did the inhabitants constitute a community? What was the role of the voluntary bodies that they established? How were women involved in economic activities? What were family / gender relations like?⁵⁸

The second set of questions that this study engages with is the GAA and its implementation. Why was the Magazine Barracks targeted for eviction? How did this fit with the racialisation of Durban? How did the residents react to the GAA? Was there resistance? If so, was it uniform or did some people cooperate for selfish reasons? If so, why? Did individual resistance / cooperation impact on the ultimate outcomes in Chatsworth?

A third set of issues deals with infrastructure in Chatsworth and some of the key challenges faced by residents. This mainly relates to housing, amenities, and service delivery. Related to infrastructure are the mechanisms that residents used to survive during the early years. What

organisations emerged and who were the drivers of these organisations? What strategies did they employ to seek redress? Were these struggles linked to broader political struggles?

With regard to the remaking of community in Chatsworth and resulting social issues, this study is concerned with the role of religion and culture in people's lives. This includes festivals, places of worship, and vernacular and cultural schools. How did home and family change? For example, Freund refers to significant changes in gender relations within the working class Indian household over the course of the twentieth century due to women entering the formal workforce and this study probes such changes.⁵⁹

An important component of this study is the political and economic changes over this period. How did increased opportunities for education and changing economic conditions from the 1960s affect residents? Did this lead to economic mobility? How did this affect identities? Did this have political repercussions?

Research problem and objectives: Broad issues investigated

This study is broadly concerned with the sense of community and place of the residents of the Magazine Barracks prior to, during, and after their forced removal to Chatsworth. As one aspect of the research process, oral history was helpful in understanding, in the first instance, how individuals recalled their lives at the Magazine Barracks and how individual lives were impacted upon by forced removals.

Examining the perspectives of former residents of the Magazine Barracks and their responses reveal how forced removals were experienced at an individual and subjective level. I attempt to historicise what people remembered, how they remembered it, and what they omitted or forgot, as well as the pain that they experienced through forced removals and its impact on respondents' sense of identity. Underlying this is a sense of loss, not only material loss, but also that of self and identity.

This study examines the very idea that apartheid created 'townships' were racially and class bound. In what ways, if any, was there contact across racial grounds and was this a purely working class area as is generally accepted? What are / were the levels of migration from / to the area and what is the relationship between geographical im/mobility and identity? Are those that remain in Chatsworth 'failed' cases or do these individuals draw strength from attachment to community? To what degree are former residents of the Magazine Barracks attached to an identity associated with the barracks and do they exhibit perceptions of exceptionalism when compared to other residents of Chatsworth since, some of them suggested, they maintain their distinctiveness?

Workers' employment choices also reveal the changing climate of the time. For example, by the 1970s, many residents, particularly women, could expect to find work in the clothing industry. Conversely, by the early 1990s, many of these jobs were shed as a result of trade liberalisation policies or the relocation of factories to border industries. What impact did the entry of women into the workplace have on gender relations and family structure?

Another broad issue to be investigated is that of social identification, both individual and communal. This would include class, race, gender, and religious identification.⁶⁰ Identities are understood as relational and fluid. The work of Tom Lodge⁶¹ and Edwards⁶² on Sophiatown and Cato Manor respectively, show how interrogating Group Areas removals can provide intriguing insight into the history and transition in political bodies.⁶³ Vahed has explored the pervasiveness of 'Indianness' and the failure to establish non-racial, class-based politics in his account of workers living at the Magazine Barracks prior to forced removals.⁶⁴

Given key political leaders' efforts to foster cooperation between Indians and Africans in the 1950s, it is important to examine the impact of such efforts 'on the ground.' By taking the study to the 1980s, we are able to examine crucial questions such as whether resistance of various kinds forged a non-racial identity in opposition to the apartheid state or whether Indians, particularly the working class, become less radical, as Freund has argued⁶⁵ If so, why? Conversely, many new institutional structures arose in Chatsworth, and it is worth examining who the drivers of these projects were. Were they the remnants of the old Magazine Barracks leadership or did new individuals assume responsibility?

Theoretical framework

The liberalist and revisionist schools are the dominant trends within which South African historiography on the GAA has been located.⁶⁶ Liberals tended to focus on race and blamed the NP government for the oppression of blacks whereas the revisionist school saw apartheid as part of a capitalist structure which had parallels in other parts of the world.⁶⁷ While there is debate on

the extent to which human agency applies, this study takes the approach suggested by Uusihakala that although ‘historical forces such as colonialism have shaped and continue to shape the lives of people globally, they are always reflected upon and given meanings in culturally specific ways.’⁶⁸ It is crucial to examine how South Africans reacted to the laws imposed upon them and the meanings that these have taken on.

Understanding the means in which South Africans affected by Group Areas responded to the structural forces imposed upon them is crucial to understanding the multifaceted impact of the Group Areas Act. Etienne Nel has pointed out that ‘geographic space in South Africa has been subsumed to the dictates of the prevailing political ideology of apartheid’ to such a great extent that ‘structure manifested by both the economy and the society reflects the ideals striven for by the architects of apartheid.’⁶⁹ However as will be demonstrated in this thesis, residents of the Magazine Barracks and Chatsworth defined in their own ways what state created housing meant to them and created their own meaning of state laws. Although the Magazine Barracks was created to house a labour force to serve the requirements of the DCC, this thesis probes into how residents in their own way created a space which became crucial to their identity. Likewise, the move to Chatsworth did not create residents who functioned in coherence to the state’s aims of geopolitical engineering.

Examining the relation between structure and human agency is referred to structuration theory. This theory was proposed by Anthony Giddens in 1984 to give equal emphasis to both state imposed laws and the ways in which people responded to these.⁷⁰ This framework is useful to this study since it seeks to examine how state laws were experienced on the ground but also how the

respondents of this study defined what apartheid and Group Areas meant to them in their own unique ways.

In discussing critical modes of engaging with the past, Dubow explains that one of the reasons that South Africans choose to disregard the study of the past is due to Western traditions of historiography which dominate the way in which apartheid and the GAA are examined. He adds that, 'Master narratives about "class", "nation", "race" or even "the struggle" have, at least until recently, allowed historians to avoid complex questions of subjectivity, not least because they deal with abstract historical forces, structures and movements'.⁷¹ Consequently, this study probes the ways in which subjects define concepts of place and community and how the meanings they attach to these have changed over time.

'Community' is used in academic and popular circles to refer to so many things that it sometimes seems to lose all meaning. According to Worsley, it can refer to 'locality' or 'a type of relationship'.⁷² The former refers to 'a human settlement located within a fixed and bounded local territory' while the latter portrays the community as 'a sense of shared identity.' For the purpose of this study, the term refers to both since we are examining a group of people who lived in a particular space and place, and who shared certain commonalities: working class, municipal workers, 'Indian', mostly Hindu, and the trauma of forced removal. The Magazine Barracks residents represented a community in the sense that they lived in a closely confined space and as a corollary shared common experiences and formed groups to deal with challenges communally.

For Anthony Cohen, community ‘is the arena in which people acquire their most profound and substantial experience of social life outside the confines of the home.’⁷³ Community is where one learns and continues to practice how to ‘be social.’ It implies ‘similarity’ and ‘difference’ and is therefore a relational idea. Members of a community have something in common which distinguishes them ‘in a significant way’ from members of other groups and which may result in the creation of religious, physical, racial, or linguistic boundaries.⁷⁴

The subjects of this study lived in bounded places at the barracks and many continued to do so in Chatsworth. Did space and proximity generate community? Working class areas are usually associated with ‘community.’ Brian Alleyne suggests that this may be because of the association with pre-modern times and dense networks of collective social relations based on religion and kinship.⁷⁵ From discussions with, and the writings of, former residents of the Magazine Barracks, it is clear that the loss of community based on self-help organisations, similar lifestyles, shared religion, and kin networks is lamented. The sense in which community is used in these discourses is associated with place.

This study adopts the position taken by Doreen Massey that space is dynamic since it is ...

never finished; never closed ... [We must] uproot ‘space’ from that constellation of concepts in which it has so unquestionably so often been embedded (stasis; closure; representation) and to settle it among another set of ideas (heterogeneity; relationality; ... liveliness indeed) where it releases a more challenging political landscape.⁷⁶

Spaces may be experienced differently by those – women, men, youth, children – who occupy them. What seems to the outsider to constitute community may be experienced differently by those on the inside.⁷⁷ Acknowledging the fluidity of space and internal differentiation is not to suggest that space did not matter, but rather not to take it as an unproblematic given. In the case of Chatsworth, the state, both local and national, played a key role in defining and producing this space.⁷⁸ Former residents of the Magazine Barracks tried to rebuild their community in the new setting which can be seen in their naming of a new school and temple after road names and landmarks at their old residence.⁷⁹

An important contribution of this study is to examine the notion of identities.⁸⁰ We need to distinguish between legal categorisation and self-identification. The state and other South Africans categorised people from the Asian sub-continent as ‘Indians’ and defined them as a distinct racial group. In reality, Indians were divided by class, caste, linguistic, and sectional divisions, all of which acted as social boundaries to a certain extent.⁸¹ The impact of external categorisation is important because, as Richard Jenkins tells us, and as we see so clearly in the South African case, identifications, particularly race, have ‘material consequences.’⁸² State categorisation carried legal weight and limited choices in a racially hierarchical structure. Identities are a relationship, about how an individual identifies him or herself in relation to others and are constantly negotiated in response to changing economic, political, and social factors.⁸³ According to Stuart Hall, identities are formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems that surround us.⁸⁴ We thus need to examine Magazine Barracks residents’ identities in relation to the wider Indian community, and the wider Chatsworth community.

Research methodology⁸⁵

This study is based on an array of sources. The Durban Town Clerk's files, which are housed in the Durban Archives Repository, contain extensive information on workers employed by the Durban Corporation and helped to recreate a picture of life at the Magazine Barracks. These files were used to examine municipal worker housing before forced removals. Together with oral sources, this information helped me to reconstruct the social and working lives and housing conditions at the barracks to provide a sense of what existed and what was lost.

The Group Areas files helped to trace the actual process of removal and resistance. The Chatsworth Housing files, also housed in the Durban Archives, cover, amongst other things, the process of removal, information on the work of voluntary bodies in Chatsworth and grievances expressed to the authorities by both individuals and organisations. Since the bulk of the residents of the Magazine Barracks were relocated to a few units ('place') in Chatsworth it was possible to use these sources to trace life before and after the removals, and highlight the impact of the move to Chatsworth and the efforts to reconstruct community. This was supplemented by the records of the Durban Indian Child Welfare Organisation which provided valuable insight into social conditions.

The work of the Local Affairs Committee (LAC) is important in this regard. Its leaders played a central role in the early years of Chatsworth in trying to transform the bare housing scheme into a liveable neighbourhood. It not only provides a context within which to compare living conditions at the Magazine Barracks to those of Chatsworth, but exposes the anger and dissatisfaction among the new Chatsworth residents. While those who led these bodies are today regarded as

‘collaborators’ with the apartheid regime, some former residents of the Magazine Barracks maintain that they played a very important role in the formative years and compliment them for never turning their backs on the poorer residents of Chatsworth who needed assistance.⁸⁶

Newspapers, particularly ethnic ones such as *The Leader*, *Post*, *Graphic*, *Sunday Times Extra*, and *Sunday Tribune Herald*, were also consulted as they provide a context of the period under review and the changes that took place over the three decades. Newspapers also show how the laws were communicated in the press and perceived by those affected. Interactions between community organisations in Chatsworth and the local state are well documented in these newspapers and shed light on the challenges that residents faced throughout the time period of this study.

In addition, several studies dealing with a variety of issues affecting residents in Chatsworth helped in mapping the challenges and supplemented the information contained in the archives. They address wide-ranging issues such as housing, conversion to Christianity, marriage and family, diseases and drug abuse. Such contemporary studies provide valuable individual case studies of the challenges facing people in Chatsworth.

Kiru Naidoo, one of the study’s respondents, believes that there is an important story to tell about Chatsworth as a journey of progression, but advocates an insider perspective.

I was born in Chatsworth so in terms of what I write and what I say and so on, I think that I am comfortable that there is an authenticity and a legitimacy about what I feel and say and so on. It sometimes upsets me that for people who do not have that experience to write as authoritatively as they do. Let me qualify that, I think that there is a lot of exceptional research that is happening by people who may not have a direct

connection there. But there is something about a voice or a lived voice that I think that people like me or of my generation have that what we feel so deeply about.⁸⁷

This raised a broader philosophical debate about who has the right to write history. The Dalits in India claim that only they can write their history from an insider perspective; the Aboriginals in Australia and Canada make similar claims.⁸⁸ The disputes and debates over representation are complex. While I respect this perspective, I also hold that one cannot put a hermeneutic seal around interpretation. There is no one authentic voice in any situation. As Sean Field points out, it is ‘not that the outsider cannot say anything about “the Other” but rather that all researchers, outsiders, and insiders must try to understand how their identities and research strategies are shaping informants’ and interviewees’ responses.’ Field adds that ‘even when all the identities of the researcher and researched are identical, unequal power relations exist. There is no power-free research nirvana to be reached.’⁸⁹

Although I am a South African of Indian decent and born in Chatsworth, and can be considered an insider in some respects, I was not born in nor from a family which came from the Magazine Barracks. Hence I lack the lived experience of the subject matter of this study. While an ‘outsider’ in this respect, I tried to make up for this by attending the weekly meetings of the Durban Municipal Pensioners’ Club during 2013 and 2014. During these meetings I spoke to many former residents and listened to the way in which they told stories to me about what life was like in the Magazine Barracks. I also observed the way in which they reminisced with one another, and the meanings that the barracks have for them today.

I also conducted sixteen one-on-one qualitative interviews with those who volunteered. This enabled me to track the life histories of certain individuals. Contact was made with the MBRA consisting of former residents of the Magazine Barracks. These individuals played a central role during the African National Congress' (ANC) land restitution programme in 1998 which aimed to provide financial compensation for land lost as a consequence of Group Areas forced removals. Members of the MBRA administered and assisted representatives of over 2 000 families from the Magazine Barracks to submit their applications to the KwaZulu Natal Land Claim's Commission. During proceedings they also interviewed these families in order to collect information to compile a book.⁹⁰ Some of the individuals in the MBRC are also community leaders who counselled other former residents when they faced the troubles of displacement. Interviewing the leaders of this body was a good starting point as it enabled me to utilise snow ball sampling to select more volunteers to be interviewed.

The interviews took the form of conversations. While I had prepared questions, I allowed the conversation to go in directions chosen by the respondent and tried to capture their experiences and perspectives. I transcribed the interviews myself and during the writing process key themes were identified. These partly shaped the structure and content of this dissertation, and I also drew on the interviews to amplify the themes discussed in this study.

The experiences in Chatsworth were diverse and the new residents had different experiences when rebuilding their lives in the new setting. This emerged through my interviews which sought to outline the traces of individual lives, and focused on aspects of day-to-day life both at the Magazine Barracks and in Chatsworth, work experience, economic challenges resulting from relocation,

occupation, children and family life, involvement in voluntary bodies, cultural and religious practices, and opportunities for children's education.

The advantages and shortfalls of oral history methodology have been widely discussed. Ciraj Rassool points out, some researchers are sceptical:

In spite of their commitment to the democratising power of oral history, for many South African social historians, it constituted only a 'supplementary source.' Its purpose was to supplement more formal, written sources 'which provide the larger context of public events, of political and constitutional, economic and institutional developments.' Human memory in the form of oral testimony was "given to error, misconception, elision, distortion, elaboration and downright fabrication".⁹¹

Field puts it slightly differently but makes the same point, that historians in South Africa 'still view oral history as a supplement to historical research, which draws primarily on written sources, but occasionally turns offstage to drag in interviews to provide vibrant colour to the serious business of history.'⁹² Historians who believe in the written word should remember that archival sources also represent particular viewpoints and that oral sources may represent different but equally important alternatives. Documentary sources are not necessarily more accurate in reconstructing the past. Oral history provides a different kind of historical knowledge, one that is not static but reveals how changing contexts are experienced.

While acknowledging the limitations of oral sources, this study utilises this methodology, in conjunction with archival and other documentary sources as far as possible. Ordinary individuals'

perspectives are indispensable to understand the impact of the GAA from the viewpoint of those affected. During the 1980s, the emergence of so-called radical scholarship, inspired by Marxism, aimed to uncover the 'submerged agency of ordinary people and give voice to the experience of marginal groups.' Since such voices were often excluded from official archival documents, social historians sought to write history 'from below' to create a counter narrative to the official history.⁹³

Field suggests that oral history interviews are less about events and more about the meaning behind these events for the narrator. Events become memories in the mind, an ever changing group of thoughts, images, and emotional responses.⁹⁴ Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and how think they did.⁹⁵ It is for this reason that oral history was such an essential tool for this study.

John Creswell and Jo Anne Ollerenshaw show that narrative research comprising of qualitative interviews involves the researcher retelling the participant's story by organising the raw data into themes that emerge from the story. The researcher thus becomes an active participant in the inquiry and brings her or his own perspectives to it, resulting in a gap between the narrative told and the narrative reported.⁹⁶ Those who embrace oral history recognise that it is a subjective methodology and acknowledge that 'memory stories are contingent and often fluid' but believe that this 'in no way detracts from their veracity and utility. In the process, oral historians have become both intuitive and imaginative interpreters of their materials.'⁹⁷

At the heart of oral history is memory since people are being asked to recall something that happened in the past. As Philip Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien point out, this may be problematic:

Memories of communities related by ex-residents who have been forcibly removed are ... suffused with nostalgic notions of a lost golden age, and these communities exist and live on in what Sean Field terms the communities in memory of those removed or displaced.... Oral testimonies ... mostly present a stripped down and romanticised narrow version of their pasts.⁹⁸

Likewise, Isabel Hofmeyr reminds us that 'in every interview one is dealing with what people remember rather than what happened.' There is of course a complex correspondence between the two but it is by no means a relationship of direct reflection.⁹⁹ Understanding these facets requires at least some attention to memory. However, as Bonner and Nieftagodien, as well as Field argue, this does not mean that we should disregard these memories.¹⁰⁰ While places such as Sophiatown and District Six are remembered fondly by ex-residents as areas where black people could own property and had rich cultural and religious lives, and a strong political tradition, residents of other settlements may have negative memories. There is a vast body of work by psychologists, sociologists, cultural anthropologists, and others on memory.¹⁰¹ Memory is affected by ageing, trauma, nostalgia, and other factors. The task of researchers is to facilitate respondents' remembering events as best as they can and, as Abrams points out, 'in our analysis, consider the various influences that shaped their recall. The important point here is that memory is not just a source; it is a narrator's interpretation of their experience and as such it is complex, creative, and fluid.'¹⁰²

Structure of the thesis

Introduction

The introduction provides a background to the topic, identifies the need for the study and the gaps in the literature, and discusses the theoretical framework and the research methodology.

Chapter One: The Magazine Barracks and its municipal employees, c. 1880s-1960

Drawing mainly on secondary sources, the first chapter traces the establishment of the Magazine Barracks and role of municipal employees in the Durban economy. The examination of the relationship between Indian municipal employees and the DCC also depicts how race and capitalism were defined in the colonial period and early years of the Union, which came into being in 1910, and how this ultimately shaped the conditions in which municipal workers lived. The chapter also probes those aspects of life that residents regarded as constituting ‘community’ – voluntary organisations, temples and schools, family, theatre, and sport. It is important to compare contemporary reports about the Magazine Barracks with the stories told by residents five decades after their relocation. This will help us make sense of how residents saw themselves as constituting a ‘community’ as well as the effect of nostalgia.

Chapter Two: Group Areas and the destruction of the Magazine Barracks, 1960-1965

Chapter two examines the process of forced removals from the Magazine Barracks – how and when residents were informed, reactions, resistance, and opportunities. It is important to provide some context of what constituted the GAA and its implications, since it was this Act that ultimately led to the destruction of the barracks. By looking at the GAA as part of a longer process of exclusion of certain groups of South Africans from resources and living spaces we get a better

sense of the meaning of Group Areas. Given that the majority of residents from the Magazine Barracks were resettled in Chatsworth, the acquisition of land to build the township is also traced.

Chapter Three: Housing and service delivery struggles

This chapter examines structural problems with regard to housing and high rentals, and dissatisfaction with service delivery in Chatsworth which led to the rise of civic organisations and intense political activity via a revitalised NIC from the late 1970s and the Chatsworth Housing Action Committee (CHAC). Context is required in order to understand residents' relocation to Chatsworth. This chapter looks at various challenges in the township for the first 15 years, before amenities were built, and the leaders who emerged to collectively deal with such challenges. It both questions stereotypes about some of these leaders and provides a window into the living environment in Chatsworth.

Chapter Four: The politicisation of transport

Closely related to general challenges and the living environment in Chatsworth were the transport challenges that arose as a consequence of relocation to Chatsworth. Group Areas relocation meant that people were moved far away from their places of employment which increased living expenses. In addition the DCC failed to provide adequate roads and a poorly planned rail system led to mass protests.

Chapter Five: Working lives: 1960s to 1980s

This chapter examines how some former residents actually experienced the challenges discussed in the previous two chapters. There were sharp increases in living expenses as workers were forced

to travel long distances to and from work, while both men and women, in particular, were unable to supplement the family income through informal employment. How did broader structural changes impact on residents and their descendants? These years were marked by an expansion of educational opportunities and economic mobility for many Indians. The deeper class divide and impact of upward mobility on identities are examined.

Chapter Six: Family and religion

While a number of factors contributed to the remaking of community in Chatsworth, family and religion were crucial. Racial clustering allowed Indians to rebuild aspects of their social and economic lives with minimal outside influence. Residents were handicapped by the almost complete absence of religious institutions and their tiny homes made it difficult to reconstitute the extended family system. This chapter examines the ways in which residents coalesced to establish a semblance of their former community. What were the consequences of achieving this / failing to do so?

Conclusion

The conclusion discusses the study's main findings and tests these against existing studies with regard to the impact of Group Areas and the constructed and relational nature of community, as evidenced by the ways in which institutional structures were established in Chatsworth. Oral history interviews helped shed light on what all these changes meant 'on the ground' and why it was that despite heightened political activity, there was some trepidation about majority rule and enthusiastic support for ethnic political parties in the 1990s.

Key respondents of study:

In the chapters most respondents are referred to by their first names since some share common surnames.

Leaders of the MBRA

Danny Pillay	‘Danny’	President of the MBRC
Jay Pillay	‘Jay’	Public Relations Officer of Durban Municipal Pensioners Club
Vassie Muthen	‘Vassie’	President of the Durban Municipal Pensioners Club
John Kisten	‘Kisten’	
Deena Muthen	‘Deena’	
Naddie Perumal	‘Naddie’	

Other Key respondents who were born in the Magazine Barracks

Karan Narainsamy	‘Karan’	Secretary of Durban Municipal Pensioners Club
Forbie Perumal	‘Forbie’	
Mrs Pillay	‘Mrs Pillay’	
Runga Munien	‘Runga’	
Aroo Naicker	‘Aroo’	
Siva Kugesan ‘	‘Siva’	
Sintha Munien	‘Sintha’	
Victor Morgan	‘Victor’	

Key respondents whose parents were from the Magazine Barracks

Kiru Naidoo	‘Kiru’
Solly Kuppan	‘Solly’

¹ Race is a complex issue in South African history. Susan Parnell and Alan Mabin argue that the unchallenged presupposition of race as a primary category when conducting research into urban segregation has restricted scholarly understanding of South Africa's urban history. This study that focuses on the removal of people from an exclusively Indian compound to a supposedly exclusively Indian township, is wary of presupposing racial divisions but rather treats notions of what it means to be 'African', 'Coloured', 'Indian', and 'White' as constantly negotiated in, and influenced by, changing social contexts. Black, as used here, refers to its usage during the Apartheid era by progressive organisations to include Africans, Indians, and Coloureds. Africans refers to the indigenous population of the country, known as 'Black Africans' in the post-Apartheid period; whites refers to Europeans and their descendants; Indians / Asians to migrants from the Asian sub-continent and their descendants; and Coloureds refers to people of mixed-race parentage. See Susan Parnell and Alan Mabin, 'Rethinking Urban South Africa,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* (Special Issue: Urban Studies and Urban Change in Southern Africa) 21: 1 (1995).

² See William Beinart and Saul Dubow, eds, *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995).

³ See Laurine Platzky and Cherryl Walker, *The Surplus People: Forced Removals in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985).

⁴ Iain Edwards, 'Cato Manor: Cruel Past, Pivotal Future,' *Review of African Political Economy* 21: 61 (1991): 415.

⁵ Brij Maharaj, 'Apartheid, Urban Segregation, and the Local State: Durban and the Group Areas Act in South Africa,' *Urban Geography* 18:2 (1997): 135.

⁶ For a discussion of the concept and application of 'penetration' in Durban, see Goolam Vahed and Thembisa Waetjen, *Schooling Muslim in Natal: State, Identity and the Orient Islamic Educational Institute* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2015), 112-145.

⁷ This will be discussed in Chapter Two.

⁸ Bill Freund, *Insiders and Outsiders: The Indian Working Class of Durban 1910-1990* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1995), 64.

⁹ This has been suggested by scholars who have examined the provincial and national effects of the Group Areas Act such as Leo Kuper, Hilstan Watts and Ronald Avies, *Durban: A Study in*

Racial Ecology (London: Jonathan Cape, 1958); Fatima Meer, *The Ghetto People* (London: Africa Publications Trust, 1975); John Western, *Outcast Cape Town* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1981); Jeff McCarthy and Daniel Smit, *South African City: Theory in Analysis and Planning* (Cape Town: Juta, 1984). It has also been argued by scholars who have examined the causes and development of the Group Areas Act such as Brij Maharaj, 'The Group Areas Act in Durban: Central - Local State Relations' (PhD diss., University of Natal, 1992); and Maynard W. Swanson, 'The Asiatic Menace: Creating segregation in Durban, 1870-1900,' *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 16 (1983).

¹⁰ Robert Home, 'Barracks and Hostels: A heritage Conservation Case for Worker Housing in Natal,' *Natalia* 28 (1998): 48.

¹¹ Katja Uusihakala, *Memory Meanders: Place, Home and Commemoration in an Ex-Rhodesian Diaspora Community* (Vuorikatu: Helsinki University Press, 2008), 2.

¹² *Chatsworth Rising Sun*, 12 November 2014.

¹³ See Sean Field, 'Remembering Experience, Interpreting Memory: Life Stories from Windermere,' *African Studies* 60: 1 (2001).

¹⁴ For an overview of the historiography up until 1995, see Paul Maylam, 'Explaining the Apartheid City: 20 Years of South African Urban Historiography,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* (Special Issue: Urban Studies and Urban Change in Southern Africa) 21: 1 (1995).

¹⁵ Some exceptions include Maynard W. Swanson, 'The Rise of Multiracial Durban: Urban History and Race Policy in South Africa, 1830-1930' (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1964); Philip Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanization in a South African City* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1963); B.A. Pauw, *The Second Generation: A Study of the Family among Urbanized ... Groups in an African Township* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1963); and Rodney T.H. Davenport, 'African townsmen? South African (Natives) Urban Areas Legislation through the Years,' *African Affairs* 68 (1969).

¹⁶ See for instance David Welsh, *The Roots of Segregation: Native Policy in Colonial Natal, 1845-1910* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1971); and John Rex, 'The Compound, the Reserve and the Urban Location: The Essential Institutions of Southern African Labour Exploitation,' *South African Labour Bulletin* 1: 4 (1974).

¹⁷ For example David M. Smith, ed, *Living Under Apartheid: Aspects of Urbanization and Social Change in South Africa* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982); Frederick Cooper, *Struggle for the City:*

Migrant Labour, Capital and the State in Africa (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983); Deborah Posel, 'Influx Control and the Construction of Apartheid' (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1987) and 'The Meaning of Apartheid Before 1948: Conflicts, Interests and Forces within the Afrikaner Nationalist Alliance,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14, 1 (1987): 123-139; Anthony J. Christopher, 'Apartheid Planning in South Africa: The Case of Port Elizabeth,' *The Geographical Journal* 153: 2 (1987); and John Lazar, 'Community and Conflict in Afrikaner Nationalist Politics in South Africa 1948-61' (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1987).

¹⁸ See Diane Scott, "'Creative Destruction": Early Modernist Planning in the South Durban Industrial Zone, South Africa,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29: 1 (2003); Swanson, 'The Asiatic Menace'; and Freund, *Insiders and Outsiders*.

¹⁹ See Matthew Hollow, 'Suburban Ideals on England's Interwar Council Estates,' *Garden History* 39: 2 (2011).

²⁰ See also Bill Freund, 'Contrasts in Urban Segregation: A Tale of Two African Cities, Durban (South Africa) and Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire),' *Journal of Southern African Studies* (Special Issue for Shula Marks) 27: 3, (2001).

²¹ The notion of the 'Indian question' will be discussed in Chapter Two. For studies examining the Indian Question see Maharaj, 'Apartheid'; and Maynard W. Swanson, 'The Durban System: Roots of Urban Apartheid in Colonial Natal,' *African Studies* 25 (1976): 159-176; Paul Maylam and Iain Edwards, eds, *The People's City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1996); and Dowlat R. Bagwande, 'The Question of Indian Penetration in the Durban Area and Indian Politics: 1940-46' (PhD diss., University of Natal, 1991).

²² Western, *Outcast Cape Town*.

²³ Western, *Outcast Cape Town*.

²⁴ For example see Shamil Jeppie and Crain Soudien, eds, *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present* (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1992); Deborah M. Hart and Gordon H. Pirie, 'The Sight and Soul of Sophiatown,' *Geographical Review* 74: 1 (1984) and 'The Transformation of Johannesburg's Black Western Areas,' *Journal of Urban History* 11 (1985): 387-410; Deborah M. Hart, 'Political Manipulation of Urban Space: The Razing of District Six Cape Town,' *Urban Geography* 9 (1988); and Paul Gready, 'The Sophiatown Writers of the Fifties: The Unreal Reality of Their World,' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16: 1 (1990).

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- ²⁵ Sofie M.M.A Geschier, ““So there I sit in a Catch-22 situation” Remembering and Imaging Trauma in the District Six Museum,’ in *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town*, ed. Sean Field, Renate Meyer and Felicity Swanson (Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council, 2007), 37.
- ²⁶ Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, ‘Speaking about building Rylands (1960s to 1980s): A Cape Flats history,’ *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* (2014).
- ²⁷ The Non-European Affairs Department’s official enumeration total in 1953 was 39 186, although an estimate was as high as 70 000. At that time the township had 1 971 coloured and 1 845 Indian residents. Hart and Pirie, ‘The Sight and Soul,’ 39.
- ²⁸ Gready, ‘The Sophiatown Writers,’ 141. See also Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London: Longman, 1983); and Karie L. Morgan and David Thelan, eds, *Experiencing Sophiatown: Conversations Among Residents about the Past, Present and Future of a Community* (Johannesburg: Fanele, 2013).
- ²⁹ Morgan and Thelan, *Experiencing Sophiatown*, 172.
- ³⁰ Lesiba T. Leta, ‘A socio-economic history of Indian families in Sophiatown and Lenasia, 1930s-1960’ (Master’s diss., University of Johannesburg, 2015), 5.
- ³¹ Leta, ‘A socio-economic history,’ 5.
- ³² Maharaj, ‘The Group Areas Act.’
- ³³ Iain Edwards, ‘Mkumbane Our Home: African Shantytown Society in Cato Manor Farm, 1946-1960’ (PhD diss., University of Natal, 1989).
- ³⁴ Gready, ‘The Sophiatown Writers,’ 139.
- ³⁵ Hart and Pirie, ‘The Sight and Soul,’ 47.
- ³⁶ Saul Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948-1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- ³⁷ Freund, *Insiders and Outsiders*, 65.
- ³⁸ For example Swanson, ‘The Durban System,’; Henry Slater, ‘Land, Labour and Capital in Natal: The Natal Land and Colonization Company, 1860-1948,’ *Journal of African History* XVI (March 1975): 257-283; Paul la Hausse, ‘Alcohol, The Ematsheni and Popular Culture in Durban, 1902-1936,’ in *The People’s City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban*, ed. Paul Maylam and Iain Edwards (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press); and Freund, *Insiders and Outsiders*.
- ³⁹ For example, see Edwards, ‘Cato Manor,’ and Maharaj, ‘The Group Areas Act.’

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- ⁴⁰ See Diane Scott, 'Communal Space Construction: The Rise and Fall of Clairwood and District' (PhD diss., University of Natal, 1994); and "'Creative Destruction.'"'
- ⁴¹ Kalviselvum Subramony, 'A History of Chatsworth: Impact of the Group Areas Act on the Indian Community of Durban (1958 – 1975)' (Master's diss., University of South Africa, 1993).
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⁸⁷ Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.

⁸⁸ See Rajesh Kumar, 'Exploring Convergences: Dalit writings and Australian Aboriginal writings,' *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 1:1 (2013) and 'A Comparative perspective on Subaltern Autobiographies: Dalits Vs Aborigines,' *Creative Forum: A Journal of Literary & Critical Writings* 23: 1-2 (2010).

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- ⁹⁵ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991).
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Chapter One

Municipal Employees and the Magazine Barracks, c. 1880s – 1960s

Durban's Indian municipal workers were an important component of the indentured migrants who were brought to Natal from India between 1860 and 1911. Although most indentured labourers are known primarily for their role on the sugar plantations, a significant number were employed by the municipality as well. This chapter traces the history of the Magazine Barracks which was established in the 1880s to house these workers. The establishment of the barracks meant that workers were congregated in a particular space defined by race, class, and work. Over time, residents made that space into place, with religion, sport, education, festivals, and leisure-time activities constituting an important part of the mix that produced a Magazine Barracks 'community.' The close proximity in which residents lived, and the associations and organisations they established to promote cultural and sporting endeavours, and to take up 'bread and butter issues,' all contributed to this identity.

This chapter provides a sense of what workers' living and working conditions were like and how residents understood 'community' in the years leading up to the GAA. This will help to contextualise the destruction of this way of living through forced removals and to understand what was involved in the residents' attempts to reconstitute their lives in Chatsworth.

Durban's Indian municipal employees

The Indian population of South Africa owes its origins to the labour requirements of the colony of Natal. The British established a small trading settlement at Port Natal in 1824 and annexed Natal

as a colony in 1843.¹ British settlers soon followed and after some experimentation found that the coastal regions were well suited for growing sugar cane. With the indigenous Zulus refusing to enter into an exploitative and regimented labour regime, plantation owners put pressure on the colonial government to import indentured Indian labourers.² Following intensive negotiations, the British government in India agreed to export indentured workers to Natal. By this stage, during the 1850s, places such as Mauritius, Trinidad, Suriname, St. Lucia, British Guiana, and other sugar producing colonies were already receiving indentured labour. In all, around 1.3 million indentured migrants from India went to work abroad. From 1860 until the system ended in 1911, 152 641 Indians arrived in Natal as indentured labourers. While the majority were allocated to the coastal sugar plantations, others were employed as boatmen, municipal workers, waiters, and as railway workers.³

With Durban and Pietermaritzburg establishing themselves as the major urban centres in Natal, they employed indentured workers to perform tasks such as street sweepers and night soil removers. Between January 1864 and July 1907, 1 437 indentured Indians were allocated to the Durban municipality.⁴ Some free Indians also sought employment with the municipality. Jay's father was born in Tinley Manor on the North Coast where his father had been indentured. He brought his extended family to the Magazine Barracks when he found a job in the municipal Cleansing Department as a street sweeper, possibly lured by the promise of shelter and rations during difficult economic times. Jay's mother was from Merebank.⁵ In his autobiography, Sam Ramsamy tells the story of how his grandfather, Rangan was lured to South Africa from the Madras Presidency to 'work in the Transvaal goldfields' where he would make his 'fortune.' However, Rangan was forced to work on the plantations in Tongaat and his son (Sam's father) who learnt to read and write was rewarded with a job as a messenger for the Durban Municipality.⁶

These newly-employed Indian municipal workers were originally housed in an informal settlement at the Point, a narrow strip of land next to the entrance of the Bay of Natal. This settlement, which came to be known as 'Bamboo Square,' was created by Tsonga workers from southern Mozambique during the 1860s. They were soon joined by Indians moving off the sugar plantations and entering the city, and by the mid-1870s local African municipal employees also lived there.⁷

Around 1880, the DCC built the Magazine Barracks a few miles north of the Durban CBD to house its Indian workers. It was surrounded by Argyle Road, Somtseu Road, NMR Avenue, Stanger Street and Brickhill Road.⁸ Adjacent to the Magazine Barracks was the Baumannville Barracks which housed African municipal workers, and the Railway Barracks which housed Indian employees of the Natal Government Railways. These three barracks were only vacated in the 1960s through Group Areas forced removals. They even survived the Slums Act of 1933 which was used to eradicate most of the other barracks in Durban, including the A.B.C. Barracks, Botanic Garden Barracks, Saaibarracks, Stable Barracks, Sarrie Barracks, Tram Barracks, and Winsor Barracks.⁹

For eight decades, municipal workers lived at the Magazine Barracks where they had to cope with such challenges as poor living standards, exploitative working conditions, and a lack of essential facilities such as libraries, schools, and places of worship which are some of the issues discussed in this chapter.

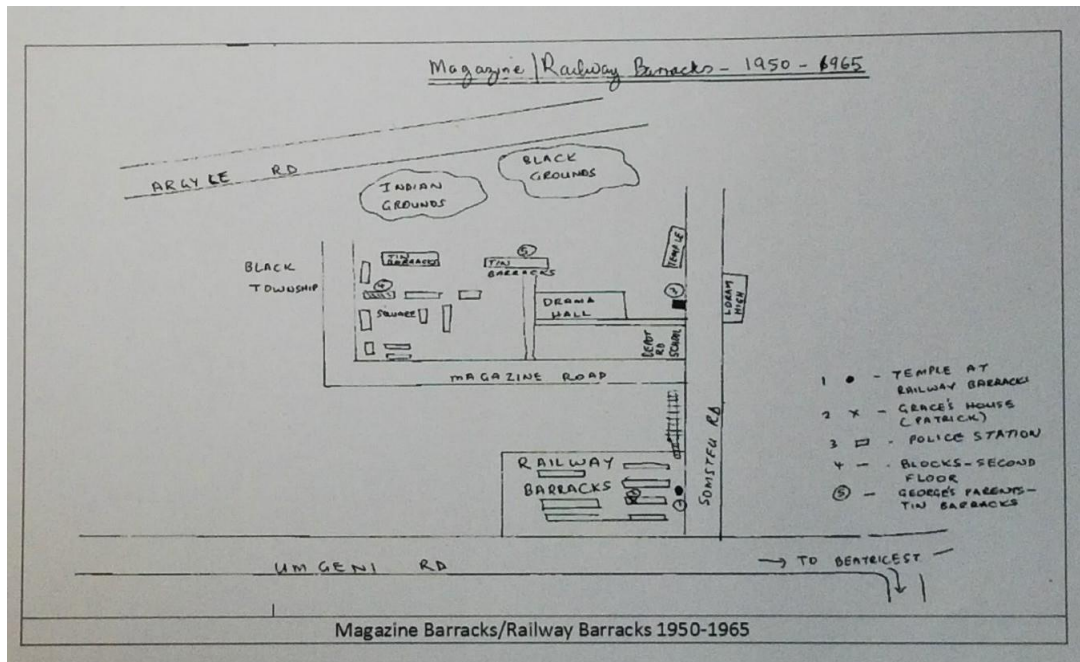


Figure 1: Hand drawn Map of Magazine and Railway Barracks from former resident of the Magazine Barracks
Karunananda Chetty¹⁰

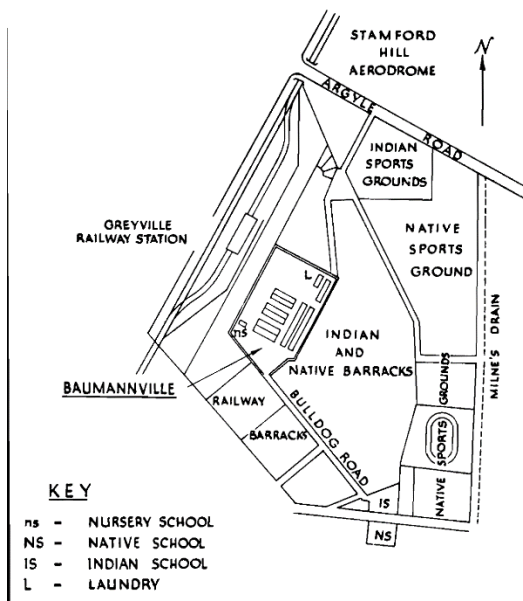


Figure 2: Map depicting the layout of Baumannville and Magazine Barracks.¹¹

Establishment of the Magazine Barracks

When the first Indians arrived in Durban there was no housing and they consequently found accommodation in informal settlements such as Bamboo Square. Located close to where they worked, this was an ideal location for the newly-employed Indian municipal workers. By the 1870s the settlement included Tsonga, Indian, St Helenian, Chinese, Malay, Mauritian, and African workers.¹² From 1874, when Secretary of Native Affairs, Theophilus Shepstone, introduced the togt or day labour system, Zulu workers who were employed by the municipality also found accommodation at Bamboo Square.¹³

The rapid urbanisation of black people and their living in informal settlements was of concern to the DCC and the white electorate. In 1866, the Borough Police wrote to the DCC to express concern about Bamboo Square, and pointed to 'at least seven other locations' where Africans and Indians lived alongside each other. In 1870 Councillor Tyzack called for a separate location for Indians due to 'evils' arising out of overcrowding at Bamboo Square. He regarded this as 'a serious matter with these Indians whose habits generally are not conducive to health.'¹⁴ This period coincided with the arrival of Indian traders, known as passengers,¹⁵ which increased fears of a rapid increase in the urban population and made it more urgent to control Indian settlement in the city.¹⁶

The DCC's solution to this perceived fear of urbanisation of blacks, was to create barracks-type accommodation for its employees. The origins of barracks can be traced to the Industrial Revolution. Further refined during the Napoleonic Wars and the Crimean War, when the British army experienced high death rates from disease, they evolved into a highly utilitarian system of mass housing which became the most common form of worker housing in British colonies from

the 1860s to the 1930s.¹⁷ The barracks were ideal for the DCC since they were cheap to build and maintain, and were ideal to teach and maintain discipline. This is reflected in a 1935 DCC report:

Apart from the economies obtained from the provision of communal sanitary washing and bathing blocks, there are undoubted advantages in having an adequate labour supply available at any hour for emergency work, and the possibility of following up all cases of absenteeism as they arise. A further advantage is the continuous supervision which is only possible in large barracks or compounds and we are further of the opinion that the training and control they receive under that system must be beneficial to the Indians themselves ... Would the provision of cottage type of house – the presumptive alternative – not constitute an unnecessary incentive to the increase of the size of families?¹⁸

In 1874, land was purchased just north of the Durban CBD on the Eastern Vlei.¹⁹ It was named the Magazine Barracks after a nearby military complex which stored magazine powder (ammunition). The Magazine Barracks was completed in 1884 and the original building comprised of 93 tiny ‘houses,’ with 26 allocated to married men and 67 to single men.²⁰ Each house comprised of a single room, roughly five metres by five metres in size, which had to be used as a kitchen, dining room, lounge and bedrooms. The entire complex was fenced, with two gates which were locked at night and guarded by Indian *sirdars* who were employed by the DCC to enforce law and order within the Magazine Barracks.²¹

Sirdars were involved in resolving family quarrels, eliminating gangsterism and gambling, and ensuring that there were no disturbances of the peace. *Sirdars* who were armed with batons and handcuffs were given the status of ‘special constables.’²² Aside from settling domestic disputes they also limited absenteeism by ensuring that workers did not remain at home.²³ Serious offenders or serious offences were referred to a supervisor or even the police. The supervisor was a white police officer whose dwelling was secluded from the Magazine Barracks’ buildings and was located near the temple next to the police station. After the 1949 riots, supervisors were moved to the beach front and maintenance of law and order was left in the hands of the Head *Sirdar* and constables.²⁴

Two single men or one family lived in each house, regardless of the number of children per family.²⁵ According to Danny, in later years, families were very large, with up to 15 children and it was not uncommon to find children sleeping on the kitchen floor or even outside on the balcony in summer.²⁶ As the number of residents increased and children grew up, married couples had no option but to share rooms with other family members as their low income did not allow for private renting. They erected curtains across the rooms for privacy.²⁷

The early wood and iron structures lacked electricity or running water and residents relied on communal taps and toilets. In 1928, the Indian Social Services Committee (ISSC), an organisation formed by educated and professional class Indians who were keen to ‘uplift’ the social condition of poorer Indians, reported that residents had to bathe in toilets with no doors,²⁸ while Swaminathan Gounden a former resident of the Magazine Barracks, recalled that as many as ‘twelve people could be using these toilets in full view of one another’ at a time.²⁹

During the 1920s brick buildings with electricity and running water were added for graded employees, that is, those who earned higher wages. As the number of municipal employees increased, additional rooms were added. In time, the Magazine Barracks came to include wood and iron houses, as well as some double storey brick buildings, with a total of 1 251 rooms.³⁰ There were around 5 000 people living in the Magazine Barracks in 1933.³¹

Danny was born at K1 block in 1941, which was located at the entrance of the Magazine Barracks. It was joined to K2, K3, and K4 which were the newest and most impressive buildings. He explained that these buildings were arranged at the entrance to serve as ‘a showcase, it was a display to the outside world that they were keeping us, the municipal workers, comfortable in modern structures.’³² In K3 and K4, each family, regardless of size, had their own bathroom and a kitchen, in contrast to the poorer sections where large families were clustered into tiny rooms and shared bathroom facilities with other residents. Danny added that K3 and K4 had modern kitchens and were equipped with electric stoves. Danny’s own home comprised of two rooms, a kitchen, a toilet and a verandah. They were allocated this house because of his father’s occupation as a member of the city police. Danny’s father was promoted to the City Police Department after doing a variety of lower paying jobs for the municipality, including painting. He commanded respect from other residents because of his job.

From its inception, the severely overcrowded conditions in the Magazine Barracks were condemned by various municipal officials during their sporadic inspections. In 1884 the Protector of Indian Immigrants, an official appointed to ‘protect’ indentured workers, described the Magazine Barracks as ‘unfit for humanity to live in.’³³

The Mayor's Minute of 1885 concluded that the conditions at the Magazine Barracks were so appalling that they should be demolished and new housing built. The Chief Sanitary Inspector wrote to the Town Clerk in 1923 that the Magazine Barracks had deteriorated to such an extent that they were beyond repair.³⁴ When future Prime Minister of India, Indira Nehru, visited in 1935, she was so alarmed at the conditions that she referred to it as 'Durban's feudal rat hovel.'³⁵ Little was done to improve the existing structures and the same buildings which were condemned in the 1880s housed municipal workers right up until the 1960s when they were targeted by the GAA.

The housing conditions were a health hazard. Dr Gunn, the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) for Durban, reported in 1943 that 40 per cent of deaths at the Magazine Barracks were the result of dysentery, diarrhoea, and enteritis which he attributed to fly plagues, overcrowding and communal latrines. He also found that due to the lack of facilities, residents were forced to use the kitchen for bathing, washing clothes and cooking. A 1950 Commission of Enquiry concluded that 'these conditions constitute a grave risk and should not have been allowed to develop to the stage they have now reached.'³⁶

It was clear that the Council's inaction was deliberate. Indeed, in the mid-1920s, Councillor W.E. Knight said that the 'more wretchedly the Indians are housed and paid the more likely they will be willing to be repatriated to India.'³⁷ Officials were keen that Indians should return to India. The Cape Town Agreement of 1927 between the Indian and South African governments provided for voluntary repatriation and offered financial inducements to encourage them to do so.³⁸

The municipality came up with various ways to cope with the housing shortage. In 1923, the DCC stopped pensions for widows unless they vacated the barracks.³⁹ In 1932, 74 women were evicted as a result of this policy. Another rule change in 1928 stipulated that male employees who retired

had to vacate the barracks to qualify for a pension.⁴⁰ People who had spent their entire lives living at the barracks were suddenly expected to find alternative housing.⁴¹ One result was that children were often forced to work for the municipality. For example, Vassie intended to be a teacher and in fact got a job as one. However, in order for his family to keep their accommodation at the Magazine Barracks, he had to leave teaching and work for the municipality. He found a job in the City Health Department as an office cleaner. He was in his early twenties and became one of the more active members of the Durban Indian Municipal Employees Society (DIMES) for many decades.⁴²

Trade union organisation

Male residents of the Magazine Barracks worked as cleaners, assistants, messengers, and clerks for the Electricity, Water, Cleaning, and Parks and Recreation departments of the municipality. Municipal workers were divided into two categories, 'graded' and 'ungraded.' Ungraded employees performed unskilled work in the transport, borough engineer and sanitary departments as street sweepers, grass cutters, and scavengers, and comprised almost 90 per cent of the Indian municipal workforce. Graded employees performed roles such as policemen, messengers, and clerks, or they worked as assistants to whites.⁴³ From the 1920s until the 1960s, there were an average 2 000 Indian municipal employees per annum,⁴⁴ though employees and their dependents totalled 10 000 in 1949.⁴⁵

Respondents were keen to emphasise upward mobility within these constraining circumstances. For example, Naddie stated that his father's promotions allowed the family to live in relative 'luxury' at the barracks. Naddie was born in 1949 in the poorest section of the Magazine Barracks, known as the Tin Shanties which had no electricity or running water. The family received wood

and paraffin rations from the corporation. His father initially worked in the Storm Water Department but eventually worked his way up through various positions until he was promoted to a job at the Rachel Finlayson Baths which was the largest municipal public pool in Durban. The promotion meant that the family was given a brick house in J1 block with electricity and running water.⁴⁶

Jay's family also moved out of their wood and iron house when Jay's father received a promotion, first working in the ration room and later at the Alice Street Municipal Depot. By the time Jay was born, the family was living in E1 Block, which was considered a 'decent house' with electricity and water.⁴⁷

Most municipal employees were poorly paid, and had to contend with periods of economic stagnation and increases in living expenses. For example, during the First World War, unemployment was a serious problem that, according to DCC minutes, 'threatened to assume embarrassing dimensions.' Rising food prices made economic conditions unbearable for many working class families. For example, between June 1914 and September 1917, a bag of rice (160 pounds), which was a staple, increased from 24s to 42s and *dhall*, another staple, from 2d to 6d.⁴⁸

Poverty brought municipal workers together to address their economic plight. Self-help organisations were established that helped to foster social networks between residents.⁴⁹ One important body was DIMES, which took up workers' grievances with the DCC. DIMES was established in 1917 as the Durban Municipal Indian Employees Union (DMIEU), but became inactive in the early 1920s when economic conditions improved, and was reconstituted in 1934 as DIMES. It lobbied for higher wages, better living conditions, and educational opportunities and

made some gains. It also achieved some practical results, such as the provision of a pension scheme, but most of its appeals were rejected by the DTC. Nevertheless, the vigour with which DIMES pursued its aims helped to unite workers. While membership was voluntary, roughly ninety per cent of municipal workers belonged to DIMES.⁵⁰

Danny, whose father and grandfather were members of the union, explained that ‘though they [DIMES] did not then get the cooperation of the authorities, having fought fiercely without giving up, they managed to get some benefits.’ More important, he adds, the union helped to unite residents of the Magazine Barracks.⁵¹ Aside from material improvements, DIMES helped to foster a sense of community. Vahed also argues that, in a context of the dense concentration of people by race, DIMES helped to forge ‘Indianness.’⁵²

The majority of municipal workers lived in abject poverty as they comprised the lowest paid workers and had little opportunity for higher paid employment as the DCC resolved in 1920 that ‘the practice of employing Indians in clerical positions be discontinued as vacancies occur, and that such appointments be offered to white youths and girls.’⁵³ In 1932, the municipality decided that ‘unhealthy’ Indian employees aged 60 and over were to be retrenched at two months’ notice with pensions only for those who had worked for more than 20 years, on condition that they vacated the barracks. It also adopted a policy to reduce the number of Indian employees by ten per cent. The number of Indian employees dropped from 2 068 in 1930 to 1 856 in 1933.⁵⁴ This was to the satisfaction of the Town Clerk who reported in 1935 that the ‘policy of replacing Indians by Europeans has been carried out with advantage. There are certain jobs, however, of a “dead end”

nature which an Indian values ... and is prepared to spend his working lifetime thereat, which would not satisfy a European lad.'⁵⁵

A comparison carried out in 1924 showed that Indian municipal labour was cheaper than African municipal labour with the average cost of labour per annum, including wages, housing and food rations, being £39 for Indians and £46 for Africans.⁵⁶ In addition to their salaries Indian workers were given food rations in the form of *dhal*, rice, flour, mealie meal, beans, oil and salt. This was insufficient in quantity and nutritionally unbalanced.⁵⁷

The MOH reported in 1938 that high illness levels were due to the rations being deficient in protein. A 1946 survey found that residents spent an average of 62.3 per cent of their income to supplement their rations but that 45 per cent of diets were deficient in calories, 70 per cent in protein and 57 per cent in fats, while 70 per cent of families at the Magazine Barracks were in debt as a result of expenditure on food, clothing and medical care.⁵⁸

Residents supplemented their income in various ways. Jay's father did gardening work for white families on the Berea. Jay said that his father was a good gardener and when Jay needed money to go to the cinema or to watch a football game, he would assist his father with the gardening. He recalled an instance where he was very excited about attending an important football game at Curries Fountain. He worked on the Saturday to earn the half a shilling required to pay his fare to attend the game on the Sunday. However, halfway through the game it was cancelled, due to violent spectators who began throwing bottles and he had 'to take for cover.'⁵⁹ Opportunities to supplement their income by working for wealthier neighbours, and the close vicinity to sports

grounds are some of the advantages that residents highlighted about living in the Magazine Barracks.

Some women did casual work for the municipality, while others did hawking, some worked as domestic workers in the city, and yet others ran small business at home, such as selling *paan* (betel leaves wrapped with areca nuts and sometimes tobacco), or Indian foodstuff like *vadde* (an Indian savoury made with ground lentils and spices). Some women ran bigger ‘businesses’, selling oil, dried fish, and eggs, or purchasing vegetables and fruit at the Indian Market each morning and selling these to residents at the barracks. Other home industries included dressmaking, shoe and watch repairs, alternative herbal remedies and midwifery. Some even engaged in illegal activities such as liquor sales and money-lending.⁶⁰ Kiru explained that his granny use to operate a shebeen to supplement the income.⁶¹

Naddie’s mother contributed to the family income by working as a domestic worker in the Beatrice Street, Grey Street and First Avenue areas. One of her employers was impressed with her work and gave her a job at his clothing factory in Grey Street, called Avalon Clothing. She began as a cleaner but eventually became one of the best machinists in the factory. By this stage, she was earning a ‘decent salary.’ As a result of his parents’ joint incomes, Naddie said that he and his siblings’ upbringing was more privileged than that of most others at the barracks. All four children (two brothers and two sisters) were educated and Naddie also owned a ‘beautiful sports bike’ which ‘was a big deal’ because few parents could afford one.⁶²

Jay's mother also supplemented the household income by working for a company which planted grass in the city's parks and sports fields. This work was erratic and his mother also bought vegetables and fruit from the market in Warwick Avenue and sold these as an informal trader in Umgeni Road. Jay sometimes accompanied her and recalls that items not sold would be sold at the Magazine Barracks at reduced prices rather than allowing the food to go off. Jay's elder sister also did hawking to earn a living when she left school, until she found a job in a clothing factory.⁶³

There were increased options for younger residents from the late 1930s as a result of the industrial expansion of Durban, with the textile, footwear, clothing, chemicals and paper industries thriving as a result of the availability of raw materials, abundant water supply, inexpensive land and cheap labour.⁶⁴ Due to the sugar refinery, food and drink industries were established in Durban.⁶⁵ Many school leavers opted for work at these factories rather than the municipality. V. Govender recalled:

There was always a place at Lockhat for the young people of Magazine Barracks who went to seek employment. Girls would earn £2 a week and contribute £1 a week to their parents. £1 went a long way in those days. The whole weekly shopping was done with £1. As the years passed their income increased. This income was a tremendous boost, not only economically, it also meant independence and freedom for the females. Many families owe their rise in economic status to the financial contribution of their working wives and daughters. It also improved the quality of life in families.⁶⁶

Everyday life at the Magazine Barracks

While contemporary reports portray a bleak picture of living conditions at the Magazine Barracks, oral testimonies depicted a far more positive picture. Every participant who lived in the Magazine Barracks that was interviewed for this study and many other former residents who were spoken to during Durban Municipal Pensioner Club meetings stated that they were ‘very happy’ when they lived in the Magazine Barracks and explained that they missed the rich cultural and community life. Many stated that if it was possible to go back, they would. For example at the end of her interview when asked if there was anything that she would like to add, Mrs Pillay stated, ‘if the place was big enough and if it was possible to go back, we would really want to go back.’⁶⁷

Rather than focus on poverty and overcrowding, interviewees described strong notions of sharing, family, and closeness, which they miss today. Siva spoke of the strong culture of sharing as residents saw themselves as part of ‘one large family.’ She added that neighbours would often eat together or exchange food. Kisten, who lived at the Magazine Barracks for over 30 years, said that ‘we lived as one big loving community. There was so much of love, understanding and respect, we respected our elders. It was very, very nice.’⁶⁸ Naddie stated that despite the poverty, residents ‘always found ways to survive,’ and he repeatedly spoke of the ‘progressive’ nature of Magazine Barracks residents, meaning that they constantly looked for ways to supplement their income, improve their position at work, and established voluntary bodies such as the Friends of the Sick Association (FOSA), a Child Welfare Committee, St John Ambulance and the Red Cross First Aid, amongst others, to help one another.⁶⁹

The respondents emphasised that one of the major advantages of living at the Magazine Barracks was that many facilities were within walking distance. This included shopping in the Durban CBD, the Indian Market in Warwick Avenue, cinemas, and the beach which was used for both recreational purposes (swimming and picnics), as well as for fishing which supplemented the diet and provided an income. Naddie stated that although large parts of Durban were reserved for whites, he and his friends, and many other residents of the Magazine Barracks, would walk on the 'white' streets. On Sundays, whole families would go to 'town,' as they called it. Looking back at the facilities located nearby to the Magazine Barracks he stated 'we had a lovely life, hey.'⁷⁰

Residents also established a clinic and library, and a drama hall, which was the main meeting point and where vernacular and dance classes were held. There was a rich sporting life and each district within the barracks had its own football team which participated in very competitive matches. These activities fostered social networks between residents and a strong sense of community which the respondents felt was lost when they were displaced. Some of these aspects of life are explored below from the perspective of former residents.

Jay said that 'everybody had a rough time in barracks but it was good, we all enjoyed ourselves,' meaning that the material conditions under which they lived were terrible but they were content and lived in harmony. The 'hard time' that Jay referred to included overcrowded conditions. Jay's parents, their two children, and his maternal aunt, uncle, and grandmother shared the two room home. During the winter months, the children slept under the beds and in summer they put blankets outside on the balcony and slept alongside neighbours' kids.⁷¹ Children from poorer sections of the Magazine Barracks sometimes slept on the floors of communal areas, such as the kitchen

facilities due to lack of space.⁷² Jay added that there were no luxuries at the Magazine Barracks with regard to diet; ‘the only luxury was on Saturdays when residents would get trotters (sheep feet). The rations were meagre and insufficient, and they had to buy their own meat, which few could afford.’⁷³

Vassie recalled another of the advantages of living at the barracks, the registration of babies at birth. At the Magazine Barracks...

We use to have nurses from Addington, midwives. That time, they use to call them bag ladies but they were qualified midwives who use to come and deliver your baby. Once the baby was delivered they use to go straight to the office in the Magazine Barracks and register your baby. There was no reason for you to go register, therefore you find people from Magazine Barracks, are the children, the date of birth was the day they was born. Lot of people outside, who lived in other districts where it was four or five days later, or even weeks later, you will find people saying, ‘Ah! that is not my correct birth.’⁷⁴

Cultural and Social Activities and Self-Help Societies

Vernacular classes and the performance arts played an important role in the lives of residents at the Magazine Barracks. Mrs Pillay stated that while living conditions (housing, electricity, water) were better in Chatsworth, she missed the barracks because of the Tamil school, dancing, singing, and sport.⁷⁵ Mrs Pillay and her siblings attended a Tamil school run at a neighbour’s home. Her

father was a well-known Tamil teacher amongst residents but it was common for children to go to other teachers. Her father taught in a room illuminated by paraffin lamps.⁷⁶

The main Tamil vernacular school was held at the Drama Hall by volunteers. The principal in the 1940s was the *sirdar* of the Indian market, Muthusamy Muthen, who ran evening classes for adults. Children who attended secular school were taught by his wife at their home in the afternoons. Muthusamy's son, Deena, stated that 'we had a very strong culture in Magazine Barracks, a very, very strong culture.' Deena runs a Tamil vernacular and cultural school in Westcliff, Chatsworth to, as he put it, 'maintain that culture.'⁷⁷

Muthusamy Muthen was responsible for 14 staff at the Indian Market. His sons Vassie and Deena spoke of the attributes that their father instilled in them through their involvement 'in various voluntary bodies and general upbringing in the Magazine Barracks.' Deena recalled occasions, such as the 1949 Afro-Indian race riots, when the barracks did not have electricity and his mother taught with candles.⁷⁸ Both parents were 'very compassionate' and taught their children with 'compassion' and 'passion'. Muthusamy was 'well respected' at the Magazine Barracks and its residents would always go to him for advice on issues ranging from debt to marriage.

The Drama Hall was a central meeting point for residents and for cultural activities, especially the performance of *Therukoothu*, a Tamil drama and dance.⁷⁹ Between 1910 and 1930, R.B. Chettiar, a wealthy Tamil-speaking passenger migrant, produced many of the plays that took place at the Drama Hall.⁸⁰ From 1929, A.J. Peters, who was a colonial-born descendent of indentured migrants showed Indian religious and social films and the hall was also used for religious theatre.⁸¹

English, music, sewing, and dance classes also took place in the hall. The building was dilapidated but the DTC ignored appeals to repair it until it almost collapsed in the 1930s and a new brick hall was built at the entrance of the Magazine Barracks.⁸² The new hall was also used for weddings, for leisure activities such as table tennis, darts and cards, and for needlework classes. The hall was so popular that bookings had to be made well in advance.⁸³ Voluntary, social welfare and cultural associations held their meetings in a room adjacent to the hall. Runga recalled that the room was usually filled to capacity.⁸⁴

One of the more popular organisations at the Magazine Barracks was the FOSA which was formed in 1941 by the Reverend Paul Sykes to combat the high levels of tuberculosis amongst Indians. FOSA established four Care Committees in predominantly Indian areas, including one at the barracks.⁸⁵ Care Committees assisted patients and their families by securing grants for afflicted families, arranging for x-rays, ensuring that patients took their medication, and providing advice on health and hygiene.⁸⁶ Though poorly paid, residents of the Magazine Barracks helped to raise funds for FOSA. Runga described it as ‘amazing’ to see how much residents contributed to FOSA despite having so little.⁸⁷

Most respondents for this study were too young at the time to participate in the voluntary bodies to the extent to which their parents did, but some accompanied their parents to meetings. Siva and a group of girls from the Temple Girls School did voluntary work for FOSA after school. Mrs Pillay was too young to be active at the Magazine Barracks but saw the benefits of such work and joined FOSA in Chatsworth. Vassie was involved in a number of social welfare bodies, with FOSA

and Red Cross First Aid being the most prominent. He recalled that the ‘Side Room’ next to the hall was used as a clinic and children who were sick or injured playing sport, were treated there.⁸⁸

Adjacent to the Drama Hall was the committee room used by local committees and clubs for their meetings. In 1957 Vela Murugan a member of the Child Welfare Society, with the assistance of P.M. Willie, H.A. Murugan, Nadas Chetty and others formed a Blood Transfusion Committee and established a blood transfusion centre at the Magazine Barracks. The committee selected a number of women to work for the Centre.⁸⁹

Most respondents emphasised that despite their poverty, residents contributed to the self-help organisations to make life more bearable for themselves in a context where the state and other authorities provided little relief. Many took heed of these lessons and would seek to replicate these organisations in Chatsworth.

Religion

Religion was important in the lives of residents. A 1946 survey revealed that 88 per cent of residents were Hindu, 10 per cent were Christian, and 2 per cent were Muslim.⁹⁰ Respondents claimed that they were all ‘brothers and sisters’ regardless of religious differences which only became important in later decades, long after they had settled in Chatsworth. At the Magazine Barracks, Hindus participated in both Christmas and the Muslim festival of Muharram, while Christians participated in the Hindu festival of lights, Diwali. Deena Muthen, who belonged to a Hindu family but now, runs a Tamil-language church in Chatsworth, recalled:

When I was a young boy in the Magazine Barracks I would get excited to wake up on a Diwali morning or a Christmas morning. Our mother would give us an oil bath and by eight o'clock we would get up and put on our new clothes and our Christmas hats, and go outside watching all the other guys, even the Christian guys....[The] whole day would be a celebration. Today, you don't find that.⁹¹

The earliest recorded attempt to build a place of worship was in 1895, when residents built a wood and iron temple for Hindu devotees on land purchased from the municipality at a cost of £200. The temple was a meeting place for prayer and festivals and also served as a safe house for market farmers who visited the city.⁹² A Barracks Temple Committee was formed in 1925 to see to the maintenance of the temple and organise religious festivals. A full time priest was hired and birth, marriage and death ceremonies were conducted at the temple. Two residents, Palanivel Sirdar and Chinnapaya, renovated the temple in 1937 while other residents rebuilt the front wall. Residents who visited India from time to time brought back idols.⁹³ In 1924, Ragavan Pillay started a Tamil night school for children at the temple and from 1926 they taught Tamil, Telugu and Hindi.⁹⁴



Figure 3: Photograph of Magazine Barracks Temple from Karunananda Chetty⁹⁵

Christian residents were catered for by the Tamil Baptist Church, originally a wood and iron structure that was rebuilt in 1931, as well as the Telugu Baptist Church which was built in 1902. Pastor J.F. Rowlands of the Full Gospel Church of God made the most concerted effort to preach to residents of the Magazine Barracks when he arrived around 1930. He used the Drama Hall as a meeting place for his Bethlehem Church. Rowlands held a meeting on 11 December 1931 to discuss the formation of a Bethesda Church ('House of Kindness') at the Magazine Barracks. There was a positive response and he held services in a store in Grey Street until his new Bethesda Church was completed in Lorne Street in 1936.⁹⁶

Respondents pointed out that residents gradually began converting to Christianity, a process that markedly speeded up after the relocation to Chatsworth. The Perumal family, one of many who did so, is discussed in chapter five. Naddie stated that the teaching his mother received from nuns at the Magazine Barracks influenced her conversion after settling in Chatsworth.⁹⁷

According to Murugan, the growing influence of Pastor Rowlands was an incentive for Sri Siva Subramoney to establish the Saiva Sithantha Sungumin in 1937, to popularise Saiva worship in South Africa.⁹⁸ Subramoney was born on 10 May 1910 in Tongaat. His family moved to Durban and he was educated at the Thiruvalluvar Nainar Free Tamil School in Umgeni Road before being sent to a private Tamil school at the Vishnu Temple at the Magazine Barracks. After completing his education Soobramoney taught Saivism at the barracks.⁹⁹

Education

Secular education was also of concern among parents from the earliest days of settlement at the Magazine Barracks. In fact, this was one of the tasks that the original trade union, DMIEU, pursued. Unlike white municipal employees, the government did not provide free education for the children of Indian employees. In 1925, DMIEU requested that the DCC do so, as education would make Indian children more ‘progressive and have modern ideas in the future, and to become good citizens.’ A request for £10 for the salaries of two teachers was rejected. Even though the Cape Town Agreement of 1927 placed responsibility on the South African government to ‘uplift’ Indians in South Africa, the state did little.¹⁰⁰ Volunteers took it upon themselves to provide education. As with vernacular schools, these took place at the homes of residents. In 1926,

residents established the 'Committee of the Durban Corporations Free Indian Night School.' Each night volunteers taught approximately 100 pupils.¹⁰¹

In 1933 residents' appeal to the DTC for permission to use the Caretakers Cottage to run a school was turned down. In April 1941, well-known local businessman and political leader, A.I. Kaje, offered to build a school for residents if the DTC made land available but this was also declined. In June 1941 only 763 of the 1 662 children of school going age at the Magazine Barracks were attending school. In 1947, DIMES requested that unused army huts near the barracks be used as a school but the municipality remained unresponsive.¹⁰²

A joint memorandum from DIMES, the NIC, a local branch of the South African Communist Party (SACP), and the Young Communist Party was submitted to the DTC in 1947 but was again unsuccessful in winning any concessions with regard to education.¹⁰³ While largely unsuccessful, the struggle for education was one of many issues that brought residents together and this explains in part why their descendants speak nostalgically about the Magazine Barracks.

Some residents who could afford to pay school fees sent their children to the nearby Depot Road School for boys and the Temple Girls School (later called St. Mira Bai). Respondents who were able to attend have positive memories. Aroo Naicker described his teachers at Depot Road as 'beautiful.' Asked for clarification, he explained that they were utterly dedicated to their task.¹⁰⁴

Vassie described the school as a 'family,' since teachers felt that children from the Magazine Barracks were deprived and took it upon themselves to help mould them.¹⁰⁵ Siva and Mrs Pillay likewise spoke fondly of their teachers at the Temple Girls School.¹⁰⁶ Mrs Pillay recalled that the

principal, Mrs H.M. Barker was ‘very strict, but very wonderful.’ Vassie and Kisten, amongst others, said that the two kinds of people most respected by children at the Magazine Barracks were teachers and policemen. While the latter, most of whom were men, were respected partly out of fear and partly because they were seen to bring order to the community, the former were respected because education was seen as a means of upward mobility.¹⁰⁷

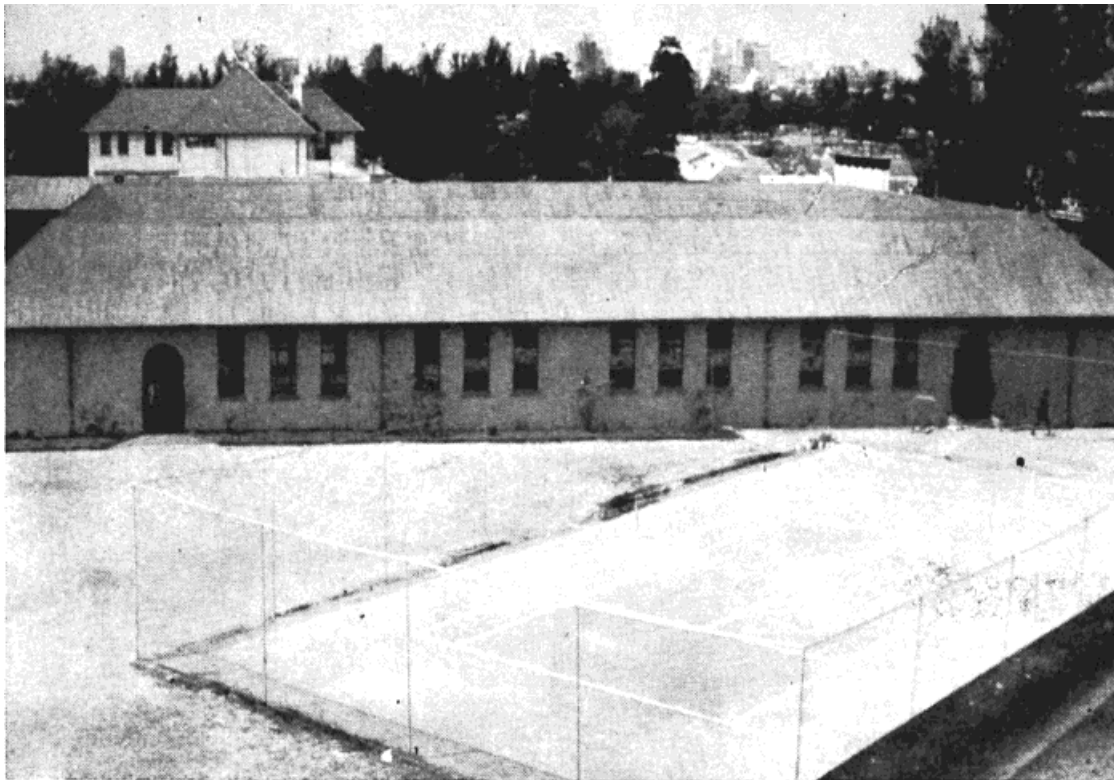


Figure 4: Photograph of Depot Road School from Karunananda Chetty¹⁰⁸

Runga spent almost the entire interview talking about his schooling and his respect for his former teachers, especially his principal at Depot Road School.¹⁰⁹ This reflected how important education was to him. He spoke nostalgically about his school years and valued the emphasis on discipline and sport, which were seen to go hand-in-hand by elders. Runga emphasised that parents always

supported teachers when they disciplined children. In fact, the teacher was seen as an extension of the parent in fulfilling the discipline role. School sports were usually held on public holidays so that parents could attend.¹¹⁰

Parents inspired children's education and sporting achievements. According to Runga, 'even though our parents had no education they had knowledge,' meaning that they knew of its importance to them. Ranga added that while many in the Indian community spoke negatively and even pejoratively about residents of the Magazine Barracks, 'they don't know us.... we had the talent, and people will come from outside to see it.'¹¹¹ Ranga and others emphasised the many fields in which residents excelled, with pride of place being given to Sam Ramsamy who for many years led the move to boycott apartheid sports from exile in London and who was a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in the post-apartheid period.¹¹²

During interviews, most respondents brought up the fact that while their parents were not formally educated they ensured as far as possible that their children received some schooling. For example, Kiru Naidoo said that while most parents had never studied beyond primary school the emphasis they placed on formal education was a great advantage to his generation. One of his abiding memories is the joy on his mother's face when he won a scholarship to study for a Master's degree at Cambridge University. His family was also unique among most Indians in that they placed as much emphasis on educating girls as they did on boys. He described education as his 'silver lining.'¹¹³

Danny also achieved upward economic mobility through education. He was educated at the Greyville School in Umgeni Road. After completing standard six, Danny earned a place at Sastri

College. This was a major achievement as Sastri College was the first high school built for Indians in South Africa and there was stiff competition for places. When Danny matriculated, he opted not to work for the municipality because he was politically minded and did not want to work for government. He opted for the private sector, joining Marshall Industrial as a clerk. Since his father was still working for the municipality, Danny could find outside employment without the risk of losing his accommodation at the barracks. With their savings, the family purchased property in Sea Cow Lake, which is where they settled when they were evicted from the Magazine Barracks.

Karan Narainsamy was at pains to emphasise that although the residents of the Magazine Barracks were very poor, the ‘people progressed educationally and in sports.’ His parents’ generation ‘put a huge emphasis on education that was essential to our children becoming lawyers and teachers.’ Karan sold newspapers at the Country Club after school to supplement the family income.¹¹⁴

In 1948 a library was built next to the Drama Hall at the entrance to the Magazine Barracks. Books were donated by municipal libraries and well-wishers. This was a real boon to both adults and the youth. Debates, speech contests, symposiums and lectures were an integral part of library activities. When the municipality withdrew its subsidy, residents ran the library using donations and funds raised through concerts and shows.¹¹⁵



Figure 5: Photograph depicting the library and the Drama Hall from Karunananda Chetty¹¹⁶

Sport

Sport and recreation were an important part of residents' life at the Magazine Barracks. According to Karan Narainsamy, while finances 'were really tough, when it came to weekends, you wouldn't believe it, that guy was working in sewerage, that guy was working sweeping the streets, the way he was dressed was like Hollywood, you know, tops.' On weekends, the 'Barracks' pride was spreading out and there were activities such as *thunie* and cannon ball in the districts, it was all alive.' Soccer matches were held on Sundays between different districts.¹¹⁷ Teams included Boys Town, Casbah, Depot Road United, Sons of India, Square Rangers, Sunrise, Temple City, and Young Buccaneers.

Sport provided a means of exercise, recreation, and competition, and also allowed residents to interact with one another. Municipal workers organised themselves into teams corresponding to the section of the municipality in which they worked and competed in tournaments and for trophies named after prominent Indians, such as the 'Harry Narain's League Cup, Govindsamy Memorial Shield, Sreenavassen Nariadoo's Cup, Sons of India League Cup and Drs Naicker and Naidoo Cup.'¹¹⁸

The most popular sports were soccer and cricket, but some residents took part in bodybuilding, boxing, golf, and wrestling. Naddie mentioned the popularity of sport but emphasised that residents established these organisations themselves. 'Everyone kept themselves busy, even old people,' to remain fit. On weekends, he would wake up at six o'clock to go and run and swim at the beach; 'barracks people liked their swimming, they liked their swimming.' He and his brother were members of a well-established boxing club.¹¹⁹ Sport played an important role in Danny's life and he still pines for the close proximity in which he lived to the sport grounds. The team Depot Road United was established by him and his friends in 1959.¹²⁰

In 1936, residents established the Municipal Indian Sports Club which organised a Gala Sports Day annually on 31 December. The Sports Association organised its first Baby Show on 1 January 1948. Weightlifting was also very popular and Reuben Govender won the Mr Universe title in 1954.¹²¹ For the annual gala, monies were raised for sweets, cakes, and cool drinks for children. Local Indian traders contributed generously while the Durban mayor provided a customary donation.¹²²

The December 1947 Sports Day programme included bicycle races, marathons, sprints, long jump, golf and *thunie*, a card game that was unique to Indians and remains popular to the present day. The Sports Day was held under the patronage of the mayor of Durban and opened by Deputy Mayor Thomas while the guests of honour included the mayor and mayoress. Councillor and Mrs L. Boyd also attended. When it is considered that this event was held in the midst of the 1946-1948 passive resistance campaign organised by the NIC against land segregation in Durban, the DIMES' officials, many of whom were also involved in the resistance, fraternising with representatives of the local state suggests the multiple identities of residents, as many were not involved in the campaign and just wanted to get on with their lives.

Concluding remarks

Analysing the history of the Magazine Barracks from its inception shows how residents responded to the structural forces imposed upon them by local government in their own unique ways. Although the Magazine Barracks was built with the sole purpose of providing the DCC with a cheap labour force whose living arrangements could be monitored and controlled, residents created a rich and thriving community with a strong emphasis on culture, religion, and sports. Examining contemporary records of the Town Clerk files depict the exploitative conditions imposed upon municipal workers and their families. Living conditions were neglected and discipline was strongly enforced by the DCC as depicted by its stance regarding evictions. But residents responded by working together to deal both with poverty and with maintaining aspects of their cultural and religious heritage. As a result their depictions of life in the Magazine Barracks today is in stark contrast from the image one gets from reading 'official sources.'

The memories of former residents of the Magazine Barracks are mostly positive and show an affiliation to this largely working class area. In the words of Deena,

There was such tremendous love. Yes, but you still get the harmony, in Magazine Barracks the harmony was there, Oh yes, there was that harmony, I wish I could explain to you Karthi, you know there was such a tremendous love amongst our people, I wish I could see that now. Everything was available there for us, the beaches were nearby, the shopping centres were nearby, the Durban Market was nearby, the cinemas were nearby.

This quote depicts the way in which residents created a home from what was intended to be a temporary housing for a cheap labour force. It has been argued however, by some scholars that in response to being victims of forced removals, some South Africans have constructed romanticised memories of life before such removals.

For example, Henry Trotter shows how Coloured identity is influenced by the trauma of forced removals and how Coloureds construct a counter narrative in opposition to the ‘official transcript’ used by apartheid architects. Whereas the legislation to introduce the GAA was justified by the apartheid government on the grounds of reducing racial conflict and overcrowding, respondents remember their neighbourhoods as being places of ‘interracial harmony’ and what the apartheid government called overcrowding is seen by former residents as ‘closeness,’ ‘intimacy,’ and ‘familiarity.’ Trotter speaks of this as ‘counter memory.’¹²³

This chapter shows that residents of the Magazine Barracks cannot speak of interracial harmony. On the contrary, the fact that housing, sporting clubs, and civic associations were racialised fostered a strong sense of ‘Indianness.’ A 1994 work on DIMES recognised this:

For decades now our people have been distributed in pockets spread over the different suburbs of the city. In each of these areas a feeling of community has developed. Around the local school or place of worship a feeling of belonging has evolved. The little communities had a structure and a form which characterised each one of them. A neighbourly affiliation developed. A common consensus resulted. The pattern helped to retain social and moral codes indicating lines of responsibility. And all this in spite of the homes being poor structures and often assuming the feature of slums.¹²⁴

On the other hand, contemporary surveys showed that living conditions were deplorable and the focus of harsh criticism by health officials, and that residents were encouraged to evacuate the Magazine Barracks for better quality housing and facilities, including electricity and running water. Yet, those very conditions are recalled now as having promoted a strong sense of camaraderie. Former residents speak nostalgically about the community that they created and have fond memories of growing up at the Magazine Barracks. The ‘unstable’ post-apartheid present seems to be producing this serene and thriving past. The move to Chatsworth was not just about material loss; underlying some of the narratives was the sense that the loss included loss of stability, friendships, family, culture, and religion, and a way of life; in other words, of self.

A final point is that even among Indians, because of the kinds of work their parents did, residents of the Magazine Barracks were often stigmatised in pejorative ways and the respondents were keen to deconstruct these notions and focus on the positive aspects of their lives. As Vassie pointed out, ‘outsiders had a negative attitude for people living in the Magazine Barracks and communal living, they thought we were all thugs.... But we had professionals in education, in sports, in all fields and we also had thugs, gambling. We had everything....’

¹ On 23 June 1835, the then 35 European residents of the settlement decided to build a capital town and name it "d'Urban" after Sir Benjamin d'Urban, governor of the Cape Colony. See Anna C. Bjorvig, ‘Durban 1824 - 1910: The Formation of a Settler Elite and its Role in the Development of a Colonial City’ (PhD diss., University of Natal, 1994).

² For a discussion on attempts to recruit Zulu workers and the reasons for settlers’ failure to do so, see Keletso E. Atkins, *The Moon is dead! Give us our money! The cultural origins of an African work ethic, Natal, South Africa, 1843-1900* (London: James Currey Ltd, 1993). For a more comprehensive understanding of the period and the relation between the British settlers and the Zulu see Jeff Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone and the Forging of Natal: African Autonomy and Settler Colonialism in the Making of Traditional Authority* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2013).

³ For a deeper understanding of indenture in Natal see Vahed, ‘The Making,’ 26-32; Leonard M. Thomson, *Indian Immigration into Natal. 1860-1872* (Pretoria: Union Government Archives, 1952); Surendra Bhana, *Indentured Indian Emigrants to Natal 1860-1902. A Study Based on Ships Lists* (New Delhi: Promilla & Co, 1991); Y.S. Meer, *Documents of Indentured Labour in Natal, 1851-1917* (Durban: Institute for Black Research, 1980); and Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai, *Inside Indenture: A South African Story* (Cape Town: HSRC, 2010).

⁴ For a discussion on the construction of the Ship Lists, see Thembisa Waetjen and Goolam Vahed, ‘Passages of Ink: Decoding the Natal Indentured Records into the Digital Age,’ *Kronos* 40: 3 (2014).

⁵ Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2013.

⁶ Sam Ramsamy, *Reflection on a Life in Sport* (Cape Town: Greenhouse, 2004), 1- 4.

⁷ Kearney, 'Bamboo Square,' 30.

⁸ Hannah Carrim, 'History and Nostalgia: Remembering the Magazine Barracks,' in *Chatsworth: The Making of a South African Township*, ed, Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013).

⁹ Of all the barracks that housed African and Indian workers during this period, the Congella Barracks is the only one still in existence. Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 11.

¹⁰ Karunananda Chetty, 'My Roots : memoirs and little tit-bits' unpublished memoirs available at the Gandhi Luthuli Documentation Centre.

¹¹ Map from Home, 'Barracks and Hostels,' 48.

¹² Kearney, 'Bamboo Square,' 29-64.

¹³ Home, 'Barracks and Hostels,' 48.

¹⁴ 'Coolies in Town' Report Town Committee, Durban Town Council, 22 November 1870 (DAR. 3DBN, 5/2/7/1/1, Sanitary Committee Reports) cited in Kearney, 'Bamboo Square,' 32.

¹⁵ Migrants who came from India but paid for their own passage became known as 'passenger Indian.' However this term has led to the stereotype of the wealthy Gujarati trader. This is not entirely representative of this group and Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie argued that although there was a small wealthy elite of Gujarati traders this stereotype masks important aspects of passenger migration. See Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie., 'The Passenger Indian as Worker: Indian Immigrants in Cape Town in the Early Twentieth Century,' *African Studies*, 68: 1 (2009), 129.

¹⁶ Kearney, 'Bamboo Square,' 31.

¹⁷ Home, 'Barracks and Hostels,' 45- 46.

¹⁸ 'Report by Chief Sanitary Inspector to the Chairman and Members of the Sub-Committee on Indian Wages and Conditions' NA, 3 DBN 4/1/3/2025, 462, cited in Vahed, 'The Making,' 83.

¹⁹ 'Indian Location on Eastern Vlei' Special Committee Meeting, Durban Town Council, 11 November 1874 (DAR, 3 DBN, 5/2/7/1/2) cited in Kearney, 'Bamboo Square,' 33.

²⁰ Home, 'Barracks and Hostels,' 48.

²¹ Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 14.

²² Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 19.

²³ Vahed, 'Race or Class,' 116.

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- ²⁴ For more on the 1949 race riots see Jon Soske, “‘Wash Me Black Again’: African Nationalism, the Indian Diaspora, and Kwa-Zulu Natal, ‘1944-1960’ (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2009), 106 – 145.
- ²⁵ Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 14.
- ²⁶ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 November 2012.
- ²⁷ Swaminathan Gounden, untitled section in G. Pillay, ed, *Come to the Point: A History of the Indian Community and some Well-Known Personalities* (Point Indian Remembrance Committee, 2002), 13.
- ²⁸ Vahed, ‘The Making,’ 83-84.
- ²⁹ Gounden, untitled section, 13.
- ³⁰ In 1922, double story brick buildings contained 528 rooms, hollow concrete block buildings contained 156 rooms and the original wood and iron buildings contained 567 rooms. See Omar, ‘The Relationship,’ 17.
- ³¹ Omar, ‘The Relationship,’ 17.
- ³² Focus Group discussion conducted by Hannah Carrim and Goolam Vahed 21 March 2009.
- ³³ In 1874, a Protector of Indian Immigrants (originally called the Immigration Officer) was appointed to administer a new set of regulations between Indentured Indians and their employers. Between 1860 and 1866, the Indian Government halted indenture to Natal due to various grievances. After a new set of agreements were drawn up, the Protector of Indian Immigrants was tasked with ensuring that these were maintained.
- ³⁴ Omar, ‘The relationship,’ 8-9.
- ³⁵ Vahed, ‘Race or Class,’ 107.
- ³⁶ Vahed, ‘Race or Class,’ 107.
- ³⁷ Vahed, ‘Race or Class,’ 107.
- ³⁸ See Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, ‘From Sastri to Deshmukh: A Study of the Role of the Government of India’s representatives in South Africa, 1927-1946’ (PhD diss., University of Natal, 1987).
- ³⁹ Minutes of Durban Town Council Meeting, 28 May 1923. NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/2/1375, 642, vol. 3.
- ⁴⁰ Report of Sub.-Committee re. Wages and Conditions, 11 May 1929. 4/1/2/1378, 642, vol. 7.
- ⁴¹ Vahed, ‘Race or Class,’ 114.
- ⁴² Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴³ Vahed, ‘Race or Class,’ 114.

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- ⁴⁴ DIMES Annual Report and Audited Balance Sheet.
- ⁴⁵ Vahed, 'The Making,' 83.
- ⁴⁶ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ⁴⁷ Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2013.
- ⁴⁸ Vahed, 'Race or Class,' 112.
- ⁴⁹ See Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 21-60.
- ⁵⁰ See DIMES Annual Report and Audited Balance Sheets. Each year's sheet recorded the number of Indian Municipal Employees and paying members of DIMES.
- ⁵¹ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 November 2012.
- ⁵² See Vahed, 'Race or Class;' and Surendra Bhana, 'Indianness Reconfigured, 1944-1960: The Natal Indian Congress in South Africa,' *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 17:2 (1997). ; 100 - 107
- ⁵³ Vahed, 'Race or Class,' 113.
- ⁵⁴ Vahed, 'The Making of Indian Identity,' 83.
- ⁵⁵ Vahed, 'Race or Class,' 113
- ⁵⁶ Vahed, 'Race or Class,' 116.
- ⁵⁷ Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 21.
- ⁵⁸ Vahed, 'Race or Class,' 116.
- ⁵⁹ Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2013.
- ⁶⁰ Forbie Perumal, interviewed 23 January 2013.
- ⁶¹ Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.
- ⁶² Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ⁶³ Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2013.
- ⁶⁴ Vahed, 'The Making of Indian Identity,' 85-86.
- ⁶⁵ Vahed, 'The Making of Indian Identity,' 86.
- ⁶⁶ V. Govender, interviewed by Goolam Vahed 15 December 2011.
- ⁶⁷ Mrs Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2013.
- ⁶⁸ John Kisten, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁶⁹ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ⁷⁰ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

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- ⁷¹ Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2013.
- ⁷² Mrs Pillay, interviewed 15 April 2013.
- ⁷³ Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2013.
- ⁷⁴ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁷⁵ Mrs Pillay, interviewed 15 April 2013.
- ⁷⁶ Mrs Pillay, interviewed 15 April 2013.
- ⁷⁷ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁷⁸ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁷⁹ Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 77.
- ⁸⁰ Dhanee Bramdaw, ed, *South Africa Indian WHO'S WHO and Commercial Directory 1936–37* (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Witness Ltd., 1935), 50.
- ⁸¹ Vahed, 'Race or Class,' 109.
- ⁸² Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 77.
- ⁸³ Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 77.
- ⁸⁴ Runga Munien, interviewed 7 February 2013.
- ⁸⁵ *Fiat Lux*, 1 February 1968.
- ⁸⁶ Murugan, *The Lotus Blooms*, 24.
- ⁸⁷ Runga Munien, interviewed 7 February 2013.
- ⁸⁸ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁸⁹ Murugan, *The Lotus Blooms*, 30–31.
- ⁹⁰ V.S. Naidoo, 'Survey of Income and Expenditure of Indian Employees of the Durban Corporation: Living at the Magazine Barracks, Durban,' *The South African Journal of Economics* 14: 1 (1946): 45.
- ⁹¹ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁹² Pillay, 'A history,' 16.
- ⁹³ Vahed, 'Race or Class', 108 and Paul Mikula, Brian Kearney, and Rodney Harber, *Traditional Hindu Temples in South Africa* (Durban, Hindu Temple Publications, 1982), 76.
- ⁹⁴ C. Kuppusami, *Tamil Culture in South Africa* (Durban: Rapid Graphic, 1993), 50.
- ⁹⁵ Chetty, 'My Roots.'

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- ⁹⁶ See Gerhardus C. Oosthuizen, *Pentecostal penetration into the Indian community in metropolitan Durban, South Africa* (Durban: University of Durban-Westville, 1975); and Gerald Pillay. *Religion at the Limits? Pentecostalism among Indian South Africa* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1994).
- ⁹⁷ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ⁹⁸ Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 62.
- ⁹⁹ See Diesel and Maxwell. Hinduism, 76. For a biography of Sri Siva Subramoney see the *Graphic*, 9 January 1954 and <http://saiva-sithantha-sungum.org/home.html> (Accessed 26 November 2010).
- ¹⁰⁰ For a detailed discussion on Indian education in Natal and the state's failure to provide adequate facilities, see Vahed and Waetjen *Schooling Muslims*, 40-61.
- ¹⁰¹ Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 48-49.
- ¹⁰² Vahed, 'Race or Class,' 110.
- ¹⁰³ Vahed, 'Race or Class,' 113.
- ¹⁰⁴ Aroo Naicker, interviewed 7 February 2013.
- ¹⁰⁵ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ¹⁰⁶ Mrs Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2013 and Siva Kugesan, interviewed 31 January 2013.
- ¹⁰⁷ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ¹⁰⁸ Chetty, 'My Roots.'
- ¹⁰⁹ Runga Munien, interviewed 7 February 2013.
- ¹¹⁰ Runga Munien, interviewed 7 February 2013.
- ¹¹¹ Runga Munien, interviewed 7 February 2013.
- ¹¹² See Ramsamy, *Reflection on a Life*.
- ¹¹³ Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.
- ¹¹⁴ Karan Narainsamy, interviewed 10 April 2013.
- ¹¹⁵ Vahed, 'Race or Class,' 111.
- ¹¹⁶ Chetty, 'My Roots.'
- ¹¹⁷ Karan Narainsamy, interviewed 10 April 2013.
- ¹¹⁸ Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 36-37.
- ¹¹⁹ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

¹²⁰ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 November 2012.

¹²¹ Murugan, *The Lotus blooms*, 46.

¹²² Vahed, 'Race or Class,' 111.

¹²³ Henry Trotter, 'Trauma and memory: The impact of Apartheid-era forced removals on Coloured identity in Cape Town,' in *Burdened by Race: Coloured Identities in Southern Africa*, ed, M Adhikari (Cape Town, UCT Press, 2009), 53.

¹²⁴ S. Jaggarnath, *DIMES: A Record in Prose and Pictures* (Durban: Magenta Art & Design, 1994), 17.

Chapter Two:

The Group Areas Act and the Destruction of the Magazine Barracks, 1960-1965

During the general elections of May 1948 the NP, led by Daniel François (D.F.) Malan defeated Jan Christiaan Smuts' United Party in an unexpected turn of events. The NP did not have a master plan but its core aim was to establish white political and economic supremacy.¹ The ideology of apartheid, which roughly translates to 'apartness,' aimed at the racial segregation of South Africans in work, residence, education, health care and, generally, as far as possible. However, apartheid was never monolithic.

Deborah Posel explains that apartheid was not static but evolved over the decades, 'marked by successive efforts to manage its internal contradictions and the effects of external pressures.'² Dubow adds that the ideology of apartheid has its roots in Afrikaner nationalism which emerged both to entrench white supremacy and to resist British imperialism.³ Underpinning the policy of apartheid were the Population Registration Act and the GAA, both passed in 1950. The former categorised South Africans into distinct racial categories while the latter facilitated the 'proclamation' of residential and business areas for designated race groups, and removal of those who did not constitute a part of that race group from that area.⁴ It took almost two decades for the policy to take effect, but once it did, the period from the late 1950s witnessed the systematic and forcible removal of mainly Black people all over the country.

In the early 1960s, after several unsuccessful court challenges, residents of the Magazine Barracks were finally informed that they would have to vacate what had been a home for thousands, for close to eight decades.

This chapter examines the application of the GAA in Durban. As most of the residents from the Magazine Barracks were relocated to Chatsworth, the establishment of that township is also traced. The chapter focuses on how and when residents were informed that they were to be relocated; their reactions and resistance, if any; whether opposition was localised or whether there was interaction with other affected communities in Durban; and whether the actual process of removal was staggered and, if so, who agreed to go first and why, and whether this affected their location in Chatsworth.

Segregation before the Group Areas Act

The GAA created the necessary mechanisms to allow local and central state departments to demarcate areas for exclusive occupation by designated racial groups, and to uproot the existing population to achieve this. In this way it differed from segregation legislation during the pre-apartheid era, which was primarily aimed at restricting the movement of black people into urban areas in particular. Some pre-apartheid legislation, such as the Slums Act of 1933, did bring about the destruction of some settled communities.⁵ However the impact of Group Areas was more widespread and extensive, and led to the countrywide destruction of numerous longstanding and established communities, with inhabitants resettled in large state created housing projects. The forced removals that were the consequence of the GAA saw approximately three and a half million people displaced.

There is a debate in the historiography as to whether the GAA was a radical departure from or a continuation of various pre-apartheid segregation laws. Maylam argues that while the wide body of interdisciplinary scholarship which emerged in the 1980s presented urban segregation as evolving over a long period of time in ‘a rather haphazard, piecemeal way,’ the continuities before and after both the 1923 Natives Urban Areas Act and the 1950 GAA are more striking than the discontinuities.⁶

The segregationist drive has a long genealogy in South African urban history. During the 1850s, for example, the increasing numbers of black people entering Port Elizabeth led to the colonial government implementing laws to keep them out of ‘white’ areas.⁷ When the Boer Republics, the Orange Free State and the South African Republic, were established in the mid-nineteenth century, segregation was promoted, especially after the discovery of minerals and the growth of urban areas such as Kimberley and Johannesburg. There were locations in the Orange Free State and Transvaal for Malays and Africans.⁸ In 1885, the Transvaal government passed the Asiatic Bazaar Law to create separate districts for Indians.⁹ For Mabin, the ‘compound and hostel were essentially the first rigid form of residential segregation applied in the development of the South African city. Ordered townships were created in the wake of that experience.’¹⁰

The earliest recorded attempts at segregation in Durban can be traced to the 1870s when the DCC used the vagrancy laws and sanitation to control Indian settlement in Durban.¹¹ According to Maynard Swanson, the DCC’s attempt to create separate locations for Indians was ‘the first concerted attempt at group area segregation in Durban and one of the first in a major South African town.’¹² This was necessary because African migrant workers were housed in closely monitored

compounds and left once their tenure expired whereas free Indians could enter the city.¹³ Swanson makes the point that whites thus ‘were more concerned about the “Asiatic menace” than the “Native problem”’ as Indians competed with them for ‘space, place, trade, and political influence with the imperial authority.’¹⁴ The drive to segregate Indians was often expressed in terms of sanitation. For example in 1875, referring to whites who leased property to Indians, Durban’s Mayor stated that ‘legislation will doubtless have to be resorted to, to prevent these people thus locating themselves in our very midst, their habits and customs being, as is well known, so totally at variance with and repugnant to those of Europeans.’¹⁵

Following the destruction of the Zulu kingdom after the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, many Africans began settling in Durban and at the turn of the century shack settlements could be found all around the periphery of the city.¹⁶ This was so pronounced that Freund describes Durban as a ‘string of colonial commercial and residential islands set in a sea of cultivated shacklands.’¹⁷ By 1903 commentators described Durban as a ‘modern Babylon’ in which white men were living with African women, ‘bringing disgrace on our own people.’¹⁸ The DCC responded by adopting a number of vagrancy laws to limit African access to the city; by 1901, this had resulted in the arrest of a third of Durban’s Africans.¹⁹ According to Maharaj, the ‘unique’ system of administering Africans in Durban, where Africans were forced to drink at municipal beer halls, and the profits were used to control them, was replicated across the country from the 1920s.²⁰

Until Union in 1910, the local state’s anxiety about controlling the African and Indian population in Durban was expressed in terms ‘of the outbreak of diseases, insanitary conditions, and crime.’²¹ After the formation of Union this began to intensify. The 1913 Natives Land Act limited African

access to the country's land. In the years after the First World War, this manifested more clearly in racial terms. The Lange Asiatic Inquiry Commission was set up in 1920 to investigate Indian trading and land acquisition in urban areas.²² It did not find an 'Asiatic menace' but recommended voluntary segregation and the setting aside of specific areas for trading.²³ Before the national government could act, the DCC passed the Land Alienation Ordinance in 1922 which gave property owners the power to include racially exclusive clauses in title deeds.²⁴

The Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 was a crucial piece of legislation as it allowed municipalities to control the movement of Africans in the areas under their jurisdiction. 'Native Advisory Boards' were tasked with removing 'surplus' people, which by definition meant those not employed in urban areas. As Freund points out, this Act 'is usually taken as the charter for racial segregation in the cities and towns of South Africa. It envisioned the "proclamation" of areas for the use of exclusive race groups.'²⁵

In 1934, the Union Government passed the Slums Act which allowed local municipalities to clear existing settlements that were deemed a health hazard. Swanson has argued that this Act was motivated by the desire to remove Indians from central areas in Durban where they were considered an economic threat to whites.²⁶ The DCC used the Act to enforce residential segregation, a point made by the South African Indian Council (SAIC) which informed the government that the DCC was motivated by 'racial consideration' and was using the law to get rid of the city's so-called 'black belt' without doing anything to improve existing housing or provide new housing.²⁷

Further segregationist legislation in 1936 in the form of the Native Trust and Land Act limited African landownership to reserves which the government held in trust. At the same time, a plethora of laws controlled black entry and movement in the city to maintain the racial hierarchy and privileges.²⁸ As far as Indians were concerned, there was great distress in Durban about Indian ‘penetration,’ or the alleged purchase of land by Indians in so-called white areas. This fixation led to the appointment of several commissions and in 1943, the NP passed the Trading and Occupation of Land Act or ‘Pegging Act’ which specifically targeted Indians by restricting their ability to purchase land in white areas and by halting property transactions between Indians and whites for a period of three years. When this expired in 1946, the NP aimed to make the effects of this Act permanent by passing the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation or ‘Ghetto’ Act. The result was a passive resistance campaign by Indians that lasted from June 1946 to June 1948 but failed to overturn this legislation.²⁹ Much of the hype around Indian penetration was imagined. In Durban, there was around 89 per cent residential segregation between Indians and whites in 1951. While whites settled on the Berea and followed the railway line to places such as Westville, Sea View, and Malvern, most Indians lived in market gardening areas on the periphery of the city, in places like Clairwood and Merebank in the south, Sydenham, Overport, Clare Estate, Mayville and Cato Manor in the west, and Riverside in the north.³⁰

The government’s concern in the 1930s and 1940s was the burgeoning black urban population. For example in Durban, the urban population increased as follows:

TABLE 1 Racial Composition of Durban's Population

YEAR	Whites	Coloureds	Indians	Africans	Total
1904	31 302	1 980	15 631	18 929	67 842
1911	31 903	2 497	17 015	17 750	69 165
1921	46 113	4 000	16 400	29 011	93 515
1931	59 250	4 240	17 860	43 750	125 100
1936	88 065	7 336	80 384	63 762	239 547
1949	129 683	11 280	123 165	109 543	373 771

Source: University of Natal, *The Durban Housing Survey* (Durban: University of Natal, 1952), 35.

As Dubow points out, despite existing legislation, and while there are continuities between segregation and apartheid, we must take into account the

extent to which the segregationist compact of 1936 was under pressure a decade earlier. The war effort and the war economy had made all too plain that segregation was a ramshackle system, full of inconsistencies, and in many cases in retreat. Segregation was plainly unable to cope with the social needs and political demands of Africans whose presence in the cities could no longer be so easily controlled.³¹

The NP's desire to reverse the tide of African urbanisation appealed to whites under these circumstances. Dubow adds:

There was a sense of impending chaos which would make 'the authoritarian solution of apartheid highly attractive. It also fed into deep racial anxieties. Fear of the swart *gevaar* (black peril) and of *oorstrooming* (swamping) were well rehearsed tropes, especially for those whites living a precarious existence in towns and cities.'³²

These fears over African urbanisation can be reflected in Malan's surprising victory in the 1948 elections over Smuts.

Group Areas Act and the establishment of Chatsworth

The GAA empowered municipalities to set aside areas for specific racial groups and for those who belonged to any other race group to be evicted from that area. The impact was far-reaching. As Dubow points out, 'no urban area remained immune from the operation of the "Group" as bureaucrats set to work to fillet out coloureds, Indians, and Africans in the "non-white" sections of town and created spatial buffer zones between them.'³³ Dominated by supposedly liberal English-speaking whites, the DCC often took the lead and appointed a subcommittee in November 1950 to report on the racial rezoning of the city's business and residential areas. White citizens were unhappy with the first report which was released on 5 May 1952 and would have affected some 120 000 of the 145 000 Indians in Durban. Their objection was that most of the 12 000 whites in Rossburgh, Sea View, Bellair, and Hillary would have to be moved.³⁴

New plans presented in August 1952 provided for the resettlement of the bulk of Indians on Indian-owned banana farms south of the Umhlatuzana River. The revised plan affected an estimated 116 900 Indians but only 2 700 whites.³⁵ It is estimated that as many as 80 000 Africans were displaced from areas within and around the city.³⁶ The plan was adopted by the DCC and was submitted to the Group Areas Board in February 1953. The Board approved it in July 1954 and it went through various parliamentary processes, including approval by the Minister of Interior, before being published as Proclamation 69 in the Government Gazette on 6 June 1958.³⁷ While the GAA required the Minister of Interior to appoint a Land Tenure Board, submissions by black people

were usually ignored. In time, a Department of Community Development was established to take over the administration of Group Areas from the Department of Interior. Although the national government had to approve all Group Areas proclamations, such permission was not required in Natal and the Cape with regard to proclamations made within five years of the Act being proclaimed. This removed an important check on their actions.³⁸

On 12 December 1958, the DCC agreed to purchase land in Umhlatuzana, 20 kilometres south west of the Durban CBD, for the construction of approximately 14 000 houses. Umhlatuzana included the farming districts of Chatsworth, Cavendish, Welbedacht, Witteklip, Buffelsbosch and Zeekoe Valley, as well as three private Indian townships, Silverglen, Kharwastan, and Umhlatuzana. Combined, this area would come to constitute the Chatsworth Indian Township which comprised of 89 acres, 61 acres of which was usable for housing.³⁹ Indian banana farmers were amongst the first to feel the impact of forced removals. *Glimpses of Rural Chatsworth*, published in 2012, depicted a long established community with a rich tradition of religious, social, educational, and political activity. Representations to the DCC by the Umhlatuzana-Cavendish Indian Coordinating Council and the Queensburgh Indian Ratepayers Association for alternative farming land were in vain, as were meetings with the Administrator of Natal on 10 December 1959 and 20 July 1961.⁴⁰ The farmers were consequently forced to give up their livelihoods at lower than market values and most settled in Chatsworth.⁴¹

Local Indian political leader, P.R. Pather of the Natal Indian Organisation (NIO), who was known to be a moderate while acknowledging the need for Indian housing, captured the frustration of Indians when he said that ‘one should not blame the Indians for violently opposing the scheme.’⁴²

Despite protests, the DCC proceeded with the scheme which was managed by the Department of Community Development. The DCC applied for permission for its housing project in March 1961 and the plans were made public on 8 December 1961.⁴³

Chatsworth was completed in stages, with each stage known as a unit. Eventually 120 000 Indians were settled there in the decade from 1963. The township consisted of mixed-housing and included land that was auctioned to the public; ‘sub-economic’ houses which were occupied on a tenancy basis (in Bayview and Westcliff); and ‘economic’ houses that occupants could purchase.⁴⁴ The local and central governments contested housing allocation as the DCC wanted to use the housing scheme to relocate Indians living in informal settlements in Springfield, Clairwood, Riverside, and residents of the Magazine Barracks to eradicate the city’s ‘slum’ problem, while the national government wanted part of the scheme to be used for those evicted as a result of Group Areas in places such as Bellair, Sea View and Treasure Beach.⁴⁵

There were ten units in Chatsworth, numbered one to eleven but missing a Unit Eight – Havenside (Unit One), Bayview (Unit Two), Westcliff (Unit Three), Mobeni Heights (Unit Four), Croftdene (Unit Five), Arena Park (Unit Six), Montford (Unit Seven), Moorten (Unit Nine), Woodhurst (Unit Ten), and Crossmoor (Unit Eleven).

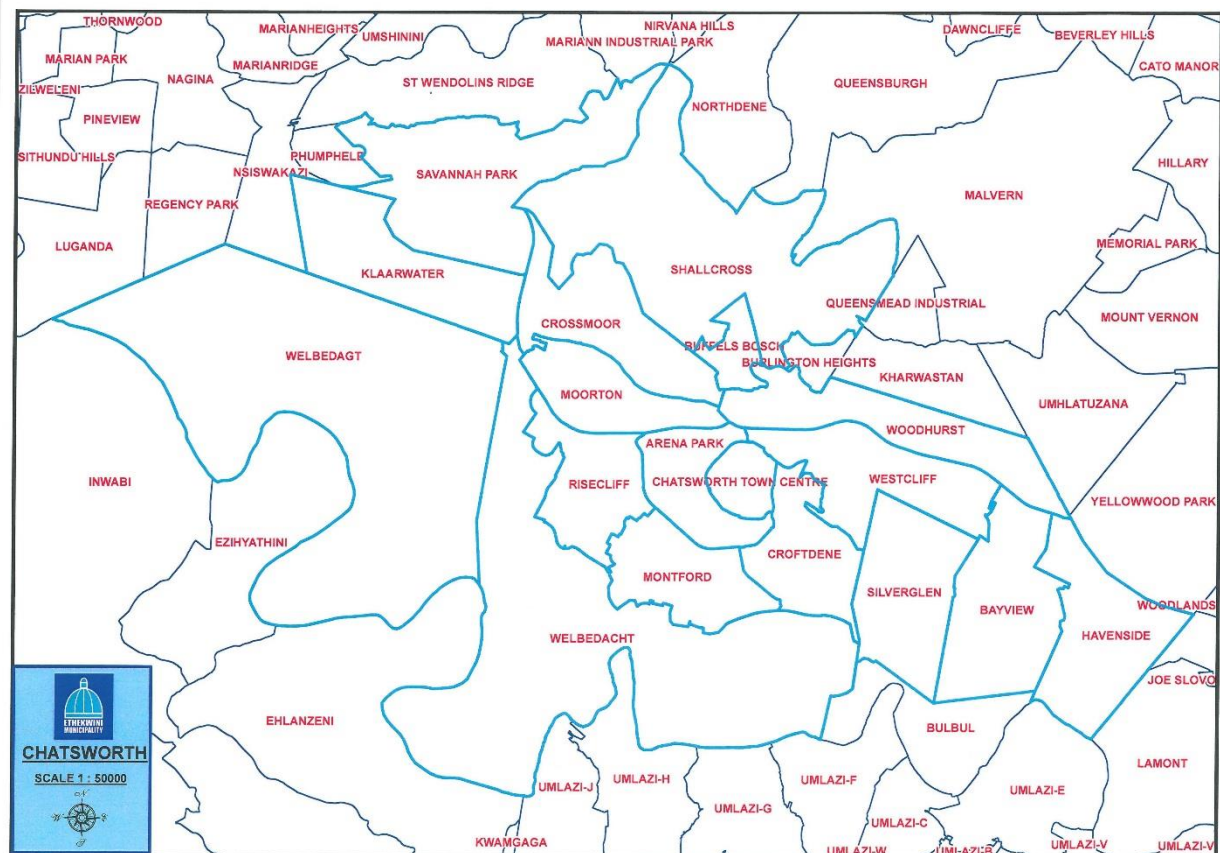


Figure 6: Map depicting layout of Chatsworth

The bulk of the housing was low cost, utilising cheap materials and maximum space. While Mobeni Heights was middle class, the other units were mostly working class with pockets of better housing. Residents who settled to Chatsworth had mixed reactions.

Reaction of Magazine Barracks' residents to relocation

The reaction of residents of the Magazine Barracks to the DCC's decision to remove them also varied. Whereas most regarded the barracks as their home and had a strong attachment to it, to their neighbours, and to the broader Magazine Barracks community, former residents pointed out

during interviews that they always knew that they could not stay there permanently. Other than space problems which grew worse each year, residents did not own the land or their houses and faced eviction when they were no longer working for the municipality. In other words, living there tied them to permanent employment with the municipality.⁴⁶

Having said this, the respondents also pointed out that they anticipated leaving the Magazine Barracks gradually at some future date and by their own volition. The DCC's decision to forcibly resettle them in the distant and unfamiliar Chatsworth was not something they had foreseen. Although most former residents of the Magazine Barracks today argue that one of the long term advantages of settling in Chatsworth was that it presented a huge improvement to overcrowding, Naddie challenges this view by stating that because of the 'progressive nature' of its residents it is possible that they would have made plans and moved out as overcrowding increased.⁴⁷

Before the residents of the Magazine Barracks were actually forced to leave, some realised that relocation was inevitable and made their own plans to leave to secure better locations. In terms of the final plan approved by the DCC, graded staff were to be allocated slightly more expensive housing in Bayview while ungraded staff were given housing in the poorer sections of Chatsworth, Units 3A and B (Westcliff) and 5A and B (Croftdene). Vassie, who was one of the younger members of DIMES at the time, explained that the first to move to Chatsworth were the better-off residents of the Magazine Barracks. According to his recollection, during meetings to discuss removals, they told the others not to move, while they had already made applications so that they could find good for houses in Havenside and Bayview.⁴⁸ He explained that although most residents began moving from 1963 onwards, as early as '1961 the sell outs were moving, [19]61 was the sell outs, they moved first. Sorry I am calling them sell outs, I shouldn't call them that.'⁴⁹

Between 1961 and 1963, when this group were moving, DIMES vehemently opposed the decision to destroy the Magazine Barracks. According to Vassie, ‘we weren’t happy, we were fighting tooth and nail, we went to court, we went to Maritzburg and all that’ until it became clear that there was no alternative.⁵⁰

Political bodies such as the NIC had a strong presence at the Magazine Barracks during the 1940s and 1950 but by the time forced removals began to be implemented most of its leaders were banned, as the state clamped down after the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960. In fact, the last major protest took place on 26 June 1950 when a protest rally at Curries Fountain drew a crowd of around 15 000, mainly Indians, and was addressed by NIC president Monty Naicker, Dr A.M. Moolla of the NIO, members of the Durban Combined Indian Ratepayers Association, and religious figures.⁵¹ Some interviewees pointed out that given the climate and the banning of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and ANC, residents of the Magazine Barracks felt hopelessly disorganised and disempowered and this hampered protest.⁵²

In Chatsworth the existing neighbourhood networks where trade unions functioned were destroyed, as neighbours were split up and resettled in different areas in the township. On 12 March 1964, DIMES held a special general meeting where members passed a resolution urging the Town Clerk to reconsider removing residents to Chatsworth. DIMES’ representatives argued that municipal workers provided an essential service in and around Durban, and being moved such a long distance from their place of work would result in exorbitant travel expenses and would disrupt service provision in the city.⁵³ This was to no avail as the DCC made it clear that it would not reverse its decision. DIMES’ suggestions to relocate workers to areas closer to the city, such as Inanda or the Springfield Flats were also rejected.⁵⁴ However, DIMES made it clear to its members

that that they would continue to address worker grievances after relocation. On 23 January 1963, for example, DIMES submitted a memorandum to the DCC requesting a minimum of R50 per month for unskilled workers and proportionate increases for graded workers, in view of the increased expenses workers were likely to incur as a result of the move to Chatsworth.⁵⁵

George Singh, a law graduate of the University of the Witwatersrand, who was a member of the NIC from the 1940s and a DIMES office bearer, and would subsequently be well-known for organising opposition to apartheid sports presented the residents' case to the authorities. According to Vassie, Singh, who was fondly known as 'The Godfather' at the barracks, 'was with us, he was our lawyer, he was our everything, our guide.' However, when it became clear that there was no chance of the DCC changing its mind, Singh convened a mass meeting sometime in 1964 where he explained to residents that they were 'fighting a losing battle' and that they should make the best of a bad situation by agreeing to the move as soon as possible in order to secure the best possible locations and homes. He brought photographs of the houses being built in Chatsworth to the meeting, showed them to the audience and urged them to physically inspect them.⁵⁶

According to Vassie and Deena, after visiting Chatsworth most residents realised that their standard of living in terms of the physical conditions of the houses would be higher as they would be moving from their one room house to houses with two and three rooms which they desperately needed for their larger families.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, most former residents explained that, the decision was not taken lightly as they had to weigh this against the destruction of a whole way of life and the fact that they would be far removed from their place of birth.⁵⁸ As Vassie recalled, 'when we moved out of Magazine Barracks, we were very disappointed and disheartened. Nobody was happy to be removed from their birthplace.'⁵⁹

George Singh ensured that residents would not have to bear the transport costs associated with relocation as he negotiated with the DCC to provide transport for residents' furniture.⁶⁰ Residents were given an option of three or four houses in Chatsworth to choose from. They were able to view the site once to make their choice and when they were ready to move, they contacted the *sirdar* at the Magazine Barracks who would draw up a schedule and find a suitable day so that between three and four families could be transported at a time.⁶¹

While the majority of residents were able to choose their house in Chatsworth and plan their move, a small number of residents, probably numbering between six and ten families, refused to leave and were the last to be forcibly relocated 'to any available house in Croftdene.'⁶² According to Danny 'towards the end were, some very poor families, were reluctant to make the move into a very strange destiny' and 'the municipal officials virtually dragged them onto municipal trucks, vehicles and whatever belongings that they could transfer were just thrown into the vehicle and they were pushed into the vehicle physically.'⁶³

Danny, referring to his experience as the president of the MBRA, described the feelings of desperation and helplessness experienced by those residents who were removed physically. He felt that they were forced to move because of the intransigence of the DCC.⁶⁴ Danny pointed out that, in contrast to the Magazine Barracks where residents had built a community over many decades, Chatsworth was a bare housing scheme 'with no public amenities, no infrastructure such as roads, schools, shops, temples or mosques, sports fields or community centres.' While he settled in Sea Cow Lake where his family owned property he stated that others 'initially felt destitute because they we didn't know who to turn to. The "master" just evicted them from their former residence, into this strange place and they were not prepared for it.'⁶⁵ At the Annual General Meeting in 1966,

a year after all the workers had been removed from the barracks and relocated to Chatsworth, DIMES chairman, R.K. Gounden assured members that DIMES would do all within its power to ensure higher wages to compensate for the increased living and travelling expenses.⁶⁶ During the early years, DIMES did achieve slight success in raising salaries.

Those who were forcibly relocated to Chatsworth differed in their perceptions of and reaction to the move. Some house owners in places such as Cato Manor and Riverside were strongly opposed to being resettled in the mass housing scheme, while those who came from shack settlements in and around Durban regarded the move to larger homes with electricity and running water in a more positive light.⁶⁷ Former residents of the Magazine Barracks also had mixed reactions. Kiru, who was born in Chatsworth after his family was moved from the barracks, explained that while the majority of people would have preferred to have remained at the Magazine Barracks, his father felt that his family ‘was blessed’ to move to Chatsworth as they had their own house and a garden. Conditions were preferable to the overcrowded conditions of the Magazine Barracks where ‘they lived on top of each other’ and where in some cases there was no place to accommodate the next generation.⁶⁸

However Deena added that, when residents were informed of the decision to move, they ‘were angry and did not want to move. Because look, we lived there for a long, long time, all the children grew up there.’ However, he conceded that the reaction was mixed. Echoing the sentiments of his brother Vassie, Deena added that in 1964 many residents visited Bayview, found that the houses were big in comparison to those in which they were living at the Magazine Barracks and embraced the idea of moving.⁶⁹ With their electricity and hot running water, the houses in Chatsworth appealed in particular to those from the poorest section of the Magazine Barracks who lived in wood and iron structures with no electricity or running water and depended on paraffin and

communal taps.⁷⁰ Denna mentioned the fact that when some of the residents of the Magazine Barracks moved to Chatsworth and ‘saw the house with toilets and a built-in sewerage system, you know, and they were able to now, to, no more put fire outside, they could put in electric stoves, all these advantages, they were very excited, it changed their entire lifestyle for the better but that took a long time, it didn’t happen immediately. It took years.’⁷¹

On the other hand, while Chatsworth may have provided a better physical environment, Deena feels strongly that life in the new township led to ‘cultural degeneration.’ He explained that at the Magazine Barracks there was a strong sense of family and community, which were lost as a result of the move to Chatsworth.

In 1965, when Kisten arrived in Chatsworth, he was 32 and working for the book and stationary store Central News Agency (CNA) in the city. At this stage, he was taking care of his two children and his wife’s five siblings since her father was late. Kisten said that he was ‘not angry’ when he was informed that he would have to leave the Magazine Barracks as he realised that there was no other option and he should ‘make the best of the situation. Instead of sitting here, and moaning and groaning we made the best of it.’ He was disappointed that residents of the Magazine Barracks were scattered rather than settled in the same unit in Chatsworth. However, he said that many recognised the benefits of leaving the barracks, which were overcrowded and their plight was getting worse as new generations were born. Families were expanding and there was no additional space. While most struggled due to the lack of public transport, Kisten did not have a problem catching a bus and but did complain that a substantial portion of his income was spent on transport, leaving little for other expenses.⁷²

When Jay's family was relocated to Chatsworth in 1965, he had just finished standard six and had begun working in Addington Hospital. Jay said that he could not recall his parents being angry at the move, but a bit sad. 'I think maybe they took their anger out in the meetings,' he said, referring to the meetings where the DCC informed residents that they would have to leave the barracks, 'and then accepted their fate.' Young Jay attended some of these meetings and remembers many residents 'putting up a fight.' The argument from the council members was that they would receive better quality houses with toilets and running water. Residents, especially the older ones, countered that they did not want to leave as everything was within walking distance of the barracks; they had temples, churches and sports grounds, and this was the only life they had known.⁷³

When Jay's father saw the house allocated to him 'he was very happy.' The family members were also excited about moving though relocation did take its toll in the form of the increased distance to work which affected them in terms of cost and time. While Jay was not personally affected because Addington Hospital provided a bus service at no charge, his father was badly affected and, like several others, retired from the municipality shortly after the move because transport costs made it unfeasible for him to continue working. Instead, he found a job at the Westcliff market closer to home. Jay's family was better off than many of their neighbours as Jay and several of his siblings were employed at that stage.⁷⁴ Similarly, Mrs Pillay cannot recall her parents ever expressing anger about being moved out. She said that she was too young to think about the GAA and just excited to be moving into a large house. Her whole family was excited.⁷⁵

Concluding remarks

The GAA affected millions of South Africans, with devastating financial, economic and social consequences. The oral history methodology employed in this study allows us to go beyond broad generalisations and to look at the experiences of individuals and their agency, and how they were impacted by the broader structural changes. There was mixed reaction to moving to Chatsworth but overall protest was muted as some felt that the process was inevitable while others regarded the move from wood and iron shacks to better quality housing and amenities as positive.

The Magazine Barracks was a closely demarcated space, which was home to thousands. Residents shared many similarities; they were Indian, predominantly Hindu, and at least one member per household worked for the Durban municipality. Communal living and a strong culture of sharing characterised their way of life. During the implementation of the GAA, residents were dispersed in areas in the much larger Chatsworth housing scheme where they faced a new set of challenges such as increased transport expenses, longer distances to travel to work, and a lack of infrastructure and public amenities. During the initial years of settling in Chatsworth, circumstances were very difficult as earnings remained the same while expenses increased dramatically.

These are some of the issues discussed in the chapters that follow. Most residents did not collapse meekly in the face of apartheid social engineering but showed great resilience in reestablishing their lives in the new setting. The next two chapters examine the challenges faced by new residents of Chatsworth when they first arrived, and capture some of the anger that was generated. Whereas this chapter had focused on the structural forces of Apartheid and its development over the years

to provided the state with a means to manage its evolving political agendas, the chapters to follow depict what this meant on the ground and how residents experienced Apartheid and responded in their own unique ways.

¹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 5.

² Deborah Posel, 'The Apartheid Project 1948-1970,' in *The Cambridge History of South Africa Volume 2 1885-1994*, ed. Robert Ross, Anne Kelk Mager, Bill Nasson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 320.

³ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 10.

⁴ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 37.

⁵ See Susan Parnell, 'Racial segregation in Johannesburg: the Slums Act, 1934-1939,' *South African Geographical Journal* 70:2 (1988); and 'Land Acquisition and the Changing Residential Face of Johannesburg, 1930-1955,' *Royal Geographical Society* 40:4 (1988): 112-126.

⁶ Maylam, 'Explaining the Apartheid City,' 19.

⁷ Christopher, 'Apartheid Planning,' 197.

⁸ Kgari-Masondo. 'A superstitious Respect,' 3.

⁹ Mabin. 'The origins of the Group Areas Act,' 409.

¹⁰ Alan Mabin, 'Labour, Capital, Class Struggle and the Origins of Residential Segregation in Kimberley,' *Journal of Historical Geography* 12 (1986): 22.

¹¹ Maharaj, 'The Group Areas Act,' 177.

¹² Swanson, 'The Asiatic Menace,' 405.

¹³ Maharaj, 'The Group Areas Act,' 176.

¹⁴ Swanson, 'The Asiatic Menace,' 404.

¹⁵ Maharaj, 'The Group Areas Act,' 176.

¹⁶ Kearney, 'Bamboo Square,' 31.

¹⁷ Freund, *Insiders and Outsider*, 33.

¹⁸ Gavin Maasdorp and A.S.B. Humphreys, *From Shantytown to Township* (Juta: Cape Town, 1975), 17.

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- ¹⁹ la Hausse, 'Alcohol,' 83.
- ²⁰ Maharaj, 'The Group Areas Act,' 119.
- ²¹ Maharaj, 'The Group Areas Act,' 119.
- ²² Maharaj, 'The Group Areas Act,' 178.
- ²³ Eric G. Haines, 'Natal and the Union, 1918-1923' (Master's diss., University of Natal, 1976), 103-4.
- ²⁴ Subramony, 'A history of Chatsworth,' 3; and Freund, *Insiders and Outsiders*, 66.
- ²⁵ Bill Freund, South Africa: The Union Years, 1910-1948,' in *The Cambridge History of South Africa Volume 2 1885-1994*, ed, Robert Ross, Anne Kelk Mager, and Bill Nasson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 236.
- ²⁶ For example see Swanson 'The Asiatic Menace.'
- ²⁷ SAIC to Minister of Health. In *Indian Opinion*, 15 November 1935.
- ²⁸ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 11.
- ²⁹ For a discussion on Indian 'penetration', the Ghetto Act, and the passive resistance campaign, see Dowlath Bagwandeen, D.L. *A People on Trial - For Breaching Racism: The Struggle for Land and Housing of the Indian People of Natal: 1940-1946* (Durban: Madiba Publications, 1991); and A.I. Kaje, P.R. Pather, and A. Christopher, *Treatment of Indians in South Africa. A Memorandum of Facts* (New York: South African Indian Congress, 1947).
- ³⁰ Davies, 'Growth of Durban,' 37.
- ³¹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 10.
- ³² Dubow, *Apartheid*, 5.
- ³³ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 59.
- ³⁴ Subramony, 'Chatsworth,' 10.
- ³⁵ Subramony, 'Chatsworth,' 10.
- ³⁶ HC Brookfield and MA Tatham, 'The Distribution of Racial Groups in Durban: The Background of Apartheid in a South African City,' *Geographical Review* 47: 1 (1957): 46.
- ³⁷ Subramony, 'Chatsworth,' 10.
- ³⁸ Subramony, 'Chatsworth', 14-15.
- ³⁹ Desai and Vahed, *Chatsworth*, 25.
- ⁴⁰ *Natal Mercury*, 21 July 1961.
- ⁴¹ Devan, *Glimpses of Rural Chatsworth* , 20

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- ⁴² *Natal Mercury*, 22 October 1959.
- ⁴³ Subramony, 'Chatsworth,' 57.
- ⁴⁴ Subramony, 'Chatsworth,' 55-65.
- ⁴⁵ Subramony, 'Chatsworth,' 68-71.
- ⁴⁶ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴⁷ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ⁴⁸ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴⁹ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁵⁰ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁵¹ See Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai, 'Of Cabals, Butterflies and Detentions: Extra-parliamentary resistance in the 1980s and its aftermath,' in *The Making of a South African Township*, ed, Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013), 155.
- ⁵² Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.
- ⁵³ DIMES Annual Report and Audited Balance Sheet for 12 Months ended June 1964, 30th Annual General Meeting Wednesday, 12 August 1964.
- ⁵⁴ DIMES Annual Report and Audited Balance Sheet for 12 Months ended June 1964, 31st Annual General Meeting Wednesday, 12 August 1965.
- ⁵⁵ DIMES Annual Report and Audited Balance Sheet for 12 Months ended June 1964, 30th Annual General Meeting Wednesday, 12 August 1964.
- ⁵⁶ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁵⁷ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012; and Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁵⁸ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 November 2012; Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012; and John Kisten, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁵⁹ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁶⁰ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012; and Naddie Perumal, 5 February 2013.
- ⁶¹ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 November 2012; Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁶² Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 November 2012; and Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.

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- ⁶³ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 November 2012.
- ⁶⁴ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 November 2012.
- ⁶⁵ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 November 2012.
- ⁶⁶ DIMES Annual Report and Audited Balance Sheet for 12 Months ended June 1966, 30th Annual General Meeting Wednesday, 12 August 1966.
- ⁶⁷ Subramony, 'A history of Chatsworth,' 78.
- ⁶⁸ Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.
- ⁶⁹ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁷⁰ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁷¹ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁷² John Kisten, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁷³ Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2013.
- ⁷⁴ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁷⁵ Mrs Pillay, interviewed 15 April 2013.

Chapter Three
Service Delivery Challenges and the South Durban Indian
Local Affairs Committee (SDILAC), c 1965 – 1975¹

Although the oral testimonies of former residents of the Magazine Barracks allude to the improved housing conditions in Chatsworth, contemporary reports point to the many difficulties that residents of Chatsworth experienced with regard to housing and service delivery, especially during the first decade when there were virtually no amenities and facilities. Even though living conditions at the Magazine Barracks were severely overcrowded and presented many health and sanitary difficulties, residents were located close to the city centre with access to public facilities such as cinemas, shopping centres, and the beach. Like other residents who settled in Chatsworth, they also left behind places of worship and community centres which they had built over generations. In Chatsworth, residents had to adjust to the difficulties of relocation, which included increased expenses due to travel and rent, the lack of places of worship or shopping amenities, and houses that were plagued by structural defects.

This chapter focuses on the structural problems with housing, high rentals, and poor town planning, all of which had implications for the new residents of Chatsworth and compounded their problems of adjustment. The poor quality of the housing and lack of service delivery generated great anger which gave birth to civic organisations and intense political activity via a revitalised NIC and the CHAC during the 1980s.² However, before this, there were others who played leadership roles in the township. By looking at their work, this chapter also provides some context of what Chatsworth was like during the its first decade.

The conversion of agricultural land into the mass housing scheme in Chatsworth in the shortest possible time created many problems for new residents. Low quality materials were used for housing construction while poor planning led to other structural problems, such as narrow roads which lacked pavements and endangered the lives of motorists and pedestrians alike, as well as inadequate storm water drainage and sewerage disposal which often resulted in flood damage to property.

The housing crisis which saw the DCC having to build houses at a rapid rate to accommodate Indians removed as part of slum clearance, as well as those relocated by the Group Areas proclamation, meant that the provision of essential services such as clinics, hospitals, schools, shops, sporting facilities, and places of worship was neglected.³ This presented further hardships for the new residents who came from various parts of Durban where communities had invested in schools, places of worship, and other community infrastructure over decades. These structures were left behind and residents had to adapt to their new environment which often lacked such facilities.

In Cato Manor, for example, a memorandum that the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) submitted to the DCC on 12 June 1959, pointed to the existence of 288 public amenities, which included 11 schools, 16 places of worship, crematoriums, cemeteries, and several business establishments and welfare bodies, most of which became dormant when Indians were forced to move.⁴ In spite of their meagre earnings, residents of the Magazine Barracks built similar infrastructure.

When it was completed in 1975, Chatsworth comprised of ten neighbourhood units located on both sides of Higginson Highway, a central road that intersects the township and connects it to Durban and Pinetown.⁵ When the first residents began to arrive during the early 1960s from shack settlements in Cato Manor and Clairwood, these units were still under construction. The first residents of the Magazine Barracks started arriving in Chatsworth in the early 1960s and settled in Havenside and Bayview. Within the next few years, the rest of the residents from the Magazine Barracks and the Railway Barracks, who were mainly in ungraded employment, settled in Westcliff and Croftdene. These areas are still known for being some of the poorest parts of the township. While many displaced Indians found themselves in an unfamiliar setting with neighbours from other parts of Durban, large clusters also remained intact. Hence, remnants of a former ‘community identity’ came into play as residents made the township their new home. During interviews, some former residents of the Magazine Barracks remarked that this could be observed in parts of Croftdene. Vassie, for example, explained that these areas were known as the ‘barracks crowd.’⁶

The South Durban Indian Local Affairs Committee (SDILAC)

In understanding some of the early problems with housing and the anger and dissatisfaction that emerged in Chatsworth, the work of the SDILAC, that many anti-apartheid activists castigated because it was a government-created body, was important as its leaders played a crucial role in communicating individual grievances to the DCC. Examining some of their work reveals the daily challenges that residents faced with regard to housing, and provides context which helps to account for the anger and dissatisfaction that emerged among residents.

The SDILAC was part of the system of LACs created as part of the apartheid project by the NP in 1963, to enable Africans, Indians, and coloureds to advise local government on matters pertaining to their ‘own affairs.’⁷ It was only in 1961 that Indians were regarded by the state as citizens. Until then, they were regarded as temporary sojourners to be relocated to India. The granting of citizenship ushered a new era for Indians in South Africa. The SDILAC advised the DCC on issues related to Indians in South Durban, principally Merebank and Chatsworth.

Key figures in the SDILAC included J.N. Reddy (chairman before 1975), C.G. Pillay (chairman after 1975), S. Pillay Poovalingam (vice-chairman before 1975), Amichand Rajbansi (vice-chairman after 1975), M. Moodley, T. Palan, and ‘Monty’ Limalia. They lobbied for much-needed infrastructure such as shopping and community centres, pavements, post offices, police stations, medical offices, and an access road to alleviate congestion on Higginson Highway. They also took up individual cases of evictions and electricity cuts, and attacked the DCC for high rentals. According to Palan, who served on the SDILAC and the Ratepayers Association concurrently to ‘campaign from both ends,’ one of the most important achievements of the SDILAC was preventing Chatsworth from becoming autonomous from Durban, comparable to the Bantustans.⁸ In contrast to stereotypes of those who participated in government-created structures as mere ‘stooges,’ what emerges from the minutes of meetings, as well as contemporary newspaper reports is that some SDILAC members were confrontational in their meetings with representatives of local government and voiced their opposition to the unequal distribution of funds between white and black areas.

While non-collaborationist politics in the apartheid period has been the focus of much attention, much less is known about the institutions established by the NP government, such as LACs. In places like Chatsworth these institutions were important conduits to take up community concerns and seek resources for developing the area.⁹ Given their limited powers as advisory bodies, LACs were described by opponents as ‘toothless bulldogs.’¹⁰ However, respondents have reassessed their role and they are seen as having helped to address residents’ grievances. Of course, this might reflect nostalgia in the post-apartheid era and the sentiment expressed by many Indians that they are being sidelined by the African majority government.

According to Palan:

The LAC worked to some extent. Although it was despised by the others, the activists, I don’t blame them because it wasn’t all inclusive. The departments were racialised. The coloured areas, the Indian areas, and the blacks were left out... So I know, we didn’t like it. But we said, I know I said to myself, that we rather fight from within than from outside. While the others are campaigning from outside, we fight within. But we managed to achieve quite a bit.¹¹

Palan who in his formative years had a strong inclination to the NIC under the inspirational leadership of Dr Monty Naicker,¹² explained that it was never his intention to join the SDILAC but due to his community work, particularly in FOSA and the Ratepayers Association, he was asked by the Havenside Civic Association to stand for the first LAC election in 1971. When the SDILAC was originally established and held its first meeting on 4 December 1967, it comprised of nine members nominated by the Provincial Administrator. However by 1971, each Unit in

Chatsworth elected its own representative on the committee and this is when Palan was asked to stand.¹³

Palan was born in 1933 to indentured parents who had arrived in Natal 1907 to work on a sugar plantation in Umzinto.¹⁴ After he completed his schooling, he moved to Durban and began work as a clerk for a panel beater. He attended training courses and eventually became the section manager. In 1978 Palan started an estate agency in partnership with a friend, before starting his own business.¹⁵ He became increasingly involved in welfare bodies and community activities which ultimately led to his involvement in the LAC. He stressed repeatedly during our interview that he did not support apartheid structures and that in fact he was in sympathy with NIC activists who opposed the LAC, but he believed that under the circumstances, he would achieve more by working within those structures in order to improve the lives of Chatsworth residents. Staying outside the structures would not have been as productive.¹⁶

Meetings of the SDILAC took place monthly with members of local government, a few of whom also occupied positions on the committee. One of the first issues addressed by the SDILAC was providing Indians with training so that they would be able to find employment in the building and maintenance of council houses in Chatsworth, a practical step considering the shortage of trained builders and high levels of unemployment in the township. At the second meeting of the SDILAC on 5 February 1968, J.N. Reddy suggested that preference be given to electrical and plumbing contractors employing Indian apprentices for future plumbing and electrical works on the housing scheme. He was informed that that City Electrical Engineer was preparing a report on the introduction of a training scheme for Indian electricians to be submitted to the Municipal Service

Commission.¹⁷ The training of Indian apprentices as well as the need to equalise the pay of Indian and white municipal workers was stressed at later SDILAC meetings. However, the disinterest shown by local government members would frustrate SDILAC members who would eventually start to challenge the DCC.

Housing Conditions

There were four types of residential property transactions in Chatsworth, viz., loans for individual sales, scheme sales, scheme letting with the option to purchase, and scheme letting. The first three types of transactions were known as ‘economic’ schemes as residents were able to purchase the house. The fourth scheme was known as ‘sub-economic’ or rental, and catered for poorer residents whose monthly income was too low to purchase the house.¹⁸ Residents in the sub-economic scheme had the option of purchasing the house only once their deposit had been paid or accumulated.¹⁹ Former residents of the Magazine Barracks qualified for this kind of housing where they originally paid rental for their properties for anywhere between ten and twenty years, at which stage they had to purchase the house.²⁰

In 1980, two-thirds of the 20 501 houses in Chatsworth were economic while the remaining third were sub-economic. Peter Corbett of the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Durban-Westville, who investigated the challenges which arose from the housing scheme during the late 1970s, reported that there were no significant differences between the different units as far as housing structure and occupational density was concerned.²¹ Hence, despite income disparities and the fact that there were a few ‘better class houses’ scattered throughout the large township for those that could afford them, regardless of locality, residents faced similar

challenges with regard to housing and basic services. However, the poorest residents were assigned to small, badly-constructed, two and three-storey ‘flats’ on the fringes of the township in Bayview, Westcliff, and Crossmoor which were strategically located so that they could be hidden from view by slightly better-off areas like Mobeni, Silverglen, Kharwastan, and Umhlatuzana.²²

According to Corbett, the few better-class houses were of a higher standard than the norm as they had ceilings, tiled floors, and plastered walls. The majority of the houses were ‘spartan’ and occupants were responsible for improvements and renovations. These houses lacked hot water, the walls were not plastered, electrical conduits were exposed, and there were no interior doors separating individual rooms. All houses had basic facilities such as running water, electricity, flush toilets, refuse removal, and street lights, which was an improvement on the shack settlements where many lived previously. The design mainly comprised of concrete block walls on a concrete floor slab with corrugated asbestos roofing and steel frame windows. Houses were described as ‘solid’ and plots were generally large enough to allow for expansion.²³

However, in spite of Corbett’s assessment, there were many grievances about the flimsy materials used and while there was adequate room for expansion, many residents could not afford to undertake such work, especially given the high rental and transport costs. The housing scheme raised a variety of challenges. Apart from the fact that the tiny houses could not accommodate the extended family system, which had allowed Indians to pool income and resources, the rapid building of the homes resulted in poor planning and the use of cheap materials. Between 1963 and 1975, just over 20 000 houses were built in Chatsworth. The council was only able to build half of the envisaged 4 000 houses per year. The reasons included the fact that the City Engineers

Department was short-staffed as qualified engineers, surveyors, planners, and draughtsmen were joining the private sector for higher salaries. The development of Chatsworth coincided with a general boom in the building industry during the 1960s, which was part of a general economic boom. This resulted in a rise in demand from suppliers who were less interested in the development of low cost housing.²⁴

This had terrible consequences for new residents of the township. Further aggravating the situation was the terrain on which the housing scheme was constructed. In contrast to the Cape and the Transvaal, the topographical and geological nature of the land available for housing purposes in Natal was not conducive to the optimal economic establishment of low cost housing.²⁵ The undulating land combined with the adverse geological structure of the sub-soil in Chatsworth was unsuitable for a low cost housing scheme and the development of roads. While the recommended gradient for housing schemes was one in four, the gradient in Chatsworth was one in seven and population density was 345 persons per hectare.²⁶ Developing a low cost mass housing scheme on this type of land resulted in steep cuts and embankments which called for deeper sewerage reticulation trenching and also made storm water disposal difficult. Road works had to be kept to a minimum and maintenance costs were excessive to prevent embankment erosion.²⁷ The haste with which the DCC built houses to accommodate the increasing number of displaced Indians, the limited budget, and the inappropriateness of the terrain created severe problems for the first homeowners.

Flood water damage and sewerage

Cracked walls, roofs that collapsed during heavy rains, flimsy door frames, an inadequate drainage system which resulted in many houses being flooded during rainy weather, and burst water pipes which damaged houses in lower-lying areas were amongst the issues addressed by the SDILAC. For example, at 11h00 on 17 January 1972, the main water pipe in Havenside, in close proximity to Higginson Highway, burst, releasing a torrent of water which hit several houses in low lying areas, eroding soil and uprooting garden vegetation as well as flooding homes, damaging lounges, bedrooms, kitchens, and furniture. Water seeped through the walls, washing away paint on the exterior walls and damaging floor tiles and mats. In this instance, Palan was able to persuade the DCC to pay compensation to the residents. He personally visited the ‘panic stricken’ residents, most of whom were women trying to remove the mud and water themselves while their husbands were at work.²⁸

While the DCC provided poor quality housing, the Purchase and Sale Agreement included a clause that it was the tenant’s responsibility to ensure that all defects were repaired before the house was purchased. In this particular instance, the SDILAC was able to ensure that residents were spared from carrying out repairs at their own expense.²⁹

In many other cases, however, occupants had to pay to repair defects caused by poor housing construction. On 6 February 1972, for example, when Palan wrote to the Town Clerk about flood damage at a house in Havenside, the City Engineer reported that the water had entered from a neighbour’s house. The neighbour was instructed to build a kerb to contain the water at his own expense even though the problem was not of his making.³⁰ The SDILAC sometimes succeeded in

preventing the DCC from punishing residents for problems arising out of poor housing construction. An example was when Poovalingam brought up cases of ruptured water pipes which resulted in very high water accounts for some residents.³¹

In the process of investigating residents' grievances, SDILAC members also got to know residents on a personal level. Rajbansi wrote to the Town Clerk that stress caused by flooding in a house in Croftdene was affecting an occupant who suffered from angina, diabetes, and arthritis. Rajbansi visited the house and reported that it was difficult for the family to move during the rainy weather and that the water was causing the walls to crack which posed an additional danger.³² The City Engineer found that the flooding was caused by a damaged drain at a nearby school and arranged for it to be repaired.³³

Minutes of SDILAC meetings show that members addressed many similar problems. For example, on 13 May 1969 they saw to it that houses under construction on roads 502-522 in Croftdene, which had entrances at the rear of the buildings, were corrected. In 1974, when 5 084 houses were damaged by a hail storm they were instrumental in securing their repair.³⁴ On 17 January 1972, when a resident in Havenside was unable to get a building company to remove their fence and equipment from his property, Rajbansi wrote to the Town Clerk to force the company to remove its equipment.³⁵ These instances show that, although the SDILAC was an advisory body with no decision making power in the DCC, and despite most of its resolutions being rejected by the local government, members were able to intervene on behalf of residents who clearly saw some value in having representatives that they could contact and speak to in an attempt to address their grievances.

In 1972, residents from three houses in Havenside complained about constant odour and it was found that a sewerage pipe in the vicinity was broken. Between November 1971 and December 1972, five houses in Westcliff were affected by blocked sewerage pipes.³⁶ In a letter to the Town Clerk dated 21 February 1972, Rajbansi complained of sewerage water being left in the open in a number of places in Chatsworth and that he had communicated this to the City Engineer's Department only to receive inconclusive replies. For example, when Rajbansi reported a sewerage leakage problem affecting his own house, he claimed that the Department's reply was that the problem had been attended to when in fact it had not.³⁷ His complaint was directed to the City Engineer's Branch Office in Chatsworth for not providing practical responses to residents' grievances arising out of sewerage disposal. Thus, pressure exerted by SDILAC members addressed some of the residents' grievances whereas in many instances those who communicated directly with the local government were ignored. Perhaps this was a way in which the authorities tried to give legitimacy to government-created bodies.

On 6 February 1972, Palan wrote to the Town Clerk on behalf of L. Govindsamy whose house in Havenside was built on a steep incline. During heavy rains, water from his neighbour's houses situated higher up, rushed down with heavy force, carrying mud, soil and shrubs into his house and flooding his kitchen. Palan had seen the problem himself and Govindsamy communicated it to the City Engineer's Department without any practical results.³⁸ On 10 January 1972, Rajbansi communicated the plight of a resident whose house was being flooded by sewage water from nearby houses. The City Engineers Department interviewed the residents and found that the problem was caused by structural problems with the drains.³⁹ On December 1971 Rajbansi wrote to the Town Clerk about sewerage discharge and storm water drainage problems affecting a few

houses in Montford. In response, remedial measures were put into place in December and the City Engineer's Department sent a construction gang to work on the drainage throughout the nights of 4 and 5 January 1972.⁴⁰

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were many similar instances of storm water drainage and sewerage disposal problems and one gets a sense of the frustration of SDILAC members with the DCC over this issue because there was no redress. At a SDILAC meeting on 3 May 1972, members noted that the galvanised pipes used in the construction of houses in Havenside were corroded and suggested that this problem be remedied.⁴¹ At a meeting the following year on 5 July 1973, Poovalingham expressed his frustration that despite their request for a report from the City Engineer regarding corroded galvanised water pipes, this had not yet materialised. This resulted in a resident receiving an exorbitant water account. Poovalingham believed that many residents were being cheated by defective water pipes.⁴² This issue was raised at the next meeting and Palan cited a case two years previously, when a water pipe at Bayview burst, resulting in an 'unrealistically high water account.' Poovalingham expressed frustration that despite SDILAC members' appeals to address the quality of galvanised water pipes the previous year nothing had been done to remedy the situation. The Assistant City Engineer denied this and insisted that materials used in the construction of houses in Chatsworth conformed to South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) specifications. He added that the thickness of the pipes was also in line with those set by the SABS.⁴³

Evictions

Given the large numbers on the waiting list for council houses, the DCC was particularly rigid in enforcing evictions in cases where occupants violated the terms of their agreement. Desai accuses the DCC of treating people as numbers and notes that their strategy to deal with the housing shortage was to evict one family and replace them with another.⁴⁴ As early as 1967, 411 people were in arrears and 30 families were evicted between September and November of that year.⁴⁵ Residents often received eviction notices without explanation as to why they were being evicted. The SDILAC made constant appeals to the local authorities to end this practice and extend the amount of time families served with eviction notices could occupy the house. Govindsamy and Poovalingham cited the difficulties that residents faced in finding alternative accommodation and noted that the entire family suffered due to one individual falling foul of the regulations.⁴⁶ Rajbansi criticised the Health and Housing Committee and said that tenants served with eviction notices should be given an opportunity to appear before the standing committee to give oral representation because of the repercussions for families.⁴⁷

On 2 May 1972, for example, Rajbansi wrote to the Town Clerk about Ramsamy who deserted his wife and children who were consequently being thrown out of their two-roomed house in Mobeni Heights. Rajbansi claimed to know the family personally and stated that Ramsamy was an alcoholic and drug addict who often neglected his family, which survived on food and clothing provided by neighbours. After their eviction the house remained vacant and Rajbansi urged the Town Clerk's Department to take a sympathetic stance and give the house back to the family. He had previously contacted Martin West Building in the CBD where the housing section was based, who, he said were not sympathetic to the family's plight. After the eviction the children were

placed with different relatives, with Rajbansi taking care of one of them.⁴⁸ In another case, a partially crippled Mrs Muthuma Naicker and her three children were left homeless after her husband abandoned her. A newspaper reported that the family had spent several weeks living in the open. A nearby resident, J. Singh who had been trying to find them a home, referred to her situation as ‘Chatsworth conscience.’⁴⁹

On 15 June 1972, Rajbansi wrote to the Town Clerk about another case, involving Govindamal Najaray who was allocated a three bedroom in Westcliff, for her and her three children. She died on 22 July 1968 and her son and two daughters were consequently disqualified from occupying the house by virtue of being a family of three occupying a three bedroom house. According to Rajbansi, Najaray’s three children made representations to the Housing Section of the DCC but they were ‘unsympathetic’ to the family. The two sisters were eventually given a one-roomed house in Westcliff, on condition that they did not accommodate their brother, as three people living in a one bedroom house would violate the regulations. As he was unable to find accommodation, the sisters allowed their brother to stay with them but when the DCC found out, all three were evicted. Rajbansi stated that many families were in the same predicament and urged the DCC to put an end to its ‘heart-breaking rules.’⁵⁰

In another instance, on 24 January 1973, Ramlall Ashray purchased a house in Havenside and moved into it in March of that year with his wife and son. Ashray suffered from asthma and during his stay in this particular house the attacks were particularly acute. He consequently moved to a house with a better climate for his illness and which was closer to his doctor. His son and nephews stayed in the house in Chatsworth. On 27 January 1973, he received a letter from the DCC stating

that he had violated the terms of agreement. He was instructed to provide an affidavit explaining the circumstances, which he did, and he moved back into the house. Despite this, he received an eviction letter from the Housing Section in the City Treasurer's Department on 4 March 1972 instructing him to vacate the house. On 20 February the house was inspected and it was found that Ashray was not occupying the premises but rather a certain Gopaul Moodley. However, in his affidavit, Ashray stated that he was occupying the house and that the inspection was done during business hours while he was at work. He added that at no time had the house been let to Moodley, his nephew, or any member of this family.⁵¹ He was allowed to remain when he proved residence.

The harsh stance on evictions was the DCC's way of dealing with the high number of Indians on the housing waiting list. In 1972, there were 17 000 Indians on the DCC's waiting list for homes in Chatsworth.⁵² At a meeting of the SDILAC on 7 July 1976, J.N. Reddy and M. Moodley urged Councillor Herron to provide a house to a family on the waiting list who were living on Road 1102, using a piece of canvas for shelter.⁵³ A similar case was that of Arjun Singh and his family who had been on the council's waiting list for a decade, during which time the family occupied a children's Wendy house in Road 701. He stated that nine officials from the Chatsworth office had visited and had instructed him to leave the Wendy house but with nowhere else to go, he defied them on Rajbansi's instructions.⁵⁴ There is no record of what happened to them.

Overcrowding and slum conditions

One justification for the forced removals of Indians in Durban was to eradicate overcrowding and improve public health. For many families, however, the move to Chatsworth aggravated overcrowding. After a meeting with Durban's Deputy MOH, Dr Hilton Barber, in 1971, Rajbansi

wrote to the Town Clerk, quoting the results of a survey carried out by the City Health Department on overcrowding in Chatsworth and arguing that ‘something very serious is developing and steps will have to be taken now to remedy the situation.’ For example, married children were forced to live with their parents as there was no accommodation for them. Given the housing backlog, it was extremely unlikely that newly married couples would find alternative accommodation. To compound the situation, if such individuals applied for a house it meant that they were communicating their situation with the authorities and would soon be served with eviction notices because they were breaking the law. Most married children were afraid to take that risk.⁵⁵

Rajbansi’s concern was that natural population growth in Chatsworth had to be accommodated to avoid the township developing into a slum. The new housing schemes planned for Phoenix and an extension of Chatsworth, Unit Eleven, were intended to accommodate Indians still on the council’s waiting list, but Rajbansi felt that provision had to be made to alleviate existing overcrowding. On 17 January 1972, the Deputy MOH wrote to the Town Clerk downplaying Rajbansi’s concerns about overcrowding. He felt that it was no worse than other parts of Durban. He noted that surveys which had been conducted showed that overcrowding only existed in 10 per cent of households examined and was only severe in one per cent.⁵⁶ Rajbansi’s concerns were, however, given credence by a survey conducted by the DCC between November 1972 and March 1973, which revealed that the number of occupants of one- and two-roomed sub-economic households ranged between one and seventeen people; 36 per cent of homes had more than five occupants; and 53 per cent of the 1 267 homes surveyed were overcrowded.⁵⁷

On 11 February 1972, three articles appeared on the front page of the *Leader* newspaper criticising the DCC for the housing shortage and overcrowding in Chatsworth. One article pointed to Rajbansi's description of a three-roomed house in Montford which was shared by 17 people. Rajbansi attacked the DCC's negative attitude and argued that families living in 'such unhealthy, overcrowded conditions' should be given priority in obtaining homes. He added that 'any building that is terribly overcrowded violates that Slums Act' and that it was the responsibility of the municipality to remedy the situation. City MOH, Dr C.R. Mackenzie, agreed that there was overcrowding but insisted that the township had not reached 'slum proportions.'⁵⁸

Rajbansi would continue to accuse the DCC of failing to find practical solutions to the problem. At a 1975 SDILAC meeting, he said that the Health and Housing Committee was not doing enough to alleviate overcrowded conditions in Chatsworth.⁵⁹ City Treasurer O.D. Gorven explained at a SDILAC meeting that 15 per cent of the houses in Newlands West and Phoenix would be reserved to accommodate the overflow from Chatsworth. This did not satisfy Rajbansi who felt that the figure was too low as there were 'multiple families living' in 'practically every home' in Chatsworth. He insisted that if action was not taken, Chatsworth would become a 'big slum' with people squeezed into shack settlements in Welbadacht which was then on the outskirts of the township.⁶⁰

Trading sites

Not counting the Unit Eleven extension (Crossmoor), the initial housing scheme was completed in 1975 and by the early 1980s plans were underway to build the massive Chatsworth Centre and other community centres. However, from the time residents began arriving in 1963, there were

virtually no amenities. In February 1968 the DCC acknowledged that the lack of amenities in Chatsworth, combined with a lack of business sites, was adversely affecting residents' welfare.⁶¹ On 11 June 1968, J.N. Reddy emphasised the need for trading sites and pointed out the long distances that residents had to walk to shops. Reddy suggested that provision be made for traders displaced by Group Areas who were predominantly small grocers, tearoom keepers and a handful of butchers. While he noted that the few shopping facilities in Silverglen, on the perimeter of Bayview, Westcliff, and Croftdene, served a very useful purpose, the Department of Community Development had to consider the establishment of trading facilities in Area Park and Montford. He felt that the absence of shopping facilities resulted in more hawkers being present, which he regarded as a health hazard.⁶² Subramony has shown how lengthy bureaucratic procedures slowed down the acquisition of trading sites during which time residents had to do without.⁶³

The difficulties in accessing shops eventually attracted attention from the press. In 1978, the *Daily News* published an article describing the plight of residents. In many cases buying a loaf of bread entailed a journey of a few kilometres to the nearest mobile stall or illegal shop operated by a resident at home. However, the article noted that, given the absence of shops, these illegal traders were providing an essential service. Rajbansi blamed the Department of Community Development, and explained that 150 000 people living in Arena Park, Montford, Westcliff, Moorton, and Crossmoor did not have shopping facilities. At the beginning of 1978, 30 traders displaced by Group Areas offered to buy 15 shopping sites in Chatsworth and develop them immediately but the Department delayed making a decision.⁶⁴

In 1980 the first shopping centre was opened on a site in the middle of Chatsworth, encircled by Westcliff, Croftdene, and Arena Park.⁶⁵



Figure 7: Areal view of Chatsworth Centre showing its location encircled by Westcliff, Croftdene, and Arena Park

Schooling

Even though the housing scheme was completed in 1975, at that stage, there was not a single school in Crossmoor and no accommodation in any of the nearby schools. In January 1975, the Natal members of the Executive Committee of the SAIC held emergency talks with P.W. Prinsloo, the Director of Indian Education to find a solution. Frustrated parents were demanding that their children be accommodated in nearby schools. Given the absence of a bus service in the area, parents had to walk with their children, in some cases up to seven kilometres, to and from the

nearest available school, Everest Primary School in Shallcross. Unable to find another school that would accommodate her children, a mother living in Crossmoor, Z, Khan made the seven kilometre journey to Everest Primary. She had to take her two younger children that were not yet of school going age with as she could not leave them alone.⁶⁶

A number of mothers told a *Leader* reporter that when they went to Moorton Heights Primary School to seek a place for their children, they kept waiting for several hours before being told that they could not be accommodated, but that, should a place become vacant, the principal would contact them. One mother said that when she went to Moorlands State Indian Primary School in Unit Nine, she was told that only children living in the area would be accepted. Another mother, Radha Pillay, said that she had submitted her daughter's name in May 1974 in the hope that she would be accepted, but was turned down. Pillay added that several other mothers in her district had suffered the same fate; indeed, the article added that nearly all the schools in Chatsworth were full.⁶⁷

Parks and Amenities

On 9 August 1971, Rajbansi sent the Town Clerk a list of questions that he wanted discussed at the next meeting of the SDILAC. In particular he wanted to know when Chatsworth would have its own fire brigade, good pavements and parks. He also complained about the many potholes on the roads and stressed that these questions required answers as soon as possible because Chatsworth had been 'neglected and badly.' Further frustrating him was that fact that cement which had been dropped on pavements in Arena Park had been left to harden, reinforcing his view of the DCC's lacklustre attitude to conditions in Chatsworth.⁶⁸

The Natal Chairman of the South African Institute of Race Relations, R.S. Naidoo, complained in 1975 that 13 years after its establishment, Chatsworth did not have a single cemetery, golf course, tennis court, or athletics track for its nearly 200 000 residents. At that stage one library and one swimming pool catered for the whole township. Expressing his frustration with the failure to provide basic amenities, he asked rhetorically ‘why can’t Black suburbs have mobile libraries, better roads, regular maintenance, and meaningful consultation on housing projects?’ He was particularly perturbed that young children were becoming adults in such abject conditions.⁶⁹

At a special meeting of the SDILAC to discuss draft estimates of revenue and expenditure of the DCC, held on 9 May 1972, A.K. Pillay emphasised that the DCC should allocate funds to the South Indian areas of Durban (Chatsworth and Merebank) for the development of amenities and recreational facilities, given that residents were forcibly settled in these areas and did not move there out of their own choice.⁷⁰ While such requests were made frequently, representatives of local government were never direct in their responses and did not respond positively.

On 9 September 1971 and 20 April 1972, the Town Clerk wrote to the Secretary for Indian Affairs requesting a meeting regarding the provision of community centres for Chatsworth and Merebank. These areas had a combined population of a quarter of a million without a single community centre. The Town Clerk cited numerous complaints from residents about the lack of halls or venues in the vicinity of the housing scheme and explained that numerous civic organisations had voiced their disapproval that such an important amenity was lacking.⁷¹

Health facilities

The first hospital built in Chatsworth was the R.K. Khan Indian Hospital in Westcliff which opened in 1969. Building plans began in 1964 on a site of 45 acres with 50 per cent of the costs covered by the R.K. Khan Hospital and Dispensary Trust founded by Advocate Rahim Karim Khan.⁷² The hospital faced many setbacks and shortages of staff and beds because of the vast number of residents that it catered for. In 1969, the year the hospital opened, a reader wrote to the *Graphic* calling the hospital was a 'White Elephant' given that R4 million in hospital buildings and equipment were unused while 130 000 Chatsworth residents had to travel elsewhere to seek medical assistance. He explained that nurses trained to work at R.K. Khan were being shunted elsewhere while doctors were desperately needed.⁷³

In February 1972, T. Palan of the SDILAC wrote a letter to the Durban Town Clerk complaining about parking conditions at the hospital. He noted that the parking site was rough, undulating and filled with potholes which led to puddles, causing vehicles to become stuck during rainy weather. Furthermore, the road leading to the hospital lacked pedestrian crossings, while hundreds of patients embarked from buses to visit during the day and night.⁷⁴ The Town Clerk responded on 6 March 1972, arguing that the parking provided on the undeveloped carriageway of Road 336 was a temporary measure until such time as the provincial hospital authorities provided suitable off-street parking. He also stated that the City Council was not responsible for the provision of off-street parking.⁷⁵ On 31 July 1973, the SDILAC established a committee consisting of J.N. Reddy, P.I. Devan, A.K. Pillay, S. Pillay Poovalingham and M.S. Naidoo to inspect parking conditions at the hospital.⁷⁶

SDILAC Critique of the DCC

The minutes of SDILAC meetings show that its members often voiced strong opposition to both local and national government policies. During a discussion on the development of a swimming pool in Wentworth which was to be shared by Indians and Coloureds, Poovalingam hit out at the government's inability to provide equal amenities for the different race groups in their own areas in line with its policies. Councillor Haupt became enraged at the attitude of SDILAC members and stormed out of the meeting over what was referred to by the *Leader* as a 'heated attack' on the government's separate development policy. Haupt said that he was 'not prepared to sit at civic meetings where party politics are introduced.' LACs, he said, should 'confine their work to civic matters in their own areas.' However, Rajbansi was adamant that it was a disgrace that Indians who comprised the majority of Durban's population were only provided with two swimming pools. Poovalingam argued that the government, which professed separate development, should ensure that all groups were provided with equal amenities.⁷⁷

During a SDILAC meeting at the beginning of 1973, Poovalingam and Rajbansi attacked the DCC over what they called the 'beggar's wage' paid to Indian municipal employees. Poovalingam also criticised the budget allocated to Southern Durban Indian areas. Rajbansi referred to it as an 'apartheid budget' and noted that civic offices had not yet been built and that the Durban Corporation was using schools in Woodhurst for this purpose.⁷⁸ After numerous unsuccessful attempts by the SDILAC to get the DCC to provide basic amenities for Indian areas, members questioned the power of their body and challenged the DCC. On 16 September 1973, Poovalingam suggested that LACs be suspended until it was known exactly how much authority they had with regard to matters affecting local affairs. He was particularly 'perturbed' that the report from the

Policy and Finance Committee meant to deal with this issue had not been submitted to the SDILAC.⁷⁹ After three representations for a second library in Chatsworth were rejected, a frustrated Rajbansi submitted a memorandum urging that the SDILAC be granted autonomy or direct representation on the DCC.⁸⁰

In 1974, the DCC increased land prices in Chatsworth by 50 per cent to address a rental shortfall of R4.3 million. SDILAC members were angry that they had not been consulted and boycotted a civic reception dinner for Indian members of the LAC organised by Mayor Ron Williams.⁸¹ The DCC ignored this boycott and actually increased land prices by 54 per cent. Rajbansi responded: 'I do not think that the City Councillors sometimes know what they are voting for.'⁸² SDILAC members tried to remove Town Clerk E.J. Goodwin as secretary of the committee during their meeting in January 1975. Rajbansi stated that residents of Chatsworth 'can be sure that it will take a long time before the DCC is ever allowed to take its decision to increase land prices in the Housing Scheme by as much as 54 percent.'⁸³ E.R. Tees, a local government member of the SDILAC, denied Rajbansi's claim and said that Goodwin did not try to 'dictate' but that he 'merely tells the LAC what is right and what is wrong.'⁸⁴ Although Rajbansi was supported by Morgan Naicker and M.R. Moodley, he failed to unseat Godwin who, instead, opined that the removal of Rajbansi from the LAC would lead to the SDILAC working more effectively.⁸⁵

By the early 1970s Rajbansi was a recognisable figure in the press, well known for his strong opinions. In 1972 he engaged in a series of heated exchanges with A.M. Rajab, chairman of the SAIC, a statutory body initially comprising of 21 nominated members, and increased to 30 members in 1972, half of whom were elected, to advise the government at national level.⁸⁶

Rajbansi accused Rajab of defending the (in)action of the DCC which, he claimed, had done nothing to alleviate the horrendous conditions in which Indians were living in Merebank and Chatsworth. A member of the SAIC himself, Rajbansi sparked controversy when he said that he would destroy the Council from within as separate development was one big bluff.⁸⁷ There was also a split within the SDILAC, with tensions emerging between J.N. Reddy and Rajbansi. Following the meeting in which Rajbansi failed to oust Goodwin, rumours emerged that Reddy had apologised for remarks made against Goodwin. Reddy denied these rumours.⁸⁸

N. Sewcharan, vice-president of the Southern Durban Civic Federation, an organisation formed to represent various ratepayers associations in the southern part of the city, and which worked outside of government structures,⁸⁹ told the *Leader* that Indian members of the SDILAC were not using their position constructively to address the problems facing the township. If they were unable to effect change, they should step down.⁹⁰ Along with some frustrated residents of Havenside, Bayview and Mobeni Heights, Sewcharan had established the Southern Durban Ward 1 Ratepayers Action Committee, which was to act as a watchdog over the SDILAC. Sewcharan told a reporter from the *Leader* in 1975 that representatives who had served on the SDILAC for almost eight years had not once called a meeting with ratepayers' organisations to discuss issues affecting Chatsworth residents. The meeting, however, attracted a small turnout and most of those present felt that the new body was unnecessary.⁹¹ Indeed, T. Palan and Morgan Naicker of SDILAC challenged Sewcharan's assertions. They were suspicious as to why a body was being formed with LAC elections looming. They added that their doors were always open for organisations and individuals who needed their assistance and pointed to their record of service in the community to support their claim.⁹² Another member of the SDILAC, George Naidoo, questioned Sewcharan's

leadership credentials. The inaugural meeting of the body covering an area with over 25 000 people had only attracted 35 people, Naidoo said, and he wondered how they could act as a watchdog.⁹³

The SDILAC was becoming more aggressive and rejected Councillor Pieter Breytenbach's all race advisory committee, formed to advise the DCC because, Rajbansi said, Indians 'were tired of playing second fiddle.' He said that for many years the LAC tried to advise the DCC and had reached the point where they were tired of such committees. Local authorities regarded LACs as a 'statutory nuisance' because they were doing their job of highlighting problems and 'delivering some truths.' Rajbansi said that he would participate if the multiracial committee got the DCC to get rid of inequalities in the budget, but he did not believe that this was the purpose for which it was being set up.⁹⁴ LACs did not function smoothly, in part because of opposition from Indians opposed to government policies and in part because of tensions between Indian members of the LACs and the council.

Social effects of the housing crisis

Relocation to Chatsworth had terrible social effects that, coupled with the breakdown of the extended family system had financial and social consequences, including a higher divorce rate, drug abuse, and gangsterism. Even before the housing scheme was completed, community leaders warned of the social problems it would give rise to. In a statement to the *Graphic* in 1969, G.M. Singh, a member of the SAIC, said that the deteriorating living conditions in sub-economic housing schemes were resulting in 'broken marriages, physical and mental breakdowns and juvenile delinquency.' He blamed the GAA for creating the housing crisis and stated that 'the success or failure of our modern society largely depends on how we deal with the housing

problem.’ With regard to improving the living standards of Indians in Durban, he argued that the construction of sub-economic houses on a large scale should be discontinued because of the absence of security of tenure and called for more economic houses. He blamed sub-economic houses on the ‘established system of artificially low wages paid to ordinary workers’ and added that efforts had to be made to raise the standard of living of the ordinary worker so that they could qualify for economic houses.⁹⁵

In 1969, Fatima Meer, then a lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the University of Natal, spoke at the 49th annual general meeting of the Aryan Benevolent Home (ABH). She predicted that Group Areas would break up the Indian joint family pattern. This, she argued, was caused mainly by children being forced to live separately after marriage because of the smaller houses in the township. While the transition was more successful in professional and semi-professional families, her concern was that amongst poorer families the old pattern was collapsing before new ones had emerged. In addition there were changes in values resulting from ‘modern advertising techniques, cheap reading material and the cinema.’ Older parents were beginning to be viewed as a ‘nuisance’ as children attempted to relegate them to their own quarters. The increased demands on the ABH were indicative of the new trend. All accommodation for aged inmates had been taken up at the home and there was a waiting list.⁹⁶ According to former residents of the Magazine Barracks, tiny houses were already a problem for them, and the situation was no better in Chatsworth.

In 1975, Meer expressed concern about the lack of voluntary social welfare bodies in Chatsworth and warned that the same problems would occur in Phoenix, which was then in the process of

being constructed. She noted that self-help bodies had a long tradition amongst Indians in South Africa and had played a crucial role in the 'welfare, health, hospital and educational services.' These bodies, she added were crucial in invigorating notions of 'community' and 'solidarity.' The physical and social environment in Chatsworth, she said, was not conducive to supporting the establishment of such bodies. The political climate created fear and constrained residents from voicing their frustrations which were then concealed. Associations other than religious and sporting bodies were looked upon with suspicion by the government and attempts by residents to collectively address their 'most urgent needs could easily fall into the category of political and subversive.' Another factor inhibiting the development of voluntary associations was resources. Indians had long relied on the contributions of the middle and upper income groups. In Chatsworth, poorer Indians were separated from wealthier ones, leading to a decline in voluntary associations in the early years.⁹⁷ In the period following the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 and the banning of major political organisations, the DCC labelled community leaders as revolutionaries that incited the poor and there was a large police presence and surveillance at mass meetings.⁹⁸

Concluding remarks

Chatsworth was built at a rapid rate to accommodate the vast numbers affected by Group Areas and slum evictions. The rich cultural and religious community life of the Magazine Barracks, which was built over decades, was destroyed and virtually overnight residents found themselves in the large and alienating housing scheme of Chatsworth, in many instances next to people that they had not known previously, and without infrastructure of any kind. Aside from higher living costs, there were problems relating to transport, school, and the lack of shopping facilities and

decent amenities. In this context, a heavy burden was placed on existing welfare bodies such as the Indian Child Welfare Society. While bodies such as this tried valiantly to cope with the increasing demands, the SDILAC was an influential organisation in communicating Chatsworth residents' collective grievances around these issues to the DCC in the first decade of settlement.

Group Areas relocations destroyed many existing social welfare bodies. The leadership vacuum was initially filled by the SDILAC, and gradually by ratepayer organisations and new voluntary bodies that emerged in Chatsworth who faced enormous challenges given the scale of the problem. Later, the NIC and Housing Committees would establish a powerful presence in the township and indigenous civics would emerge to take up the issues confronting residents.⁹⁹ In 1980 when the DCC announced a rental increase of 15 per cent, various civic bodies organised themselves into the CHAC, with NIC leaders, including George Sewpesadh and Farouk Meer as members. During this period mobilisation became more intense.¹⁰⁰ However during the first decade and a half when displaced people made Chatsworth their home, and when there were no amenities, the work of the SDILAC should not be underestimated.

Minutes of meetings and newspaper reports show that SDILAC members took up a myriad of issues on behalf of residents. While they addressed these issues within the logic of separate development, they were the only means to gain redress for the challenges facing residents in Chatsworth. Their inability to make gains frustrated SDILAC leaders and created tension between them and the DCC. Examining their work provides an opportunity to address the structuration theory grounding this study. The apartheid state attempt to create advisory to bodies to function within the parameters set aside by the white controlled DCC. However, individuals whom

comprised the positions in these bodies such as Palan and Rajbansi used their position to challenge the DCC on many pertinent issues and in their own way improve the lives of residents in Chatsworth.

¹ Part of this data was used for the publication in Karthigasen Gopalan, 'South Durban LAC, 1967 – 1975' in *Chatsworth: The Making of a South African Township*, ed, Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013).

² The period from the 1980s to the end of Apartheid has been examined in some detail, the most recent study being Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, 'The Natal Indian Congress, the Mass Democratic Movement and the Struggle to Defeat Apartheid: 1980–1994,' *Politikon* 42: 1 (2015).

³ Poor town planning arising out of the implementation of the GAA, is of course not unique to Durban or Chatsworth, see Martin Murray, *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008); for a discussion on the complexities of post-apartheid town planning see Caroline Newton and Nick Schuermans, 'More than twenty years after the repeal of the Group Areas Act: Housing, Spatial Planning and Urban Development in Post-Apartheid South Africa,' *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 28:4 (2013).

⁴ Maharaj, 'The Group Areas Act,' 430.

⁵ Numbered one to eleven but missing a Unit eight.

⁶ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.

⁷ Bridglal Pachai, *The South African Indian Question, 1860-1971* (Cape Town: Cape Town: C Struik & Co, 1971), 272-6.

⁸ Thulkana Palan, interviewed 27 November 2012.

⁹ Although Blom had looked at the leaders of the SDILAC, particularly Rajbansi, he had not examined their work during the early stages when Chatsworth lacked amenities. See Blom, *Melancholia of Freedom*, 142-175.

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- ¹⁰ *Leader*, 24 March 1972.
- ¹¹ Thulkana Palan, interviewed 27 November 2012.
- ¹² See Vahed and Desai, *Monty*.
- ¹³ Thulkana Palan, interviewed 27 November 2012.
- ¹⁴ Thulkana Palan, interviewed 27 November 2012.
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- ⁸⁷ *Leader*, 4 April 1975.
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⁸⁹ Kogila A. Moodley, 'South African Indians: The Wavering Minority,' in *Change in Contemporary South Africa*, eds, Leonard Thompson and Jeffrey Butler (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), 273 - 274.

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⁹¹ *Leader*, 28 February 1975.

⁹² *Leader*, 21 March 1975.

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⁹⁴ *Leader*, 28 March 1975.

⁹⁵ *Graphic*, 4 July 1969.

⁹⁶ *Graphic*, 26 June 1970.

⁹⁷ *Leader*, 21 February 1975.

⁹⁸ Desai, *We are the Poors*, 25.

⁹⁹ One of the earliest studies to examine the role of civic bodies in challenging the local state was done by Cecil Seethal who examined the efforts of the Pietermaritzburg Combined Ratepayers and Residents' Association in response to high taxation, see Cecil Seethal, 'The Transformation of the Local State in South Africa (1979-1991): Group Areas, Property "Super-Taxation," And Civic Organizations,' *Urban Geography* 13 (1992); also see Cecil Seethal, 'Civic organizations and the local state in South Africa (1979- 1993)' (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1993).

¹⁰⁰ The outcomes of their efforts have been examined in Vahed and Desai, 'Of Cabals.'; and Brij Maharaj, 'Urban Struggles and the Transformation of the Apartheid Local State: The Case of Community Civic Organisations in Durban' *Political Geography* 15:1 (1996), also see Kalpana Hiralal, 'Married to the Struggle: For better or worse Wives of Indian anti-apartheid activists in Natal: The untold narratives.' *New Contree* (Special Edition) 70 (2014).

¹⁰⁰ Deena Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.

Chapter Four

The Politicisation of Transport¹

Group Areas relocation to Chatsworth meant that thousands of residents, who had previously lived close to their places of employment, were suddenly forced to travel long distances to work. In addition, the residents of the new township had to move around to visit friends and relatives, and to do shopping. This increased household expenditure and on average resulted in about an hour being spent each day commuting. Neither the local nor the national government intervened to ease workers' financial burden; indeed, transport became highly politicised as the state tried to force residents to use the rail service rather than buses, built narrow roads within the township, and refused to build a second access road to ease entry and exit from Chatsworth.

Bus service

Private bus companies were handicapped by difficulties in obtaining certificates to operate buses in Chatsworth. To compound the situation the government decided in 1972 to ban buses from operating between Durban and Chatsworth in order to force residents to use the poorly-planned rail system. Bus workers, civic and political bodies, and thousands of residents joined the protest against the South African Railways (SAR) and National Transport Commission (NTC) that lasted almost two years. An examination of this protest highlights the frustrations of residents whose Group Areas relocation was compounded by transport-related issues and also provides insight into the fissures in Indian politics at this time.

Despite the massive size of Chatsworth, there were originally only two established bus stops, both situated on Higginson Highway. A meeting of the SDILAC in May 1968, six years after the first

residents settled in Chatsworth, expressed concern that passengers had to travel long distances by foot to these bus stops due to the absence of an inter-unit bus service.² Buses only catered for residents travelling to the city centre; there were no buses for those who needed to travel within the large township.³ This was a major problem given the long distances that people had to travel to schools and for shopping.

One group that was particularly affected by transport difficulties was Indian municipal workers who had lived at the Magazine Barracks. Workers at the Rachel Finlayson Baths on the beachfront only finished work at 23h00 and had to walk to the Victoria Street bus stop in the middle of the night. Residents of Croftdene got off at the bus stop in Westcliff and had to walk up to two miles to their homes. In 1965, DIMES requested that the municipality operate a special bus service for them. Following a year of correspondence with the Transport Department, arrangements were made with the United Tobacco Company to provide transport.⁴

Other residents continued to experience problems and some expressed their anger in the press. For example, U. Hanomantoo of Mobeni complained of the pathetic bus service and inability of local ratepayers associations to do anything about it.⁵ Members of SDILAC and the Mobeni Heights Civic Association made numerous appeals to the Town Clerk and the Local Road Transportation Board (LRTB) to grant additional Motor Carrier Certificates to bus owners. On 9 April 1969, J.N. Reddy explained to representatives of local government that there was an urgent need for additional bus services and for public transport for residents of Silverglen. The shortage of buses resulted in overloading. He requested that five additional inner circle buses be established.⁶ The SDILAC unanimously resolved that the Town Clerk make representations to the LRTB for five

more certificates, extend the bus routes to Silverglen, and review the situation every three months in view of the rapid increase in population.⁷ The Town Clerk opted to wait until after the implementation of the train service which would begin service in 1971.⁸

Rail service

Limited as it was, the bus service provided an essential service to thousands of commuters. The first train station in Chatsworth commenced service on 1 May 1971. It turned out to be highly contentious due to poor planning. Two train stations were built on the northern fringes of the township, far from where most residents lived.⁹ The distance to the station and the fact that rail fares were higher than bus fares, made residents reluctant to use trains and the service was running at a loss. The SAR ran 77 trains between Chatsworth and Durban each day to provide for a daily carrying capacity of 207 900.¹⁰ In view of the boycott, in August 1972 the NTC banned Indian-owned buses from operating between Chatsworth and the city. This would have put hundreds of bus workers out of work and bus owners, some of whom were still paying off loans for their buses, out of business, and would have resulted in increased travelling time and expenses for residents. Bus workers, civic bodies, and residents joined forces to protest against the decision to ban the buses.

On 24 August 1972, the SDILAC resolved that it viewed 'with despair and disappointment the attitude of the City Council in ignoring the plea of the Committee with regard to the continuation of the Bus Service in Chatsworth' and that they were suspicious of the intentions of the DCC to phase out the bus service that would adversely affect bus owners, and drivers and conductors who would have difficulty finding other forms of employment due to their age and inexperience in

commerce and industry. Havenside Civic Association president Freddie Badal said that buses had served the residents of Chatsworth for almost a decade and he could not understand why the railways were seeking to put them out of business. Residents, he said, had the right to 'choose their own mode of transport.'¹¹ Columnist Sadiq Alli [a pseudonym for Pat Poovalingam] wrote in the *Graphic* that the government was treating the residents of Chatsworth like 'animals' by denying them choice and compared its attitude to the government of Idi Amin of Uganda. The bus ban led to enormous anger.¹²

While the LRTB refused to comment to the press, community leaders voiced concern. J.N. Reddy said that it was a 'serious problem,' while Amichand Rajbansi called it an 'outrage' and said that 'there would be chaos of an unprecedented scale.' He felt that the decision to ban buses would 'give rise to public sentiment against the state.' A.M. Rajab, executive chairman of the SAIC, described the ban as 'shocking, most unreasonable and outrageous.' He promised that the SAIC would take up the issue with the Minister of Indian Affairs, Senator Owen Horwood, and prayed that there would be no riots.¹³ Residents made use of the 'Letters to the Editors' column in the *Graphic* and *Leader* to condemn the LRTB's decision. On 8 September 1972, the *Graphic* interviewed four residents about how the bus ban would affect them. Montford Civic Association president Bala Naidoo said that the ban would mean that the people of Chatsworth 'don't have a single right.' J. Shedkaran, who lived three and a half miles from the train station, said that the authorities 'keep on making the struggle to survive harder and harder.' Factory machinist Maliga Govender said that while it already took her an hour to get to work, travelling by train would take longer, and with her low wages, she wondered how she would cope. Pushpa Chetty, a 22 year old

mother who lived in Montford, travelled daily by bus to the Indian market and said that it would be impossible for her to walk from the station to her house with parcels.¹⁴

Bob Moses, a resident of Bayview, told the *Leader* that the move was ‘disastrous,’ especially considering that residents were not consulted. He added that while the bus picked him up on his doorstep, the nearest train station was half an hour’s walk away, which he would have to make twice daily. With just two stations in a township of 150 000 people, he concluded that, ‘the trains can’t cater for us. Maybe, we men will be able to manage. But what about women and old folk?’ Constable George Govender, who also lived in Chatsworth, said that ‘everything favours the buses remaining.’ He was concerned about the thousands that would be affected, ‘especially those in Units 6 and 7, whose homes are a whole bus journey away from the nearest station.’¹⁵

One of the striking features of the bus ban was that it brought together leaders with conflicting political opinions in joint protest. On 11 September 1972, the Southern Durban Civic Federation (SDCF) and ratepayers associations met with the NIC, SAIC, and LAC officials to discuss ways to fight the bus ban. M.R. Moodley, chairman of the SDCF, said that a united front was essential to beat the ban and called the LRTB’s decision a ‘grave injustice’ to the people of Chatsworth. On 14 September 1972, the SDILAC held an emergency meeting and appointed a six person committee to seek temporary certificates for operators so that they could beat the August renewal deadline. The committee also resolved to join forces with the SAIC and seek an urgent interview with the ministers of Indian Affairs and Transport to address the crisis. George Sewpersadh, NIC president, told reporters that the bus ban was ‘inhumane and cruel.’ It confirmed that ‘to the whites of this country, the needs, feelings and desires of the Black people are of no consequence

whatsoever' and that 'the time has come for Indians of all classes and from every part of the country to unite and oppose every assault on our dignity.'¹⁶ For the NIC, which had been resuscitated in 1971, the bus ban provided an opportunity to gain a foothold in the township.

During August 1972, the LTRB refused bus owners' applications for the renewal of their certificates. Undeterred, they continued their service after the expiry of their licence. At that stage 73 Indian bus owners were operating 120 buses which ferried more than 100 000 workers between Durban and Chatsworth daily.¹⁷ R.B. Bangtoo, chairman of the Chatsworth Bus Operators Association, made numerous representations to the Department of Transport until the LRTB agreed on 22 September 1972 to temporarily suspend its decision not to renew the permits.¹⁸ This reprieve was for 30 days only.

Mass protest meeting

Bus owners had already planned a mass protest for 22 September 1972. They distributed 30 000 handbills and displayed 500 posters on their buses and at bus stops advertising the protest.¹⁹ Arthur Grobbelaar, Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) general secretary, was invited to speak at the protest which he 'heartily welcomed.'²⁰ He wrote a letter to Prime Minister B.J. Voster warning that the withdrawal of buses from Chatsworth could 'boil over into a violent emotional upheaval, unless something is done to restore the transport status quo.' He personally believed that 'that an explosive situation of frustration, resentment and dissatisfaction is now building up among the entire population resident in the Chatsworth complex.'²¹ He also said that the Chatsworth bus ban 'frightened him' because it had sparked severe discontent. Harriet Bolton, secretary of the Garment Workers' Union, was also scheduled to speak at the meeting.²²

The mass protest meeting on 22 September 1972 attracted a large crowd. G.R. Naidoo put the number at 6 000 while Sewpersadh estimated that there were over 10 000 people.²³ However, Naidoo reported that the protest ended without a decision being taken. The meeting was opened by M.R. Moodley, chairman of the Chatsworth Bus Operators' Association. When Moodley suggested that trains not be boycotted, the crowd became angry and began heckling him. When Grobbelaar tried to speak, he too was booed, with chants of 'white man go home' and 'you are the problem.' He was forced to leave the meeting. Members of the SAIC who tried to speak were also booed and heckled off stage. Instead, the crowd began chanting 'Black Power' slogans. The booing and chanting lasted for over an hour, during which time no one was able to speak.

Durban attorney and member of the NIC, D.K. Singh, eventually assumed the role of chairman to help create order. He told the crowd 'If you want to walk, I will walk with you. We must organise ourselves.' His comments were received with 'thunderous applause.' The only other person allowed to speak was Jerry Coovadia, an executive member of the NIC who told the crowd that the people of Alexandra, Gelvandale, and Hammarsdale had walked to work for the sake of principle and that the people of Chatsworth could do the same.²⁴ The rowdiness of the crowd was indicative of the level of residents' anger and frustration, as well as increased militancy amongst younger people.

During the protest, representatives of the Black People's Convention (BPC) distributed pamphlets calling the Chatsworth bus ban 'Nazi-like' and part of the master plan by whites to keep Blacks in 'perpetual servitude.' The pamphlet read, 'violence is a feature of our oppressed South African

way of life. Violent atrocities are committed against us everyday in the name of white justice and domination.’ Group Areas was referred to as the ‘herding of masses of Black people, like so many cattle into ghettos like Chatsworth.’ According to the pamphlet, the government was out to destroy Blacks ‘physically and mentally’ and ‘White people have never suffered the way Indians, Africans and Coloureds suffered over the years.’ ‘Moderate’ leaders blamed NIC supporters for the rowdiness.²⁵

The crowd’s response received a mixed reaction in the press. One reader, who wrote under the pseudonym “Unite” said that it was ‘heartening to see the people of all shades of political opinion rallying together,’ something that had never happened before. He was ‘happy to know that people holding different political views can get together in moments of crisis.’ If Indians failed to unite they would remain a ‘small people.’ Interestingly, the writer added that a People’s Party was needed ‘not for Indians only but for all the Black people of this country.’ The writer hoped that whites would join but there was a tendency on their part to ‘keep as far away as possible.’ Their feeling of superiority was so ingrained that they considered it below their ‘great white dignity’ to associate with Blacks. The letter complimented the work of the South African Students’ Organisation but felt that their wrath against whites was discouraging the support of white moderates.²⁶ Some used the mass protest to criticise moderate leaders. For example, J.N. Reddy was booed off stage. E. Christopher wrote to the *Post* to say that the crowd’s reaction to Reddy was in ‘no uncertain terms’ an outright rejection of him as a civic leader. LAC members, he said, must realise that if they did not act in accordance with the wishes of the people then at the next elections they too would face the axe.²⁷ He expressed similar sentiments in an earlier letter to the *Leader*.²⁸

The *Graphic* editorial supported M.R. Moodley's decision to invite Grobbelaar and Harriet Bolton and called the attacks on them a reflection of a 'deep seated inferiority complex inculcated by generations of exploitation.'²⁹ The newspaper was also critical of the 'virus of racism' that had infected 'some persons in the Indian community' and condemned the anti-white stance of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM).³⁰ A *Post* editorial expressed similar sentiments, claiming that Indians in South Africa had a 'great reputation for being peace loving people' which dated 'back to the days of Mahatma Gandhi.' The *Post* found it disturbing that the 'hotheads among the advocates of Black power are seeking to enflame passions over the Chatsworth bus row.' While it opposed the bus ban, the newspaper also opposed the distribution of 'dangerously worded pamphlets' at the meeting and the fact that moderate leaders such as J.N. Reddy and A.M. Rajab were shouted down.³¹

On 23 September 1972, a day after the mass protest, a smaller protest was planned at a sports ground in Montford. However, on the night before, organisers were informed by Chief Constable V.C. Jearey that he had not been given enough notice to issue a permit for a public meeting and that if it went ahead organisers would be prosecuted. Deciding that it was too risky to hold the meeting at the sports field, protesters crowded into two gardens between a cluster of nearby houses. Over 750 people stood in the rain to hear a succession of speakers 'urge them not to let officialdom win without a fight.' One of the key speakers was Rajbansi who told the cheering crowd that if the appeal went against the bus operators he had something else up his sleeve and it was not a boycott: 'I won't say how we will do it but there are ways of preventing people from using trains if they

don't want to.'³² It is interesting that even at this juncture, while the likes of Reddy and Rajab did not have much appeal in Chatsworth, Rajbansi clearly did.

The NIC took a hard line approach. At a meeting on 18 October 1972, it threatened 'other forms of action' if the bus ban was not lifted. The NIC arranged a mass meeting on 22 October 1972, the day before the temporary reprieve was to end. R.M. Ramesar of the NIC said that they viewed the ban on Chatsworth buses with 'grave concern' and that the mass meeting would not be the end of NIC activities in the area.³³ Addressing the NTC on 24 October 1972 with bus owners present, Rajab warned that 'certain organisations' were already 'fishing in the troubled waters of the Chatsworth bus dispute' and trying to arouse the people to take irresponsible action. While not mentioning names, he accused these organisations of using slogans such as 'boycott Trains' and 'down with the SAIC' and urged the authorities to allow the buses to continue operating in Chatsworth or else face the fact that Indian people would accuse the Government of adopting double standards – 'separate for Indians and Whites.' Rajab reminded the National Road Commission that that all shades of public opinion, including the white press had condemned the proposed ban. He argued that the SAIC had been in a position to exert a favourable influence over the Indian people but if the bus operators were forced to give way to the railways, public opinion would turn against the Council and the Government. Rajab described the plan to remove buses as 'totally unreasonable and smacks of inhumanity.' There was a strong presence of bus operators, represented by eight attorneys, at the meeting.³⁴

Another mass meeting in Westcliff in late October attracted 2 000 people.³⁵ One of the results of this meeting was a petition bearing the names of 70 000 Chatsworth residents in support of the bus

service, which was handed to the chairman of the NTC, J. Driessen at a hearing on 23 October 1972. The bus owners told Driessen that Chatsworth was a community comparable in size to Pietermaritzburg, East London or Kimberly and asked him to imagine the public outcry if the people of these cities were told they could no longer choose their mode of transport but be forced 'to use trains because the service was running at a loss.'³⁶ Their appeal was, however, was rejected. Another appeal in November was also turned down.

In February 1973, the NIC distributed 10 000 handbills to residents in Chatsworth. Referring to the ban as an 'inhuman act,' the handbills urged residents to walk to work rather than take the train if the buses were forced off the road.³⁷ In March 1973, the bus owners appealed to the Supreme Court to review the decision, but this was turned down. During this entire period, the buses continued running. Although they were unlicensed, the city authorities did not stop them.³⁸ By May 1973, the bus owners had already spent R22 000 on legal fees to keep their service running.³⁹

The bus owners took their case back the Supreme Court at the end of August 1973. On 31 August 1973, Justice Henning downplayed the seriousness of the situation facing commuters by claiming that it was 'extremely difficult to believe that just because of their past habits, the people of Chatsworth preferred not to use the rail service into Durban.' D. Friedman, who represented the SAR, argued that their objection to the renewal of bus certificates was based on the fact that a large investment (R14 911 000) had been made in the train stations and that it was in the 'general public interest' that the service was fully utilised. Henning and Friedman felt that residents' refusal to use trains was due to 'force of habit.'⁴⁰ In effect, both argued that residents of Chatsworth should be made to pay for the SAR's miscalculation.

By September 1973 the money spent by bus owners had increased to R35 000, but they nonetheless vowed not to give up the fight against the SAR. The LRTB was forced to reverse its decision when, in the last week of September, in an 86 page judgement, Justice Henning of the Supreme Court in Pietermaritzburg dismissed the SAR's objections and upheld the bus owners' appeal to be allowed to continue operating. Henning ordered that the operating certificates be renewed and that the NTC and SAR pay all legal costs. The 50 bus operators pledged immediately thereafter 'to strive constantly to provide an efficient and satisfactory service throughout the vast Chatsworth complex.' R.B. Bangtoo, chairman of the Chatsworth Bus Operators' Association, gave this assurance after saying, 'the pistol directed towards the bus operators has been removed. We are convinced that we will receive the patronage of the majority of people who use public transport in Chatsworth.'⁴¹

While lasting less than two years, the Chatsworth bus protest revealed some of the everyday issues facing the community.⁴² Clearly the issue of transport was one of the major problems facing people in the new township. The location of the township some distance from places of work meant that at the core of the problem was the increased cost of travelling to work. It also meant that a significant portion of each day was spent in travel. Residents felt further aggrieved that they were being deprived of the opportunity to make their own choices. The protests revealed that the community was not prepared to simply succumb to the authorities. Over a short period, local networks were created that fed into older organisations like the DIMES and embryonic civic organisations. Newspapers like the *Graphic* and *Leader* played a huge role in ensuring that the bus struggle reached a wider audience.

The bus protest also exposed the fault-lines in politics. On the one hand were structures like the SAIC that worked within the system. On the other hand were the NIC and BCM. While there were tensions within these structures, the bus protest foretold the division between collaboration and non-collaboration that was to haunt Chatsworth politics through the 1970s and 1980s.

Roads

The township of Chatsworth had narrow roads which lacked sidewalks for pedestrians. Combined with the uneven terrain, this created a dangerous situation for motorists and pedestrians. Many of the roads were constructed from bricks and vehicles were sometimes damaged when the bricks jutted out of the road. According to Palan after repeated campaigning and complaining, the SDILAC was successful in getting the DCC to replace the brick roads with tarred ones.⁴³ However, in many instances, residents of the township paid the price for the DCC's poor planning. On 27 May 1971, N.A. Pillay was charged for parking his car on the pavement outside his house for more than seven days. The Chatsworth Police Department pointed out that this could not be tolerated given the narrow roads and sidewalks in the township. Pillay wrote a letter to the *Daily News* in which he explained that he had no option as there was nowhere else to park his car. His house was built on uneven terrain and he was unable to build a driveway on the property.⁴⁴ Due to instances such as this, in 1976, members of the SDILAC adopted a resolution that the City Treasurer should provide funds to assist residents to make such extensions.⁴⁵ Nothing came of this.

On 10 April 1973, James K. Moodley, a resident of Montford wrote to the City Engineer, Town Clerk, the Montford Civic Association and the Durban City Police, requesting pavements between

Roads 701 and 709. He cited ten accidents in the preceding five years resulting in two deaths and explained that pedestrians were in constant fear of being knocked down by motorists on either side.⁴⁶ During a SDILAC meeting, Poovalingam referred to the high accident rate, particularly along bus routes and argued that the lack of footpaths was a major contributing factor. The Assistant City Engineer undertook to examine and report on the repairing of Roads 125, 123, and 101. Following a discussion on road conditions a sum of R40 000 was transferred from normal city development for road development.⁴⁷

Given the narrow pavements and the number of road construction works in progress, almost every meeting of the SDILAC requested that the City Electrical Engineer provide adequate lighting on Higginson Highway. These requests were rejected and the Town Clerk's standard response was that several other road construction projects needed completion first. At one meeting, J.N. Reddy brought to the attention of members the high number of accidents in Chatsworth and suggested that school principals cooperate in the instruction of school children about safety measures.⁴⁸

Despite Chatsworth's massive population, Higginson Highway was the only road that connected the township and its 70 000 families to the Durban and Pinetown CBDs where residents worked. Given that Chatsworth was 'second only to Durban's CBD in terms of dwellings and led the city as a whole in terms of rate of population intensification,' during peak hours Higginson Highway became incredibly congested and strained as thousands made their way to work.⁴⁹ A second access road to Durban was desperately required. However, plans to build a second access route became highly contentious due to its potential to link Chatsworth to Yellowwood Park, a white residential area, and hence remove the barrier which separated the two. Yellowwood Park was separated from

Chatsworth by the Stainbank Nature Reserve, which consisted of land donated to the National Provincial Administration (NPA) by landowner Kenneth Stainbank. Stainbank had donated the land on condition that it was used as a nature reserve. Sives Govender and Maharaj have shown how debates about building a second access route through Chatsworth were halted during the 1970s and 1980s, when Stainbank made further donations of land that appeared to be a deliberate attempt to prevent a road connecting Chatsworth to Yellowwood Park. As early as 1961, the City Engineer had reported that there was an urgent need for a second access road due to the strain on Higginson Highway and proposed a route that would avoid the nature reserve. However in 1963, Stainbank donated a further 200 acres of land for the nature reserve, which interfered with this route. By 1987, the City Engineer had had to modify the route six times due to sporadic donations by Stainbank.⁵⁰

The proposed route came to be known as the Coedmore route. It was the most feasible for a second access route in terms of costs and the number of plots that would be affected by its construction. However it attracted strong opposition from Stainbank and white ratepayers associations. By 1983, white ratepayers of Yellowwood Park, Woodlands, and Montclair had joined forces to oppose the route. They were supported by the Natal Parks Board, Wildlife Society of Southern Africa, and Stainbank himself. The DCC appointed an ecologist, C. Ward to investigate and he found an alternative route that avoided the nature reserve and came to be known as the Umhlatuzana option. However, this would have cost 62 per cent more than the Coedmore route and would have meant that Chatsworth residents would have to travel further. For this reason it was rejected by the DCC. What followed was a series of tense exchanges between Indian organisations in Chatsworth and white ratepayer organisations. Although this has been examined previously, is important to

highlight that the debates surrounding the construction of the second access route became so contested that even up until today it has not been built.⁵¹ The delay meant that, as early as 1994, it had already become financially unfeasible to construct a second access route. The incident portrays the power of white interests during the apartheid era.

Concluding remarks

Group Areas forced removals were traumatic for many residents of the Magazine Barracks, forced as they were to move to barren land long distances from their former places of employment and to spend a considerable amount of time travelling to and from work in the city. At the same time, there were few amenities and shopping facilities in the township, and residents experienced great difficulty in even moving around the township. The local and national state not only did not make this adjustment any easier, but compounded residents' problems by stalling the granting of bus permits and refusing to build an alternative access route.

While this chapter and the previous one examined some of the general challenges facing the residents of Chatsworth when they first arrived in the township, the next chapter examines how the former residents of the Magazine Barracks experienced and responded to these challenges.

¹ Part of this data was used for the publication in Karthigasen Gopalan, 'The Threatened Bus Ban and Political Fissures, 1972-73' in *Chatsworth: The Making of a South African Township*, ed, Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013)

² NA, 3DBN, Minutes of SDILAC, 7 May 1968.

³ *Leader*, 31 January 1975.

⁴ DIMES Annual Report 1966.

⁵ *Graphic*, 3 January 1969.

⁶ NA, 3DBN, Minutes of SDILAC, 9 April 1969.

⁷ NA, 3DBN, Minutes of SDILAC, 13 May 1969.

⁸ NA, 3DBN, Minutes of SDILAC, 1 June 1971.

⁹ Subramony, 'Chatsworth,' 87.

¹⁰ *Mercury*, 28 October 1972.

¹¹ *Graphic*, 25 August 1972.

¹² *Graphic*, 25 August 1972.

¹³ *Graphic*, 8 September 1972.

¹⁴ *Graphic*, 8 September 1972.

¹⁵ *Leader*, 8 September 1972.

¹⁶ *Graphic*, 15 September 1972.

¹⁷ *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 September 1972

¹⁸ *Mercury*, 23 September 1972.

¹⁹ *Daily News*, 22 September 1972.

²⁰ *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 September 1972.

²¹ *Mercury*, 4 October 1972.

²² *Daily News*, 22 September 1972.

²³ *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 September 1972; and *Graphic*, 29 September 1972.

²⁴ *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 September 1972; and *Leader*, 29 September 1972.

²⁵ *Graphic*, 29 September 1972.

²⁶ *Graphic*, 29 September 1972.

²⁷ *Post*, 22 October 1972.

²⁸ *Leader*, 13 October 1972.

²⁹ *Graphic*, 29 September 1972.

³⁰ *Graphic*, 6 October 1972.

³¹ *Post*, 1 October 1972.

³² *Sunday Tribune*, 24 September 1972.

³³ *Mercury*, 19 October 1972.

³⁴ *Post*, 29 October 1972.

³⁵ *Graphic*, 27 October 1972.

³⁶ *Rand Daily Mail*, 25 October 1972.

³⁷ *Leader*, 2 February 1973.

³⁸ *Leader*, 30 March 1973.

³⁹ *Graphic*, 4 May 1973.

⁴⁰ *Daily News*, 31 August 1973.

⁴¹ *Leader*, 28 September 1973.

⁴² Bus Boycotts have been a common feature of resistance against Apartheid policies and provide researchers with valuable insight into the workings of resistance movements. For example in 1983 Lodge examined the Evaton and Alexandra bus boycotts 1955-1957, to reflect on fissures and weaknesses in African political organisations at the time. See Lodge, *Black politics*, 153-187.

⁴³ Thulkana Palan, interviewed 27 November 2012.

⁴⁴ NA, 3DBN, Town Clerk's Department: Chatsworth Housing Files, 30 June 1971.

⁴⁵ NA, 3DBN, Town Clerk's Department: Chatsworth Housing Files, 19 April 1974.

⁴⁶ NA, 3DBN, Town Clerk's Department: Chatsworth Housing Files, 10 April 1973.

⁴⁷ NA, 3DBN, Minutes of SDILAC, 3 February 1973.

⁴⁸ NA, 3DBN, Minutes of SDILAC, 11 June 1968.

⁴⁹ Sives Govender and Brij Maharaj, 'The Politics of a Second Access Route to Chatsworth,' in *Chatsworth: The Making of a South African Township*, ed, Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013), 134.

⁵⁰ Govender and Maharaj, 'The Politics,' 136.

⁵¹ See Govender and Maharaj, 'The Politics'; and Anusha Naidoo, 'Theory and Principles of Urban Planning: The Second Access Route to Chatsworth – A Case Study' (Master's diss., University of Natal, 1987).

Chapter Five

Work, Education, and Social Mobility After Relocation to Chatsworth

Forced relocation to Chatsworth brought about many challenges for former residents of the Magazine Barracks. These included a lack of essential facilities in the bare housing scheme, a sharp increase in living expenses, and the closing down of opportunities to supplement their income through informal employment such as fishing and domestic work in the city. Life was difficult, but residents gradually found new ways to supplement their income by opening stalls to provide goods and services that were otherwise not available and they later found employment in the many factories that were opening in nearby Jacobs and Mobeni, to the South of Durban.

Examining the working conditions show the ways in which residents adapted to conditions in Chatsworth as they had in the Magazine Barracks. The state treatment of municipal workers in the racially segregated Magazine Barracks led an identity based on being progressive. This chapter focuses on how residents adapted to the new financial burdens that relocation incurred and how over time they were able to increase their wages either climbing up within the municipality, or finding jobs outside. Also important to this was education, and some former residents of the Magazine Barrack took advantage of the fact that Chatsworth meant that they no longer needed to find work in the municipality.

Relocation and the higher cost of living

The move to Chatsworth proved expensive and costly for both residents who had to rebuild their lives in the new setting and the DCC which struggled to keep pace with service delivery demands. At the Magazine Barracks, residents had paid just 86 cents in rent, while their employer provided

paraffin and wood rations and they lived within walking distance of work. In Chatsworth, residents paid more than double this rent, now had to pay for electricity and water, had to buy electric stoves, and had to pay for transportation to and from the city to work, do shopping, and to visit relatives and friends.

In 1966, DIMES carried out a survey into the living expenses of its members in Chatsworth. The survey found that the average family of six people spent R49 a month on rent (R7.35), electricity (R3.17), transport (R7.20), groceries (R18.20), vegetables (R8.28), and bread and butter (R4.80). At this time, ungraded municipal Indian employees earned between R36.60 and R41.00 per month.¹ These expenses did not account for meat and clothing, or the additional furniture that was needed in Chatsworth. According to Deena,

At the Magazine Barracks we only paid 86 cents. Now when we moved into Chatsworth we had to pay rent, we had to pay light account, and we had to pay rates on our properties and we had to pay bus fares. When we lived in Magazine Barracks, the municipal buildings were close by, so we never had bus problems or transport problems. But when we moved into Chatsworth, we had all these problems. It was really difficult for the people.²

The hardships faced by residents when they first arrived were repeatedly stressed during interviews. For example, Naddie stated many times that life became ‘very hard’ when they first arrived in Chatsworth, compared to conditions in the Magazine Barracks. Naddie’s account of the forced relocation exhibited also elements of what Trotter referred to as a ‘counter memory,’ in his study of District Six, whereby life before the removals is viewed positively and problems like sanitation and overcrowding are seen to have started after the relocation.³

In similar vein, Naddie portrayed the GAA as apartheid's way of destroying a 'good life' and creating hardships, in contrast to the DCC's argument that residents were moved from the Magazine Barracks in order to improve housing conditions:

The apartheid government, they brought us here. Lots of people, the old people, our fathers, our grandfathers, they died. As soon as they came here, they never live long, because they just couldn't make it. They lived a rosy life there [Magazine Barracks]. Everything was comfortable, we had the beach there, just a stone's throw away. We had a good life, everything was nice for us there. But when apartheid, you can say, dumped us here. The moment when we came here things were getting very tough. People were just dying. Lot of old people died, lot of old people.⁴

His account of older residents being unable to deal with conditions in Chatsworth and passing away shortly after they arrived is also similar to Trotter's observation that 'according to virtually every removee, many older people died just before or just after moving. Survivors blame this on the trauma of eviction.'⁵ Naddie's observations are also similar to the accounts of other former residents of the Magazine Barracks. However, what is striking in his account is that he referred to the Magazine Barracks as 'comfortable' and 'rosy' which he contrasted to conditions in Chatsworth.⁶

Notwithstanding this, we also should not lose sight of the context in which Naddie lived, and his particular experiences when compared to other former residents of the Magazine Barracks. At the Magazine Barracks, Naddie's father's promotion to graded employment meant that the family lived in a brick house with running water and electricity. He said that when the family arrived in Chatsworth, his father was unable to cope with the travel and retired shortly thereafter.⁷

Naddie's mother was also unable to work once the family moved to Chatsworth. When she was living close to the CBD, she found employment as a casual domestic worker, first at a home in Beatrice Street, then in Grey Street, and later in First Avenue in Greyville, all within walking distance of the Magazine Barracks. One of the families for whom she worked was very impressed with her work and the husband offered her employment at his factory, Avalon Clothing in Grey Street. She started as a cleaner but worked her way up to become 'one of the top machinists' at the factory and earned a 'decent salary' which supplemented the family income. In essence she was able to take advantage of her surroundings in the city to improve the family's economic standing. Moving to Chatsworth meant getting up very early in the morning, depending on unreliable buses to get to work, and returning home late at night. Naddie explained that 'she became fed up, because we never live like that. My brother now, he had to leave school now and work.'⁸

Naddie stressed that things became 'very hard' during the initial years of settling in Chatsworth because of the higher living expenses. In comparison, as he remembers it, 'we were living in luxury there [Magazine Barracks]' because of the double income, nominal rent, and no transport costs.⁹ In Chatsworth they survived on his father's pension, and his brother's salary. Once Naddie finished schooling, he too assisted and worked day and night shifts. 'I finished in standard eight (grade ten) and I didn't finish my studies because as I said things were very tough.'¹⁰

Aroo, whose father worked for the City Health Department as a messenger, also spoke of a familiarity of space within the Magazine Barracks and the difficulty of adjusting to life in Chatsworth. Although his father passed away when he was three, his brother was also employed in the City Health Department which meant that they kept their accommodation in the brick section. He recalled that 'we were not happy when we were moved out.' He explained that, at the Magazine Barracks, everything was central and available to residents, within walking distance and

life was ‘comfortable,’ whereas Chatsworth was ‘another experience ... We were not happy.’ For Aroo, Chatsworth was underdeveloped in terms of infrastructure and there was a ‘lack of social cohesion.’¹¹

Challenging other accounts of the Magazine Barracks, Aroo argued that the Magazine Barracks was warm in winter and that it was only after settling in Chatsworth that they ‘really experienced cold.’ To come to Chatsworth and ‘live in the bush was another experience’, he said. He stressed that in the Magazine Barracks, there were good roads and sanitation. He also highlighted how transport difficulties and the lack of infrastructure compounded the problem of relocation. For example, there were no shops in Chatsworth and residents had to travel to the city to purchase groceries or look for work. Before the shopping centres were built in Chatsworth residents travelled to the morning market and the fish market in Victoria Street in the city for their purchases, which was time consuming and expensive.¹² Aroo added that ‘it was difficult, if you haven’t got bus fare, you couldn’t go home. And even to look for a job you need bus fare.’¹³

At the time of settling in Chatsworth, Aroo was also working for the City Health Department as a messenger. When he arrived in Chatsworth, he supported his wife and mother, as well as his sister and her husband, who were both unemployed, and their three children. His financial situation was difficult and everything he earned was used immediately.¹⁴

The move to Chatsworth placed a heavy financial burden on younger former residents of the Magazine Barracks who had just begun to work for the municipality while older individuals found it very difficult to adapt to life in Chatsworth and many retired. For example, Muthusamy Muthen, father of Vassie and Deena, was a *sirdar* for the Durban Market and an important community leader known as ‘Headmaster’ because of his role as principal of the central vernacular school,

which operated from the Drama Hall. A year after settling in Chatsworth, Muthusamy suffered a stroke and retired. Deena remains convinced that this was caused by forced relocation. He explained that Muthusamy had to leave 'home at four o'clock each morning to walk to the Westcliff bus stop where he would board a bus' into the city and 'the stress built up in him, as a result he had a stroke.'¹⁵ At the time, Vassie was also employed at the municipality and the family were given two houses in Chatsworth adjoining each other, one for Muthusamy and the other for Vassie. While this was a major boon, after Muthusamy's stroke, Vassie was the sole breadwinner in the family of eight and he also supported his four foster brothers.¹⁶

Vassie had initially found a job as a teacher when he finished his schooling but to qualify for a house at the Magazine Barracks, which was important given the general housing shortage in Durban, he was required to work for the Durban Corporation. He therefore joined the City Health Department, where he was employed as a 'low earning office cleaner.' He explained that had he known that they were going to be moved from the Magazine Barracks, he would have never left teaching.¹⁷

For some, the transition to Chatsworth was not as difficult. In 1964, when many residents were being resettled from the Magazine Barracks to Chatsworth, Mrs Pillay after completing her standard five (grade seven) had left school and began working in a clothing factory in the CBD. The reason that she left school was because her family was not well off and needed the extra income. The following year, 1965, when they moved into Chatsworth the family did not find the relocation as difficult financially as others, because, many in the family were employed at this stage. Mrs Pillay and her sisters were working for clothing factories and her brothers were employed by the municipality. She added that she did not have a difficult time adjusting to bus

transportation to get to work. The buses were reliable and took them to work and brought them back safely, she added. In the factory, her job entailed passing materials around to the machinists until she was promoted and worked with the sewing machines herself. She could not recall the exact date but said that her father retired shortly after settling in Chatsworth but because her siblings were employed, it was not a problem. Unlike Naddie and Aroo who came from the brick buildings, she originally lived in the wood and iron section of the Magazine Barracks and moving into a larger house in Chatsworth was a huge improvement for their large family.¹⁸ Likewise Sintha, who also worked in a clothing factory in Clairwood, during which time her siblings were employed by the municipality did not find the transition difficult.¹⁹

Jay's experiences of relocation were similar to Mrs Pillay. In 1964, he was in standard six (grade eight) at the Depot Road School. His younger brother would also soon enter high school. Since his parents could not afford to send two children to high school, when Jay completed standard six, he left school to begin working. He was disappointed because he excelled in sports and came first in each of his classes that year. Nonetheless, the following year in 1965 he went with friends to various departments of the Durban Corporation to look for a job. He explained that at that time, 'you don't apply for jobs, those days, all you have to do is go that one department and stand there and wait maybe the whole day, come back the next day, until whichever department is short of man power they take you.' Jay tried the Cleansing Department, City Engineers, Storm Waters, and Parks and Gardens but being 17 years old, employers thought he was too young and did not want to employ him. However, when one of his friends from the Magazine Barracks left his job at Addington Hospital to become a police constable, he suggested that Jay take his place. Jay went to the hospital and they told him he was too young but after a few months they called him back.²⁰

Jay had just started working at Addington Hospital when his family relocated to Chatsworth. Although the family was excited about moving to a larger house, Jay pointed out that relocation took its toll in other ways: the increased distances to work affected them in terms of cost and time. While Jay was not personally affected because Addington Hospital provided a bus service at no charge, his father was badly affected and, like several others, retired from the municipality. He said that transport costs made it unfeasible for his father to continue working. Instead, he found a job at the Westcliff market which was closer to his house. Two months after settling in Chatsworth, his paternal grandmother passed away and his mother, who became very sick, was unable to work and died in 1971. The family managed as Jay and several of his siblings were employed at that stage but many of their neighbours experienced dire times. Jay said that he didn't know how they coped because so many people he knew retired when they arrived in Chatsworth.²¹

Victor and his family found the transition to Chatsworth 'very difficult' because of 'transport, rain, flooding and all that.' Unlike many of the other interviewees, he settled in Bayview since the family was amongst the first to move. He was 17 at the time and told his father that they should 'make a plan quick and purchase a house quickly.' They were given a few options to choose from but settled in Bayview because it was the cheapest home at a time when he earned just R48 per month. Houses in Havenside were better built but much more expensive. In Bayview, the family experienced problems with the house and the paint and plaster would peel off the walls. He said that was common to see nearby houses 'being washed away' when it rained. The only road which ran through the township was a sand one which became unusable when it rained.²² On the other hand, Jay explained that his family did not experience these kinds of problems because houses in

Croftdene, (which were built after those in Bayview) were constructed by Long Till Building Company, which residents came to regard as the best company.²³

Both Kiru's parents welcomed the relocation to Chatsworth because it represented improved living conditions compared to what they experienced in the Magazine Barracks. Kiru's father was a messenger who 'had great standing' in the community because he wore a suit to work. People looked up to him and he was a 'well-connected man who played an important role in Chatsworth due to this status.' Looking back, Kiru finds it ironic that 'they paid him so dreadfully' and that his father's job really entailed 'opening doors' and 'collecting letters.' However at the time, the job commanded respect. Unlike others, his father did not have difficulties adjusting to the new transport arrangements. He took a train to Berea Station and his office was in nearby Smith Street. On weekends Kiru sometimes accompanied his father to work and he remembered the camaraderie between his father and the other workers who took the train and that they would sit in the same seats each day.²⁴

Economic mobility within the municipality

While the pay was low at the Durban Corporation, especially for ungraded employees, as noted in the first chapter, some found ways to improve their situation. The interviewees noted that while some workers chose to remain in low paying positions, for those who were determined, there were ways to climb the ladder to higher positions. For example, Naddie's and Jay's fathers' promotions when they lived in the Magazine Barracks resulted in their families moving from the wood and iron structures into the brick buildings. The next generation that began working for the municipality when they arrived in Chatsworth also found ways to improve their situation. Vassie said that although he initially regretted his decision to leave teaching and work as an office cleaner,

looking back it was a kind of ‘blessing in disguise’ as he worked his way up in the municipally and eventually became the principal line manager in the City Health Department. By the time he retired, his salary was similar to that of a high school principal, which he said was the highest possible position had he stayed in teaching.²⁵

Naddie, who was quoted extensively in chapter one on the ‘progressive’ nature of Indian municipal workers when they lived in the Magazine Barracks, continued this theme in his portrayal of how he was able to ‘better himself’ within the municipality whilst living in Chatsworth. Naddie originally found a job in a factory in Pinetown, through his brother-in-law who worked at the factory. However, due to the inadequate pay and high expenses in Chatsworth, he worked day shifts and night shifts. His mother was unhappy with the hours he worked and convinced him to leave. He found a job at the Navigators Packaging Industrial, and thereafter found other jobs in various private companies. During this time he got his licence to drive small trucks and joined the Durban Corporation in 1975 as a driver for Parks and Gardens. He explained that, ‘I climbed up one way in the Durban Corporation, improving myself. See, once you are in the Corporation, lot of people, I mean some of them don’t worry, they like to stay there, you know drinking and everything. But some of them like to improve themselves.’²⁶ While working for Parks and Gardens, he got his extra heavy duty licence and became a truck driver which was ‘one step up.’ He tried to get into the Electrical Department, because it would be a further step up. He was ‘turned down so many times’ but ‘never gave up,’ and finally got the job. At each interview, he learnt the kinds of questions that he would be asked and gained a better understanding of the selection criteria.²⁷

At the Electricity Department, Naddie drove a large truck with 21 African workers. Asked if there was any animosity between him, an Indian, and African workers, he stated, ‘no, that time it was

different, the Blacks used to respect the Indians.’ He added that it was only after 1994, when South Africa got majority rule, that African workers expressed a problem with Indian drivers and supervisors:

In 1994, after they came into power now, we can’t tell the guys what to do anymore.

Say now you want to tell the guy to dig a trench... they won’t listen. And then when we don’t do the job now, then the engineers would come to us and ask ‘what now, this job is taking so long?’ Now we’re getting calls from the office.²⁸

He said that due to frustration he left the Durban Corporation, joined a private contractor and worked night shift until his retirement in 2011 to take care of his ill wife. This was at the suggestion of his son, since all four of Jay’s children were working by this stage.²⁹

When he was young and needed a job, Jay worked at Addington Hospital. He worked there from 1965 until 1970, when he joined the Durban Club where he worked as waiter for a year. Thereafter he joined the municipality, working at the Montford Library, the first library in Chatsworth. He worked there for three years and during this period did night studies at the M.L. Sultan Technical College and completed his Junior Certificate (JC) which is the equivalent of standard eight (grade ten) and then matric via correspondence through ML Sultan. In 1974, he got a position with the Durban Police Force.³⁰

Jay enjoyed binding books and working in the library also gave him an opportunity to read much further than he would have ordinarily done. He also enjoyed serving with the police but acknowledged that it had its challenges. While with the police force, from around 2007 Jay helped one of his friends to manage a soccer club in Umbilo Road called Ball Park. Jay had been a

soccerite and had also served as chairman of the Young Clydes Soccer Club. When he retired from the police force after four decades of service, Jay focused almost fulltime on Ball Park as a way of giving back to the community.³¹ At this stage his children were employed, with his three daughters working outside of the municipality and his son working as a police.

When Victor arrived in Chatsworth he was working for the Durban Corporation as a general worker. He originally wanted to be an engineer but argued that there were no opportunities due to apartheid. After he completed standard seven (grade nine), he attended trade school and became a mechanic. While working as a mechanic for the Durban Corporation he got into fights with white workers who he said, gave him a 'hard time' and this led to him being transferred to a clerical position. He did not like this kind of work as he wanted something more 'robust' so he joined the Land Surveyors Department. He was eventually promoted to Martin West Building as a clerk, which he accepted because of higher wages. After 12 years he joined the army and worked in the defence force. This was the 'perfect' job for him as he found the work 'exciting,' it paid well and as a child he had always dreamt of being a soldier. He worked in the army for 20 years before retiring. As was the case with the other respondents, his children were working.³²

These short biographies are important in illustrating that individuals were not static in their work; even when they spent all their working lives within the municipality, they were evolving and 'on the move' as they aspired to reach higher employment rungs. Also important is that unlike their parents who retired during difficult circumstances, they retired comfortably, usually at the suggestion of their children. This was a common theme in narratives about moving to Chatsworth. Danny explained that the poorest of those who came from the Magazine Barracks struggled

initially but as their children became educated, the family's predicament would change. One former resident who did not manage to progress in the municipality after settling in Chatsworth was Kristen Govender. When he lived in the Magazine Barracks, he did a number of jobs including sweeping streets, working at the carousel, and working for the municipal swimming pool until he was promoted to foreman in West Street. However in 1958 he became severely ill and spent six months in hospital. He returned to work in 1959 but when he settled in Chatsworth in 1965, he found it very difficult to rely on municipal transported and retired. He eventually found a job at a shop near to his house. For this reason he said that 'up to now, I still don't prefer Chatsworth.' However he did concede later in the interview that his family are better off today than they would have been if they stayed in the Magazine Barracks due to the larger house, and opportunities for the children's generation to work outside of the municipality.³³

Supplementing incomes in the township

Although the opportunities to supplement their incomes which existed in the CBD disappeared in Chatsworth, some residents found ways to do so in the new environment. Vassie said that this was because of the 'progressive nature' and 'resourcefulness' that was developed at the Magazine Barracks. He added that although residents lived as one big family and treated one another as 'brother and sister' they were also 'brought up to live independently.' For him, it was this 'upbringing' which led to some finding creative ways to become 'small time entrepreneurs,' when they arrived in Chatsworth. For example, due to the absence of retail stores, some residents of the township started tuck shops at their houses which provided essential daily commodities. Vassie and his wife sold milk, bread, sugar, tea, and other items, while others opened barbershops (hairdressing) or workshops where they repaired cars.³⁴

Kiru recalled that his grandmother sold eggs and cigarettes. With her earnings she erected an outbuilding in their backyard, which, he claimed, was the first outbuilding in Chatsworth.³⁵ Such 'stores' were illegal and those who ran them were in constant fear of being raided by the police. Kiru's grandmother's strength is reminiscent of Maya Angelou's 'Phenomenal Woman.' She must have had women like Kiru's grandmother in mind when she penned the lines 'I'm a woman, Phenomenally, I'm a Phenomenal woman, That's me.' Kiru described his grandmother 'as that real matriarch that grew and kept my family together.' His grandfather, a street sweeper, died before the move to Chatsworth and she handled the whole relocation process, arranging a house 'for herself, for my father and my uncle, which was my paternal aunt's husband. [She] must have been a very organised and connected woman and must have known the system very well.' Kiru continued:

I think her strongest contribution in all of this was that she was a woman really ahead of her time, very entrepreneurial, entrepreneurial with really nothing. She had nothing to begin with but she really made a great deal with nothing. She set up a tuck shop at home, I mean now we call it a tuck shop but she was literally a woman with a box of eggs and cigarettes.... They [elder generation] spent very little, very frugal people but very, very high, exceptional rates of savings to be able to do this. So I think she had that matriarchal quality about her. If there were the right sort of political circumstances, I am more than certain that my granny would have been a millionaire. You know apartheid presented obstacles for her. If she had the slightest opportunities, she would have been phenomenal. She just had a way and this is a woman who has never been in

a classroom, who couldn't even read or write Tamil but had, I think of it as a generosity of heart and spirit. She grew up [raised] so many people..... So there is that element of it. So if we talk about Chatsworth, as a story of triumph.³⁶

Kiru's description of his grandmother highlights several themes that emerged during the interviews: economic and personal upliftment despite hardship, hard work, simple living, and the ability to look beyond oneself at the needs of the broader community. This theme of progression and upliftment was a major theme that emerged from the narratives about relocation to Chatsworth.

For example, Karan was keen to emphasise the perspective of 'triumph' and how Magazine Barracks' residents did well in sports, work, education, and other aspects of their lives, overcoming great adversity in the process. He stressed that the history of the Magazine Barracks should be written in terms of how much the residents achieved in very difficult circumstances. He sees the story as one in which people struggled and worked in the municipality but they brought up their children 'well,' meaning that they taught them good values, ensured that they got a decent education and many 'eventually became doctors, teachers, and they became good sportsmen, you see all that is the flourishing and blossoming.' He added, 'in the end we can say thank God for our humble beginnings.' For Karan, there were not many opportunities in Chatsworth, but the resourcefulness engendered in the Magazine Barracks helped residents to make their way to prosperity and for these reasons the 'name Magazine Barracks will never fade.' Although he hated Group Areas, in retrospect he believes that the move to Chatsworth was beneficial in the long run because the Magazine Barracks was becoming 'seriously overpopulated' and moving improved people's health.³⁷

The original tiny houses in Chatsworth presented many challenges for the new residents. However, Vassie pointed out that although conditions were difficult in the beginning, municipal employees, despite their meagre earnings, managed to improve themselves to the extent that their houses in Westcliff and Croftdene 'are now much better' than houses in what were originally the more affluent areas, such as Mobeni Heights. If you 'look back and visit these people, ninety per cent of them have progressed so far, you know the municipality and the government did not realise that the Indians would progress so far in their building.'³⁸ Extensions were made not because residents wanted luxurious living conditions but because they were a necessity due to large families. This is important since many interviewees and other former residents explained that although one of the advantages of moving to Chatsworth was improved living conditions and larger houses, these houses were originally small and it was up to residents to make them sufficient.³⁹

People from the Magazine Barracks had big families and they had to accommodate those children. Therefore if you look at Unit three and Unit five you will find that a lot of people have built their houses bigger, either built their outbuilding or extended the building to accommodate their children, not for fancy not for having a big house or a fancy house or a nice looking house to show people to show how rich.⁴⁰

Whereas forced removals are often seen in the literature as creating 'victims,' many removed from the Magazine Barracks emphasised how they and their families overcame difficult odds. Kisten explained that instead of facing the situation as powerless victims, most of the removees accepted the inevitable and tried to make the best of their predicament. Although it was difficult in the early years, the residents concentrated on making the best of it and this enabled them to improve their circumstances considerably. In this regard, moving to Chatsworth provided much-needed improvement to the situation that existed in the Magazine Barracks where the space problem would

have been compounded. Kisten said that once residents got over their initial 'shock' and 'sadness' of being displaced from their homes and split from their neighbours, 'instead of just sitting and moaning and groaning, we thought let's see.'⁴¹ For Kisten it was this attitude and the progressive nature of former residents that enabled them to succeed.⁴² He added that had they remained in the Magazine Barracks it would have been difficult because families could not be accommodated in the overcrowded conditions for much longer. In his work as a priest, he is called upon to offer prayers when a former resident of the Magazine Barracks makes a purchase like a car or some other major investment and he said that it gives him great pride because at the barracks, only two people owned cars.⁴³ For other interviewees however, this could have negative consequences in some cases. According to Deena, economic mobility led to some residents becoming embarrassed about their 'roots.'⁴⁴

When people moved here, it changes, the lifestyle starts to change and then pride got into people. Some of them, some of them won't want to mention that they were from the Magazine Barracks because the lifestyle changes. It was difficult to find someone with a motor car in the Magazine Barracks because of how little our parents earned. It was too little to buy a motor car. But when they came to Chatsworth, they were able to buy a motor car. Now when you buy a motor car, the first one in your family, you got the pride ... and then you become embarrassed to say that, you know, there was a time that I couldn't afford a motor car?⁴⁵

Work outside of the municipality

Some residents, such as Danny, found work outside the municipality. Being politically minded, he argued, 'I preferred to working outside with private companies.' His first job was as a clerk in the wholesalers, Marshall Industrial in Prince Alfred Street. 'I had a fairly good education then, in that, after primary school, in Greyville Primary, I graduated through Sastri College, it was very elite institution because it was about the only high school [for Indians] in Durban. You had to go through some sort of academic merit.' Danny acknowledged, however, that this education which enabled him to find employment outside of the municipality was largely due to the fact that his father, as a member of the Durban City Police, was a graded employee whose salary made it possible for Danny to study. He said that many of his contemporaries who performed very well in school had to drop out because of their financial circumstances and find jobs with the municipality.⁴⁶

After finishing school in Glenhover, Deena found a job as a nurse at R.K. Khan Hospital in 1969. He had a passion from childhood to be a nurse and enjoyed the work but his earnings were very low. When he was married and had four children he was earning just R108 a month, which was very low for that time, especially when his children began attending school. For this reason he left state employment and went into industrial nursing, joining Dormal Dorm at Bayhead. 'The salary was obviously better, ten times more than the salary I earned at the hospital.' However, he 'still kept to that profession and thereafter I got into health and safety.'⁴⁷

The decision to leave the municipality was not always a choice but in some instances a necessity to cope with the new environment in Chatsworth. From a long term perspective the financial

situation of many former residents of the Magazine Barracks improved significantly after settling in Chatsworth.

Although conditions were initially very difficult, Deena emphasised that improved living conditions was a ‘gradual process’ that ‘took many years.’ Like Naddie he stressed that relocation created difficult financial circumstances such that ‘some of the men when they came to Chatsworth, they actually resigned from the municipality, because the money was too little. They had to work in the factories in Mondi.’ Deena noted that leaving the municipality and finding outside employment enabled residents to ‘buy stoves, fridges and microwaves’ that he claimed characterised the difference between Chatsworth and the Magazine Barracks.

All these things you know, as years went on ... there were no luxuries here [at first].

When the residents of Magazine Barracks came to Chatsworth and saw the house with toilets and a built-in sewerage system, you know, and they were able to now, to, no more put fire outside, they could put in electric stoves, all these advantages, they were very excited, it changed their entire lifestyle for the better but that took a long time, it didn’t happen immediately. It took years.⁴⁸

Deena explained that in order to cope, some of the poorest residents from the Magazine Barracks were forced to leave the municipality and seek work in factories where they did tasks such as washing or ironing clothing. He said that it was relatively easy to find jobs in these factories in the 1970s.⁴⁹

Some of the people were forced to leave. Some of the people took their severance package, to keep it going you know. I even met a man at Telkom, we were talking, he

is from the Magazine Barracks, he is 81 years now. He said ‘ah man when I came to Chatsworth I could not make it man I was forced to resign from the municipality. I took that lump sum and I began to do my house up, to do my tiling, and send my children to school.’⁵⁰

Fortunately for municipal workers, they had a reliable pension scheme, which DIMES had fought so hard for. As illustrated in the case described by Deena, some pension schemes provided former residents with a large payout which became more useful in Chatsworth than their salaries would have been. For Vassie ‘the municipal pension scheme is so good, I can comfortably say that I got the best.’ There were two schemes available to municipal employees, the Provident Fund and the Durban Municipal Pension Scheme. The Provident Fund provided a large, once-off payment whereas the Municipal Pension Scheme was, in Vassie’s view, more profitable since it provided monthly payments, a 13th thirteenth check and medical aid.⁵¹

Vassie added that facilities in Chatsworth that were eventually provided by the municipality also assisted. He recalled that while he was with the City Health Department a city councillor questioned why Chatsworth should be provided with so many clinics. Vassie and his colleagues pointed out to the councillor that the residents of Chatsworth were displaced from places where these facilities had existed and therefore the DCC was obliged to provide them.⁵² Although Chatsworth lacked essential public facilities during the 1960s and most of the 1970s, when these facilities were built they were beneficial to residents. Vassie argues,

At the present state I think the people from the Magazine Barracks have realised, we have lost group living, communal living, and brotherhood all that, but we have progressed to a great extent moving from that communal living to Chatsworth where

you are free to do what you want to do. Although you were free in the Magazine Barracks to do what you want to do, but we were in a community where you were restricted in certain things. But here [in Chatsworth], you can progress as you want. People in Chatsworth and Phoenix, from the Magazine Barracks, Railway Barracks, and Congella Barracks moved to, have progressed tremendously. In my voluntary work I do a lot of visits to these families, also because of my religious work at Magazine Barracks Shree Vishnu Temple, because of my religious work and social activities and being a chairman of the Durban Municipal Pension Fund and also being a secretary in the Durban Remembrance Municipal Indian, I use to go interview people on how they progressing, what their fathers and mothers use to do in Magazine Barracks and all that. Checking their past and checking their future and how they come up from and how they are moving up the ladder now, the progress is tremendous. I am not speaking bad about Magazine Barracks, I am one proud of the member of the Magazine Barracks. But I am sorry if they stayed in that same communal living they wouldn't be where they are now. They would be very happy and would progress in a small way, but they wouldn't progress to the extent that they progressed now. Although we had dancing classes, we had drama halls, we had libraries, we had clinics, we had everything in Magazine Barracks, community living. Here we have more or less of the same facilities and the people are making use of it in the broadest sense. There you will stick to the one library and whatever books were there you got. Now you got libraries in every Unit. Every people go to libraries, clinics, places provided for various things.⁵³

This long quote captures an important theme that emerged during many of the interviews. The loss of communal living, although lamented by former residents of the Magazine Barracks, also meant economic progression and a ‘modern way’ of life. The initial hardships of Chatsworth were difficult but from a longer term perspective it allowed former residents to move out of a closely confined space and provided them with new opportunities.

As noted earlier, Naddie, who strongly opposed the GAA, acknowledged that it had some benefits. He explained that although he liked living in the Magazine Barracks, moving to Chatsworth meant that they had houses which could be extended and if they had remained in the barracks ‘it would have become a slum.’⁵⁴ Danny too made a similar point. He emphasised that when residents made the transition they were left without any choice in an environment with no infrastructure (shops, schools, and transport) which he called the ‘essential parts of one’s wellbeing.’ However echoing the sentiments of Vassie, he added ‘if you walk around certain areas [in Chatsworth], you wouldn’t recognise the place’ when compared to the area when residents originally settled. This he said was due to their ‘progressive nature.’⁵⁵

Education and upward mobility

In discussing economic mobility and upward progression of families from the Magazine Barracks, a major theme that emerged was the importance of education. Whereas many in the generation born at the Magazine Barracks left school early to assist with monthly expenses, most of those in the generation born in Chatsworth took advantage of schooling in the township and chose professions which would not have been possible had they lived in the Magazine Barracks.

When residents first arrived in Chatsworth, there were no schools in Westcliff or Croftdene, where many of the Magazine Barracks residents settled. Many parents were unable to pay the bus fare to send their children to schools in the city and consequently had to withdraw them from school altogether. Deena pointed out that ‘lots of people found it difficult to adapt to the situation because the transportation was poor, and there was no schools.’ Given the lack of an inter-unit bus service, school children relied on municipal transport but ‘some of the parents couldn’t afford it and their children couldn’t go to school, you see?’⁵⁶

When Deena arrived in Chatsworth at the age of 16, he was attending Loram High School in Somtseu Road in Durban. In his neighbourhood in Westcliff, there were ‘no roads, only bushes all around.’ Every morning he would walk to Higginson Highway to board the municipal bus which the workers took at six o’clock in the morning and would wait outside the school grounds for the clerk to open the school. At four o’clock in the afternoon, he and the other pupils would make their way to the bus station in town and join one of two long queues. He explained that ‘we had to wait there for three, four buses to go past and then the fifth one you will take. That was the delay and that leaves us little time to do our homework for the next day.’⁵⁷ In 1966, Glenhover High School was established and Deena got a transfer there where he completed his matric. Naddie, who also took the municipal bus to school, fondly recalled how sometimes they would pocket the money that their parents gave them to take the connecting bus from Warwick Avenue to Somtseu Road and walk the distance in a group.⁵⁸

While schooling was a challenge for many former residents of the Magazine Barracks after their relocation to Chatsworth, especially given their difficult financial circumstances, a substantial number ensured that their children and especially the generation that followed, completed their schooling. After Glenhover High School opened, a few other schools opened within walking

distance of the areas in which former residents of the Magazine Barracks settled, such as Westcliff High School, Greenwell Primary School, and Southern Cross Primary School in Westcliff. In Croftdene, Witteklip and New Haven Secondary Schools and Belvedere Primary School were established. Residents of the Magazine Barracks who settled in Bayview were catered for by Chatsworth High and a primary school which they named the Depot Road Memorial School, after the school on Depot Road located near the Magazine Barracks. Education was described by residents as a means to economic mobility. Although Danny's education which allowed him to find employment outside the municipality was somewhat of an exception for residents who were born in the Magazine Barracks, Chatsworth provided their children with the opportunity to leave municipal work which most did. In fact, when discussing the hardships of relocation, Danny stated 'gradually as the children grew up and began to work, the family's financial position improved.'⁵⁹

According to Vassie, while it was rare in the Magazine Barracks for children to receive higher education, in Chatsworth 'people have learnt to move ahead.' He explained

At Magazine Barracks we had limited amount of doctors, lawyers, teachers and all that, although every profession, there was someone in that profession. But when it came to Chatsworth, people have learnt to move ahead. And you see a lot of Magazine Barracks children and often some of the children, the grandchildren are either doctors, enough doctors, enough lawyers, like my family and all we got three doctors and two lawyers because the children learnt, and they mastered themselves and they bettered themselves. Likewise other families did various things to better themselves.⁶⁰

Vassie added that when they first settled in Chatsworth and those in his generation were looking for new ways to supplement their income, for the older generation the ‘most important thing was to see that education wasn’t lost.’ In emphasising the importance of education and self-improvement, Vassie narrated the story of Mala Lutchman as an example of upward mobility in Chatsworth. A former resident of the Magazine Barracks, Lutchman came to Chatsworth as a child and learnt Tamil and English. She studied in India where she mastered Tamil and returned to South Africa. ‘Now she is a very, very good Tamil scholar and Tamil school teacher now and she is also a lecturer in, she is a Tamil school lecturer and then she is also a radio announcer, like that now they further themselves.’⁶¹

Although neither of his parents went beyond standard seven, Kiru acknowledged that the huge emphasis that his parents placed on formal education was a massive advantage for him. He was also grateful that school was within walking distance of where he lived. He added that, although some of the friends that he grew up with in Chatsworth had the same opportunities, they still live in difficult circumstances, but because of his parents, he ‘had a huge edge.’ He said that, ‘in the context of the time I felt very privileged ... the greatest thing that I could have received from them was this great belief in formal education,’ which for him was the ‘ticket to social and economic mobility.’ One of his great joys in life was his mother’s reaction when he was awarded a scholarship to do his Master’s degree at Cambridge University in England. His education was vital to his mother who came from a family that was unique, he said, in that the same emphasis was put on educating girls as boys. The value that his parents put on education was his ‘silver lining.’⁶² According to Kiru, parents played a crucial role in the education of their children:

The most prominent one was the school and education committee. He [Kiru's father] took a very active role in that. And he wasn't alone in that. I attribute the excellence of the schooling not just to the teachers but because the role the parents took. So they raised funds for the schools. I must tell you also the schools were pristine. Everything from manicured play grounds, the toilets didn't stink. There were rules and the regulations. We had odd instances with people messing around. But I remember if the window was broken the caretaker saying, "fix the broken window". If you leave one broken window. We were in school on time. I joined the scouts and then I left the scouts. When I was in high school, I refused to wear the flag and I coerced the head girls to do the same. Ja, so the schools were really good. My father used that base of the school.... I often think about this, that in a strange way, I think of myself as a beneficiary of apartheid. We had outstanding schools.⁶³

Kuppan's experiences of schooling were also positive but he said that he had noticed a decline in recent decades as fewer parents served on school committees. He explained that when he was attending school, the teachers were outstanding and committed to their task.⁶⁴ Today Kuppan is a transportation planner in a civil engineering company and Kiru has held positions at the University of Natal, Durban Institute of Technology, and the National Research Foundation and in the South African public service. Both of their fathers were employed by the municipality.

It should be kept in mind that the move to Chatsworth coincided with massive changes in educational opportunities for Indians. These included the establishment of a university for Indians on Salisbury Island in 1961 (which became the University of Durban-Westville in 1971) and a rapid school-building programme in the 1970s.⁶⁵ The generation that started schooling in the later

1960s was the first generation of Indian South Africans to truly benefit from these educational opportunities.

This applied equally to girls who were for a long time denied education opportunities. Although Siva was educated when she lived in the Magazine Barracks, she mentioned that she and other girls were discouraged from pursuing careers and that their development as a child was aimed at making them a 'good wife'.⁶⁶ In the Magazine Barracks Siva lived in an environment where elders had a huge influence on the upbringing of children. In Chatsworth, where people lived in a nuclear family in separate houses, girls were encouraged to pursue education. The daughters of all the interviewees who were born in the Magazine Barracks were educated up to matric with some pursuing tertiary education. In Jay's family of four children, three girls and a boy, only the youngest daughter pursued a university degree. Two of his daughters work for Nedbank, his son works for the city police and his other daughter established a business after working for several years in Umgeni Water.⁶⁷ Today many of the girl children who were born in Chatsworth after their parents left the Magazine Barracks, are lawyers, teachers, or academics or are working in business establishments or banks. For those who settled in Chatsworth after being displaced from the Magazine Barracks, the municipality and the clothing and textile factories were major employers. As Mrs Pillay explained, 'that time there were a lot of factories everywhere, that was the only job you can get if you didn't get a good education.'⁶⁸ However, none of the children of any of the study respondents have depended on these sources of employment.

Education is very important in this regard since the opportunities for employment in nearby factories in Mobeni, Jacobs, and Clairwood which existed when residents first settled in Chatsworth have disappeared in recent years. Vahed and Desai who examined the Flats of Bayview, known for housing some of the poorest residents of Chatsworth, have shown the

devastating impact that post-1994 shifts in economic policies have had on these households, whose breadwinners were employees of these factories.⁶⁹ The number of jobs in the clothing sector fell from 45 000 in 1990, to just 19 000 in 2000 in KwaZulu-Natal.⁷⁰ This has led to massive unemployment giving rise to the various economic and social problems which plague large sections of Chatsworth today.⁷¹

Concluding remarks

Due mainly to the working class background of municipal workers, many stereotypes developed over the years about residents of the Magazine Barracks. Various interviewees stressed that other residents held negative views of them. What emerges from these narratives is a story of great hardships as a result of forced relocation, due to increased transport costs, higher rents and service charges, long hours of work, a lack of basic amenities, and the poor quality of housing. On the other hand, independent housing also ‘liberated’ workers because they could seek work outside of the municipality, unlike at the Magazine Barracks. The move to Chatsworth also coincided with an expansion in education which would facilitate upward mobility because new opportunities were opening up – as teachers in the newly-built schools, clerks in the Indian Affairs Department, policemen and women in the township’s police stations and the new professions opening up to Indians.

Even before this happened, the new residents of the township found innovative ways to survive, with women often at the forefront in formulating survival strategies. Deena, while feeling ‘sad that we had to leave Magazine Barracks,’ also felt that ‘it was good for us to leave there, to progress in life. If people were still living in the Magazine Barracks they would still be living the old primitive way.’⁷² This is by no means intended to romanticise life in Chatsworth. Several studies have shown

the widespread poverty in pockets of Chatsworth; while many former residents of Magazine Barracks progressed economically, others remained rooted in poverty.⁷³ This chapter has shown how former residents of the Magazine Barracks asserted their agency in response to apartheid created structures by taking advantage of opportunities in Chatsworth to achieve economic mobility. However, residents also believe that economic advancement that Chatsworth enabled also came with a decline in their culture, a theme which is taken up in the next chapter.

¹ DIMES Annual Report and Audited Balance Sheet for 12 Months ended June 1966, 30th Annual General Meeting Wednesday, 12 August 1966.

² Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.

³ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

⁴ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

⁵ Trotter, 'Trauma and memory,' 51 – 52.

⁶ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

⁷ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

⁸ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

⁹ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

¹⁰ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

¹¹ Aroo Naicker, interviewed 7 February 2013.

¹² Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

¹³ Aroo Naicker, interviewed 7 February 2013.

¹⁴ Aroo Naicker, interviewed 7 February 2013.

¹⁵ Focus Group discussion conducted by Hannah Carrim and Goolam Vahed 21 March 2009.

¹⁶ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.

¹⁷ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.

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- ¹⁸ Mrs Pillay interviewed 15 April 2013.
- ¹⁹ Sintha Munien, interviewed 14 February 2012.
- ²⁰ Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2003.
- ²¹ Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2003.
- ²² Victor Morgan, interviewed 4 April 2013.
- ²³ Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2003.
- ²⁴ Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.
- ²⁵ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ²⁶ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ²⁷ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ²⁸ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ²⁹ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ³⁰ Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2003.
- ³¹ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ³² Victor Morgan, interviewed 4 April 2013.
- ³³ Kristen Govender, interviewed 21 February 2013.
- ³⁴ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ³⁵ Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.
- ³⁶ Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.
- ³⁷ Karan Narainsamy, interviewed 10 April 2013.
- ³⁸ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ³⁹ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴⁰ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴¹ John Kisten, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴² John Kisten, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴³ John Kisten, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴⁴ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁴⁵ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁴⁶ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 December 2012.
- ⁴⁷ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁴⁸ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.

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- ⁴⁹ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁵⁰ Deena Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁵¹ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁵² Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁵³ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁵⁴ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ⁵⁵ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 December 2012.
- ⁵⁶ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁵⁷ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁵⁸ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ⁵⁹ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 December 2012.
- ⁶⁰ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁶¹ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁶² Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.
- ⁶³ Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.
- ⁶⁴ Solly Kuppan, interviewed 30 November 2012.
- ⁶⁵ See Goolam Vahed and Surendra Bhana, “‘Colours Do Not Mix’: Segregated Classes at the University of Natal, 1936-1959,’ *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 29 (2011).
- ⁶⁶ Siva Kugesan, interviewed 31 January 2013.
- ⁶⁷ Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2003.
- ⁶⁸ Mrs Pillay interviewed 15 April 2013.
- ⁶⁹ See Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai, ‘Flats of Bayview’ in *Chatsworth: The Making of a South African Township*, ed, Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013).
- ⁷⁰ Vahed and Desai, ‘Flats of Bayview,’ 174.
- ⁷¹ See Thembisa Waetjen and Goolam Vahed, ‘Gender, Citizenship and Power; The Westcliff Flats Residents Association’ in *Chatsworth: The Making of a South African Township*, ed, Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013).
- ⁷² Deena Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁷³ See also Desai, *We are the Poors*.

Chapter Six

Remaking Community: Religion, Culture, and Sport

A central theme that emerged during individual interviews with former residents of the Magazine Barracks, as well as during group meetings and social gatherings, was the importance of family and culture at the Magazine Barracks. As we saw in the first chapter, many former residents described the Magazine Barracks as ‘one large family.’ Even allowing for nostalgia, this depiction was due in large measure to the social welfare, cultural, educational, and sporting bodies that residents established. Family and religion were also important in remaking community in Chatsworth. Racial clustering in the township provided Indians with an opportunity to rebuild aspects of their cultural and religious lives although this was a difficult and challenging task. Displacement was not just about physical movement; those who were forcibly relocated became dislocated and isolated by the rapid physical and social changes that took place so abruptly in their lives. When residents first arrived in Chatsworth, there were virtually no religious, cultural, and educational institutions. This chapter examines the ways in which former residents of the Magazine Barracks coalesced to establish a semblance of their former community life and the outcomes of their efforts.

Examining the way in which they rebuilt community is an important component of this study. We saw in the first chapter how residents responded to circumstances imposed upon them by the DCC regarding housing, by creating a rich cultural and social environment within the Magazine Barracks. Chatsworth was created as a bare housing scheme to serve the state’s aims of social engineering. This placed huge burden on people who left behind a place with a rich heritage. This

chapter will probe into the agency of so called victims of Group Areas and how they attempted to recreate their social and cultural lives in a completely new setting.

Displacement and Dislocation

One obvious result of forced relocations was the destruction of the ‘districts’ that had existed at the Magazine Barracks. This was not just damaging in terms of breaking up the vernacular classes and voluntary bodies that had depended on existing neighbourhood networks; it also terminated long established social relations. These districts within the Magazine Barracks were important for creating the notions of family and community that residents such as Kisten and others described so affectionately (see chapter one). For Kisten, this was the ‘most difficult part’ of forced relocation. While he was aware of the increased living expenses and the other disadvantages of settling in Chatsworth, what really ‘disturbed’ him and other people from the Magazine Barracks was the split from friends and neighbours.¹ As Deena explained, the separation of neighbours and break-up of the districts was very difficult for many:

You see, in Magazine Barracks you lived as a family. When we came to Chatsworth we were exposed to different kind of people, different cultures. It was rather difficult for us to adapt. And being at home with very strong cultural parents, we could not go into the neighbour’s house. So we weren’t really exposed to other people.²

Many interviewees highlighted how poverty and close proximity at the Magazine Barracks created closeness and used the example of how neighbours shared curry, a traditional Indian culinary dish.

Although most residents were poor, they rarely went hungry because people were willing to share food and it was common for children to visit neighbours' houses to do so. In Chatsworth, with unfamiliar neighbours, this kind of bond was broken. Some residents even perceived their new neighbours as unfriendly.

For example, Aroo said that at the Magazine Barracks 'the people that we lived with, were like family' and that 'everything was comfortable' and people were friendly and knew one another, but in Chatsworth 'things changed.' Suddenly 'we were living in isolation' and people 'were not as friendly as when living in the Barracks.'³ He added that due to the lack of public or personal transport, it was difficult to visit friends and family within Chatsworth itself. Furthermore, with so much time spent travelling each day to and from work, they simply did not have spare time to engage with friends.⁴ While most interviewees expressed some kind of resentment that Group Areas separated them from their neighbours, Aroo's recollection portrayed a depiction of isolation and loneliness in Chatsworth, in stark contrast to what had existed in the Magazine Barracks. While there is obviously an element of nostalgia in this recollection, it reflects feelings of loss connected to homes that were left and a neighbourhood that was cherished.

Aroo's experiences were also influenced by him being allocated a house in Croftdene whereas most of his neighbours and friends from the Magazine Barracks were assigned homes in Westcliff. While some people struggled to make the adjustment from the close-knit community of the Magazine Barracks, to what they perceived to be a more physically and socially isolated environment in Chatsworth, others found the transition easier. Mrs Pillay recalled that although she was separated from her friends, most of whom were settled in Westcliff while her family was

given a home in Croftdene, she did not have a difficult time adjusting. She occasionally met up with old friends and also made friends with her new neighbours, many of whom were from the Magazine Barracks. She and her classmates from St. Mira Bai, also organised a committee. Others argued that even though their new neighbours were from different districts, they ‘connected’ because they were all from the Magazine Barracks. Sintha for example, said that she got along with her new neighbours like a ‘house on fire’ because they all came from the Magazine Barracks. She added that it did not ‘matter if we were not from the same district but we were from the same place and we had that same feeling for each other.’ It was her perception that those residents of Chatsworth who came from places other than the Magazine Barracks were not friendly to them, but it was no problem to her.⁵

According to the respondents, many residents in Chatsworth displayed varying degrees of hostility towards former residents of the Magazine Barracks and other labour barracks, such as the Railway Barracks. People from the labour barracks were stereotyped as ‘thugs.’ Most respondents, for example Sintha and her brother Runga stated that such stigmatisation did not bother them because outsiders ‘did not know us.’⁶ Mrs Pillay said that although people felt ‘low’ about Magazine Barracks, ‘we didn’t care because we were brought up in a good way in the Magazine Barracks so it never bothered us’ she says. However, Naddie said that stigmatisation led to altercations during the early years and that he was involved in many fights as a result.⁷ Although the stigmatisation affected him and those in his generation, he added that it did not affect their children and that they were never stereotyped at school. He added that eventually as ‘outsiders’ got to know former residents of the Magazine Barracks, the stigmatisation fell away. Like Sintha and a few others,

Naddie's contact with his old friends from the Magazine Barracks gradually ebbed and then ceased as it became difficult to maintain contact, but he made new friends amongst his neighbours.⁸

Victor, who settled in Bayview where fewer residents of the Magazine Barracks lived, recalled the arguments and even fights that arose as a result of stigmatisation of those from the Magazine Barracks. He emphasised, however, that some 'outsiders' who knew people from the Magazine Barracks did have respect, and that others gradually got to know them and the stigmatisation fell away. Victor maintained contact with old friends from the Magazine Barracks, made new friends in Bayview and married a former resident of Clairwood after settling in Bayview.⁹ It seems as if those who settled in Bayview and Westcliff experienced more discrimination when they first arrived, than those who settled in Croftdene. However, all interviewees stated that as the years past the stigmatisation faded away.

The stereotyping of those from the 'barracks' may have been a factor that led to a few individuals trying to erase this link with their past. For example, some former residents did not participate in the land claims meetings in the 1990s because they claimed that they did not come from the Magazine Barracks even though their roots were known. This may have also been due to the fact that, as Deena pointed out, when some people became wealthier they were embarrassed about their past in the barracks. Deena felt that those that achieved wealth and status after settling in Chatsworth did not want to be associated with the 'communal living' in the Magazine Barracks.¹⁰ During interviews and meetings of former residents, these individuals are sometimes mentioned and their attitudes are contrasted to the 'majority' who are proud to have come from the barracks. For example during one of his presidential addresses to the Durban Municipal Pensioners' Club,

Vassie narrated a humorous incident of a well-known businessman who denied that he came from the Magazine Barracks because he was embarrassed.¹¹

In discussing the destruction of the districts, respondents also spoke of how the move to Chatsworth led to a decline in many cultural aspects of their lives. For example, when asked about whether the fun and passion that he described so vividly in the Magazine Barracks during the festivals continued in Chatsworth, Naddie's answer depicted a strong correlation between the breaking up of these districts and the eventual decline of the culture that existed in the barracks. He described at length how joyous the festivals were and when asked if they continued he explained, 'No, that thing dropped off. You want to know why?! Because where I am from, Young Clydes, in Young Clydes all our neighbours use to do those things. They [are] not here now.' He then pointed at his neighbours on both sides of his house and explained that the one was from the tin shanties and the other was from a different district called Ramblers. He said that because of this, they could not have the same fun that they had in the Magazine Barracks; everyone began to do their 'own thing' and 'then we gave our hearts to the lord, most of the people gave their hearts to the lord.' In speaking of converting to Christianity, his account indicates a relationship between the breaking up of neighbourhood districts, conversion to Christianity and a decline in the lifestyle of the Magazine Barracks which was centred on festivals and interaction with neighbours.

Again, this may be because Naddie settled in Westcliff. His views are also similar to Deena who also settled in Westcliff. In sections of Croftdene, where large clusters of former residents of the Magazine Barracks settled alongside one another, they found ways to continue some of the activities of the barracks. These included the 'Road Show' which was a major celebration at the

Magazine Barracks. The Road Show took place annually on New Year's Eve and in each district bands would play, and all the residents would sing along and dance for the whole night.¹² This was continued in Croftdene with great vigour and community leaders such as Rajbansi donated money.¹³ Mrs Pillay who still attends the Road Shows, stated that from 14h00 on New Year's Eve former residents of the Magazine Barracks would begin.¹⁴ Kisten explained that during other religious occasions some streets in Croftdene were decorated by residents just as they did when they lived in the Magazine Barracks.¹⁵

Religion

When residents first arrived in Chatsworth, there were few places to worship. According to Vassie, the most pressing concern was 'religion. Religion was the most important thing for people of the Magazine Barracks because they didn't want to forget their culture, their religion, and where they come from. We always carried that.'¹⁶ The earliest attempt to replace the Magazine Barracks Temple took place when the central shrine from the Shree Vishnu Magazine Barracks Temple was taken to Glenover Road, Westcliff in 1964 and residents gathered to worship.¹⁷ A new temple was built on the site in 1967 and was named the Chatsworth Magazine Barracks Shree Vishnu Temple in honour of the original temple at the barracks. The temple came to observe most major Hindu festivals, including the Thaipoosam Kavady Festival, Sithiraa Paruvam Kavady Festival, Panguni Uththiram Kavady Festival and Kantha Sashti.

Vassie added that when this temple was built in Westcliff other former residents of the Magazine Barracks built temples in places such as Croftdene and Montford.¹⁸ For Vassie, the destruction of

infrastructure, in this case the temples, did not lead to a decline in culture because residents were determined to replace what was lost in the new setting.

Vassie's brother, Deena, also saw the temple as central to the preservation of culture but provided a slightly different interpretation of what happened when they first arrived in Chatsworth. According to Deena, the move led to residents' attachment to their culture and religion being weakened in comparison to when they were living at the Magazine Barracks because of the lack of places to worship, coupled with the weakening of community bonds more generally. He argued that

It was so sad, our culture, when we came to this place our culture deteriorated. And there were no temples to go and pray. Later on, yes, they built the Magazine Barracks Shri Vishnu Temple at Road 332 in Westcliff, Chatsworth. Then all the Magazine Barracks people would gather there on a Sunday morning for a service.¹⁹

For Deena, the construction of the temple was important in uniting former residents of the Magazine Barracks and he believes that when he and other former residents gathered at the temple for Sunday services or during festivals such as kavady, 'there was that strong remembrance of the Magazine Barracks.' The temple activities became one of the few occasions which brought them together. Asked what happened during the early years of the temple in Chatsworth, he added,

It will bring back that old memory of the Magazine Barracks. Like when we use to go to the beach, have a bath at the beach and come, and do your haven prayers and go

carry the kavady and come to the temple. You will see the people with so much of excitement, and you can hear people chirping and saying ‘ah you can’t beat Magazine Barracks. Can’t beat Magazine Barracks.’ And we missed it. Even now, if you interview a lot of people, old people from the Magazine Barracks, they will tell you ‘We like to go back to the Magazine Barracks.’ It was so beautiful to stay in that place, but unfortunately we had to leave.²⁰

The descriptions of both Muthen brothers reveal a strong correlation between the activities of the temple and remembering the Magazine Barracks. Since the majority of former barracks residents were still Hindu when they arrived in Chatsworth, the affairs of the temple were one of the few times they met up in Chatsworth.

Asked if there was an enduring sense of a Magazine Barracks identity after relocation, Danny, who was one of the few residents of the barracks who did not relocate to Chatsworth but chose instead to settle in Sea Cow Lake, where his family owned property, also mentioned the temple. In response the question of whether a notion of Magazine Barracks identity continued after its demise he answered, ‘Definitely! The attachment was continuing in that they [former residents of the Magazine Barracks] travelled wherever they lived in Chatsworth, to the temple. That is where they kept in touch with each other.’ Danny himself made every effort to attend functions at the temple to ‘keep in touch,’ despite the fact that he lived a long distance away. He described the temple at the Magazine Barracks as the ‘glue to keep the residents together’ and expressed disappointment that a ‘very fine structured temple was destroyed.’ However, residents salvaged whatever they could to rebuild the temple in Chatsworth that enabled continued social relations between former

residents. Although the temple was for Hindus, specifically Tamil speakers, he added that ‘so did the other linguistic groupings and other religious affiliations, they kept their sense of togetherness quite cemented.’²¹

However, it is important to note that many residents who met at up at the temple during Hindu occasions, and who said it was important for the preservation of a Magazine Barracks identity, converted to Christianity in later years. This includes Deena, who became a Christian Pastor in 1985. Pastor Dr Deena Muthen, as he is now known, does not see a contradiction between Christianity and an identity associated with the religious, linguistic, and cultural activities that residents embraced at the Magazine Barracks when they were predominantly Hindu. He mentioned many times during our interview that in the Magazine Barracks notions of Christian, Hindu, and Muslim, did not ‘mean anything’ as they ‘lived as a family, regardless.’ At the Magazine Barracks if ‘it was like a Christmas function, right? Everybody participated, like if it was Diwali they would exchange food and all those things. But they never really participated in the prayers, you know what I mean?’ There was religious tolerance at the Magazine Barracks:

I wish I could explain to you, there was such a tremendous love amongst our people, I wish I could see that now. When I was a young boy in the Magazine Barracks, I would get excited to wake up on a Diwali morning or a Christmas morning, our mother would give us an oil bath and by eight o clock we would get up and put on our new clothes and we would put our Christmas hats, and we would go outside watching all the other guys, even the Christian guys. We go to your house, from your house we go to that house. Whole day would be a celebration. Today, you don’t find that. Even when we

came in '65 we tried to maintain that, but we could not because next door person was from another place. You know what I mean?²²

Referring to his life after his own conversion, Deena stated, 'But when you study the word of God and realise that certain things you should not be doing, you know what I mean? And that is obviously now you have to draw a line.' He explained that when he visits an old (Hindu) friend during a religious festival he still associates with them and only when they initiate their actual prayer does he not participate. Since he believes that religion played no factor in dividing residents culturally when they lived in the Magazine Barracks, his conversion does not affect how he attempts to preserve the legacy and culture of the barracks 'community.' Deena sees it as his responsibility to help preserve the cultural aspects of the Magazine Barracks, particularly the Tamil heritage. In speaking about his vernacular schools he added, 'now to still keep our culture going I am a minister at the Church. It is a vernacular church (Alpha Revival Tamil Ministry) to keep our culture going.' Deena also established the Alpha and Omega School of culture, songs, dance and drama to promote Indian, mainly Tamil, languages and culture, and at the time of the interview was president of the South African Christian Vernacular and Cultural Trust. He added that the voluntary schools he runs in Chatsworth, which teach the Tamil vernacular, drama, dancing and singing are open to everyone regardless of religion because he came from 'a very strong cultural place' and he does not want his culture and language to be lost.²³ By implication, Deena does not see a contradiction between being Tamil and being Christian and in fact Tamil features strongly in his Church, including hymns and sermons.²⁴

While Deena has converted to Christianity, his brother Vassie remains a staunch Hindu and plays an integral role in the temple. This is a microcosm of what has happened amongst many families where some members have converted to Pentecostal Christianity while others remain Hindu. Vassie's wife tells a similar story. She was not from the Magazine Barracks but met Vassie when she came to live with her paternal grandmother at the barracks because her family had converted to Christianity while she wanted to remain Hindu.²⁵

Vassie believes that religious identities hardened after settling in Chatsworth. He argued that '75 per cent to 95 per cent of residents of Magazine Barracks were universal believers of religion.' For him this meant that residents were mainly Hindu, but some Muslims and Christians and Hindus would go to the church, mosque or temple, and attend each other's festivals; this started to fade when they moved to Chatsworth.²⁶ This is not unique to the Magazine Barracks community. Globally, instead of a rise in secularism there has been a hardening of religious identities in recent decades.

Kiru, whose father was born at the Magazine Barracks while he himself was born in Chatsworth, and raised by Hindu parents, said that he and his siblings were brought up to embrace and understand the traditions of many religions. His analysis depicts the idea that his father's upbringing at the Magazine Barracks combined with his living environment in Chatsworth, promoted this acceptance of all faiths:

In terms of faith we embraced everything, I am very grateful to my parents, my mother took me to the tomb of BadshaPir, you know, that is a Sufi sentry (in Brook Street,

Durban)? At the same time we did Kavady we went to midnight mass. We embraced all of the faiths and Chatsworth allowed us that because we had neighbours from different backgrounds.²⁷

During the eight decades that Indian municipal workers and their families lived at the Magazine Barracks, the vast majority were Hindu and a smaller number were Christian and Muslim.²⁸ Former residents that are still Hindu today as well as those who converted to Christianity argued that it was only after settling in Chatsworth that many began to convert. Various studies suggest that Hindus began converting to Christianity in large numbers following forced relocation as a result of Group Areas, which resulted in the destruction of temples and the extended family system, which were important to Hindu practices.²⁹ South African census figures also support this.³⁰ While there were originally no temples in Chatsworth, there were several established churches, including the Bethesda Temple in Westcliff, which catered for displaced Indians as they made it their new home.

The experiences of the Perumal family regarding their conversion from Hinduism to Christianity demonstrates that there was a correlation between the churches which surrounded the Magazine Barracks and the decision to convert after settling in Chatsworth. During the time in which they lived in the Magazine Barracks, both of Naddie's parents were considered by other residents as important Hindu and community 'leaders.' Naddie and his siblings were consequently raised as Hindus in a strongly Hindu family. During this time, his older brother belonged to one of the famous gangs within the Magazine Barracks, known as the 'Dirty Dozen.' 'Nobody could touch them, they were terrible. They were all boxers,' Naddie explained. But Naddie and other former

residents argued that these gangs had a strong ethos of discipline. There was a rigid hierarchical order and members of the Dirty Dozen organised around boxing. While Naddie's brother did not allow him to join the gang when they engaged in activities such as gambling or drinking alcohol, he was allowed to train with them. This was common practice.³¹

However, Naddie claimed that after settling in Chatsworth the discipline and training that kept such gangs 'in order,' fell apart. Former members of Magazine Barracks' gangs now lived apart, alongside new neighbours, and there was a lot of violence in Chatsworth, with Naddie's brother involved in some instances. During the early 1970s, it became really intense. Naddie explained that around 1974 or 1975, his brother was attacked by six members of a rival gang and was left for dead. The family took him to R.K. Khan Hospital which according to Naddie was new at the time and had the best facilities. Regardless, Naddie's brother could not walk and the doctors failed to diagnose the cause of the problem. Still unable to walk he spent the next week away from work, and a colleague at the Durban Corporation filled in for him.³²

The following Sunday, their neighbour, 'Uncle Dorry' a former resident of the Magazine Barracks, who used to attend a nearby church in Woodhurst, brought two white missionaries to pray for Naddie's brother. The parents accepted the 'Christian prayer' because they were desperate to find a cure. The missionaries asked his brother if he knew the Lord Jesus Christ, and if Christ were to touch him and make him walk again, what he would give in return. He responded that he would 'give the Lord his heart.' The missionaries prayed for him and asked him how he felt. According to Naddie, at that moment, his brother could move his legs and was able to stand up and slowly began walking. One of the ladies gave him a gift, a gold cross. The brother was 'alright for a week

or so' but returned to drinking and tried to leave the house one night to settle an issue with a rival. Naddie and his father had to restrain him one day and during the commotion his mother started praying in Tamil to Christ, which instantly calmed his brother down.³³

The following morning, his brother woke up and went to work 'as if nothing had happened' the night before. Naddie asked his mother why she prayed like that, because usually, when something was the matter she would follow Hindu tradition by getting camphor and carrying out the ritual. His mother replied that his brother no longer belonged to them but to Jesus. Naddie followed up by asking where she had learnt to pray in that manner, having been a Hindu all her life. At this point in his story, he stopped and started to speak about the Tamil Baptist and Telugu Baptist Churches on both sides of the Magazine Barracks and the influence of J.F. Rowlands on residents when they lived there. Naddie explained that some residents described the Magazine Barracks as being protected by those two churches, which stood on either side, and also spoke about how influential Rowlands' missionaries were when they visited the barracks. Going back to the story of his brother's conversion, he said that when he asked his mother how she knew how to pray like that she told him that she had been taught to pray by the nuns in the churches and that she attended Sunday school. When he asked why she did not become a Christian, she said it was because she married his father who was a Hindu and it was traditional for a wife to follow her husband's way of life, including religion. What is important in this story is the influence of Rowlands and the Baptist Church on some residents when they lived in the Magazine Barracks. While the focus in Chatsworth was large scale conversion, the work of missionaries in the CBD laid the foundation.

After the incident with Naddie's brother, his parents began to attend a nearby church. Karan's father, Robert who was a Christian when living in the Magazine Barracks was friends with Naddie's parents and would secretly take them to church. The reason for the secrecy was that Naddie's father was a 'big shot in the temple,' as was his mother. When Naddie's father died in 1977, his mother attended church with his brother in Woodhurst where she was baptised. Eventually, Naddie was also baptised there and the entire family converted to Christianity. However, Naddie said, 'But we still go, visit a lot of Hindu families around. Ja we still got lot of Hindu families around. We go visit them, you know. They are our loved ones.'³⁴

The Perumal family's experience of conversion also depicts another theme. Scholars who have examined the issue of conversion after Group Areas relocation point to the breakdown of the extended family and the 'order' which characterised communities prior to the GAA. Naddie's account of how gangs were organised in the Magazine Barracks and how this fell apart after relocation supports this argument. In Chatsworth people were living in nuclear families separated from old neighbours, the lifestyle changed and new challenges emerged.

Cultural transformation

When the respondents spoke of culture, they referred to it in the widest sense, to include not only religion, but language, dress, food, social habits, and so on. While it is clear that religion has undergone rapid and fundamental change, other aspects of former barracks residents' lives also underwent change in Chatsworth.

At the Magazine Barracks, social welfare institutions attended to the many problems which assailed residents, while educational bodies aimed to facilitate social and economic progress, and sporting associations helped residents to productively occupy their leisure time. According to Naddie, participation in such bodies characterised life at the Magazine Barracks, and most people participated to some extent.³⁵ Many other former residents described their daily participation in organisations such as FOSA, and emphasised that almost everyone participated in one body or another. Kisten, who pointed out that residents ‘did everything’ in the Drama Hall, including homework, holding vernacular and cultural classes, and convening welfare meetings, spoke of the importance of these kinds of structures and the close proximity in which people lived as well as enthusiastic participation in such bodies. After listing some of the welfare bodies at the Magazine Barracks he continued, ‘we served all these organisations one time’ because ‘after school we use to meet up there, today we have FOSA meetings, tomorrow we have child welfare meetings, it’s not like we had to come from far, we were always there.’³⁶

Respondents also felt that the level of sharing and caring was lower in Chatsworth where lifestyles underwent dramatic changes. Neighbourhood networks were broken up, and with them the interconnected system of vernacular and cultural schools which operated at some homes and from the Drama Hall, since this proved difficult to recreate. For example, Deena lamented, ‘it was so sad that, because when we moved into Chatsworth, there were no facilities to accommodate our children into Tamil schools.’ He argued that this contributed to what he felt was a decline in their ‘culture.’ Deena was still in school when he arrived in Chatsworth in 1965, and was unable to do anything about the lack of Tamil schools. However, by 1969 when he got married, he had a job as nurse. In 1971 he started a Tamil School with his wife who taught children from 15h00 until 16h00

while he would teach adults from 18h00 to 19h00. ‘God gave me that relationship. I have a vernacular school where I teach the children to sing in Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi. I came from a rich cultural place and I don’t want to lose my culture,’ he said. He added that moving to Chatsworth destroyed the network of vernacular schools and that residents never fully recovered. At the Magazine Barracks ‘students use to come, they were hungry and thirsty, the children, for their own culture but when they came to Chatsworth, they lost it.’³⁷ In Deena’s view, the destruction of infrastructure in the Magazine Barracks, a closely confined space where homes acted as an interconnected system of vernacular and cultural schools, contributed to a decline in ‘culture.’ One should point out, however, that whatever the cause, in the period from the 1960s to 1990s, English became the *lingua franca* of Indian South Africans.³⁸ According to the 1996 census, around 96 per cent of Indians claimed that English was their home language. Whether, in the absence of Group Areas, vernacular languages would have retained their former significance is a moot point in a context where there was a hunger for English-language secular education.

In addition to splitting up family and friends, the increased time spent travelling to and from work and the fact that residents had to find other means to supplement their incomes, meant that many former residents of the Magazine Barracks had limited time for voluntary work. For example, after relocation Vassie had to support his family and siblings’ families and had to find other means to supplement the income that he earned as a municipal worker. At the Magazine Barracks he assisted the Durban Child Welfare Society and the Red Cross First Aid, which performed weekly duties at a sports club at the Magazine Barracks, and ran a first aid clinic called the Side Room at the barracks. He was a member of FOSA, ran a football club, and was involved in the temple. He explained that, when he arrived in Chatsworth,

I was able to continue part of my work, because my family commitments in Chatsworth was greater. I never left my religious and sporting activities. I couldn't continue with the others because I was involved with four different jobs, to get more money, I worked in City Health and then come home and work in private jobs.³⁹

Although some, like Vassie, were unable to continue their voluntary work in Chatsworth, there were a few who got involved in voluntary work once they settled in the new township. For example, Mrs Pillay, who was not active in FOSA when she lived at the Magazine Barracks, joined the organisation in Chatsworth because she lived near to an influential leader of FOSA. Tuberculosis was on the rise in Chatsworth and volunteers were needed in the Croftdene area.⁴⁰ Some community leaders at the Magazine Barracks, such as Kisten, continued to play an integral role in FOSA, amongst other bodies, in Chatsworth. However, Kisten pointed out that the geographical separation of neighbours in Chatsworth meant that it was difficult for these organisations to function in the new setting as they had done in the Magazine Barracks. For those that lived near leaders of voluntary bodies such as Mrs Pillay it was possible to join, but most that were now separated from their leaders dropped out. Coupled with day-to-day struggles, it was difficult to find the time and energy, especially in the early years, resulting in decreased participation in civic engagement.

Danny believes that the GAA destroyed the vigour of voluntary civic bodies. Asked if residents continued to participate in voluntary bodies after they arrived in Chatsworth, he answered

Ja, you know it is a good question this, with the likes of FOSA, St John's Ambulance, unfortunately the relocation dented their effectiveness. Though they were revived later, but not to the same degree of participation. But when these organisations existed in the Barracks, they were thriving.⁴¹

Naddie agreed that involvement in civic organisation declined in the early years following resettlement because there was 'no organisation.' He was involved in the St John's Ambulance at the Magazine Barracks but gave that up completely because the person who organised the meetings settled in Bayview whereas he settled in Westcliff and the lack of proper transport and time meant that he found it impossible to get involved. He explained how important the Drama Hall had been, but in Chatsworth, when they arrived 'there weren't even libraries.'⁴² For practical reasons, it was easier to organise at the Magazine Barracks. In Chatsworth various factors conspired to make such civic involvement difficult. But after a decade or so, once people had settled in their new lives, and were rooted, more and more indigenous organisations emerged.

Although the lifestyle at the Magazine Barracks underwent dramatic changes in Chatsworth, interviewees believe that it did not change completely. They felt that, former residents of the Magazine Barracks were different from other residents of Chatsworth who they believed completely lost their sense of attachment to the places that they came from. Many people who came from the Magazine Barracks point out that, in areas where former residents settled alongside one another, it was common to find neighbours helping one another in difficult times. For example if a child showed talent in music, the neighbours raised money to send the child to India to study further. Thus, the notion of a Magazine Barracks community helped them to cope in Chatsworth.

An important way of preserving the culture was seeking the opinion of one's elders. For example, Vassie, who spoke extensively about how his work in the MBRA has led to his belief that 'that 'ninety per cent' of people from the Magazine Barracks who settled in Chatsworth have progressed 'tremendously,' highlighted that they did not do this as individuals but as a community. At the Magazine Barracks the advice of seniors was important when making decisions. In Chatsworth, many younger people continued to seek the counsel of elders. Vassie added that even though his father was a well-respected elder at the Magazine Barracks, to whom many came for advice, sometimes, when making decisions about his life in Chatsworth, he would consult someone more senior to him.⁴³ For him this was one of the factors that helped residents to adapt to the challenges of relocation and an example of how they 'progressed in Chatsworth as a community.' Kisten also pointed out that up until today he is still called upon for assistance due to his reputation in the community as leader.⁴⁴

However Vassie acknowledged that the intensity of this lifestyle has faded over the years. Speaking about the 'brotherhood' in the Magazine Barracks, he said:

But that kind of brotherhood still carried on, in the early part of our years in Chatsworth. Later when the older guys passed away, either their children or their grandchildren, slowly that was evaporated. The same bondage that was there was kept for the older people but for the younger generation that evaporated slowly. Western style taking over and these guys don't have that bondage anymore.⁴⁵

In similar vein, Solly stated that when he grew up in Chatsworth this respect for seniors from the Magazine Barracks still existed but is lost in his children's generation. He explained

My youngest uncle is the only surviving uncle in 60s or 70s. He is from the old school, even at my age if I do something wrong he will scold me. But my sons will ask 'What is his problem?' because they don't understand. Because I understand where the common resources, common things, you know. But my children or my cousin's children don't know and don't appreciate that kind of interference.⁴⁶

However for Vassie, all has not been lost. Although it has faded, he said that up until today, the bond between former residents of the Magazine Barracks has never really been broken and that when he meets a former resident or one of their children at a shopping centre, for example, they will always stop and greet him respectfully. Residents from other places who settled in Chatsworth 'don't have this type respect.' While the younger generation live a very different lifestyle and 'do not follow their culture as seriously' as their parents did, he said that there is still a 'type of bond that binds us together... If you speak to them [children and grandchildren of former residents] negatively about the barracks they flare up (get angry) because that blood is still there.'⁴⁷ In this regard he sees residents of the Magazine Barracks as unique because according to him, other residents of Chatsworth have lost their sense of attachment to the places they came from. The work of the MBRA since the later 1990s has helped to consolidate this attachment.

Comparative Memory

When discussing the social and cultural impact of moving to Chatsworth former residents of the Magazine Barracks also exhibited notions of what Trotter and Uusihakala referred to as ‘comparative memory,’ where their respondents compared life before forced removals to life after forced removals. In this instance, they ignored or downplayed the disadvantages of their settlements before forced removals, which they then contrasted with the settlements after relocation. For example, when asked about poverty or violence in the Magazine Barracks, former residents explained that although it existed, it was under control, unlike what happened in Chatsworth. In the Magazine Barracks, poverty was described fondly as something that promoted sharing and communal bonds. In Chatsworth, poverty in the initial years was described by something that was unfamiliar and created unbearable hardship.

Depictions of violence were also described in this way. Referring to the stigmatisation of former residents of the Magazine Barracks, because of associations with thugs and violence, Vassie explained:

we had everything. We had good, bad, the ugly. We had professionals in education, in sports, in all fields and we also had thugs, we had gambling. We had everything. But everything there was controlled within that ambit. Nothing went out.⁴⁸

As seen earlier in the descriptions of the Perumal family’s conversion, Naddie described the gangsterism in the Magazine Barracks as structured and organised. When he described the Dirty

Dozen he stated ‘nobody could touch them, they were terrible. When I say terrible, they were all boxers, no fighting with sticks and knives like now, like the cowards, [they were] all boxers. It was a fair fight, they’ll have, a fair fight.’ He argued that when they came to Chatsworth and were split up, the discipline fell away. There was ‘no unity’, they started going their own way and there were fights between rival gangs.

He also stated that, at the Magazine Barracks, parents did not worry if their children joined gangs because ‘they knew they were in good hands’ and ‘the gangsters knew what they were doing. Because they knew each other.’ ‘There was a good side and a bad side, but that place that was a lovely place’ but ‘you won’t find people just fighting for nothing, no!’

The gangsters, big gangsters too, they don’t just fight for nothing unless there was a good reason. They were very helpful like, they help each other, you know I told you they were like a community like, like one family like. They never see somebody getting hurt or falling down or something, they take him home put him in bed. That is what they do, they help each other. But here in Chatsworth, all that is gone.⁴⁹

Mrs Pillay’s description of festivals in the Magazine Barracks depicted this commemorative memory as well. She said that they celebrated in a ‘good’ way which she contrasted to way in which the youth celebrate in night clubs today.⁵⁰

Generation born in Chatsworth

For Kiru, who was born in Chatsworth after his family left the Magazine Barracks, the notion of a Magazine Barracks identity played an important part of his life. He said that he is proud to have

come from that the Magazine Barracks and that he also felt blessed to have grown up in Chatsworth where notions of ‘culture’ and ‘community’ mattered. ‘Where I live now [Westville], there is no community; socially, culturally, faithwise, family wise there is no continuity. Because we live sort of an alien environment compared to what we had in Chatsworth.’ He added that he ‘felt enriched by that experience of Chatsworth, of friends of family, of community.’ Although Kiru’s decision to leave Chatsworth as an adult was voluntary, his descriptions of his move from Chatsworth to Westville illustrate a similar theme that emerges from former residents’ explanations of their move from the Magazine Barracks to Chatsworth. Like former residents of the Magazine Barracks, he romanticised notions of poverty. Poverty in Chatsworth was described by him as a factor that fostered closeness with neighbours and created ‘community,’ which he then contrasted with the environment in Westville. Subsistence measures to cope with poverty were also described romantically by Kiru, for example when he described the business that his granny started:

And also my granny found the niche because there were no shops around. We went there for bread, we went there for milk. If nobody worked, chances are we would have made it. Now I buy Dania, but then I would have never dreamt of it. That self sustaining environment was lost but we became considerably wealthier.⁵¹

Interestingly his account of how material progression in the present is associated with loss of community and poverty in the past is a nostalgic one:

I have very good memories largely through these conversations with my parents. But also you know we kept photographs and we kept heritage of storytelling going. So when I tell

stories now I feel that I have a good gene pool of storytelling, it may not be the most interesting stories to my children but I think it is a valuable historical record.⁵²

Kiru's parents were diligent about keeping photographs and telling him stories about the Magazine Barracks.

Other children of former residents, who were born in Chatsworth such as Solly, have a slightly different take on this theme. Unlike Kiru, Solly explained that the notion of a 'Magazine Barracks identity' was not that important to him when growing up or today. He noted that in this regard he differed from many of his friends who were born in Chatsworth after their parents left the barracks. For example, asked if a Magazine Barracks identity existed in Westcliff, where he grew up, Solly stated:

Ja, ja they did, they did, not me personally, but in general. Although my cousin Sam was the same age as me, but he was more, what's the word, patriotic, to the Magazine Barracks. I wasn't, like if I met somebody I wouldn't go out of my way to tell them I was from the Barracks. But he would, and he will say you know whose son this is and he would make an issue of it of trying to tell people who I was.⁵³

Solly's explanation is also interesting in that unlike Kiru, he still resides in Chatsworth but depicts the same idea. For Solly, it is not movement out of Chatsworth to a place such as Westville, but rather the changing environment in Chatsworth that led to a decline in a communal lifestyle, which he lamented.

On a Saturday morning we would go to each family's house and cut the lawn and clean up. If this month is your turn all of us get together and paint that house. Although we were each independent, the co-dependence was there. This was because of the lack of economic resources. But now all of us, the third generation, we all live our own lives. We have our own lives. What the economic interdependence was brought from lack of economic opportunities. The independence now, is ironically gained through the economic opportunities.⁵⁴

Asked about his memories about Chatsworth he answered, 'it has changed hey, it has change a hell of a lot.' He explained that if he left Chatsworth, he would not want to go back because, 'In the last ten years it has just gone, become very ugly.' This is partly material progression but also, 'To get rich you need to trample people on the way. They had no qualms about destroying the environment.'⁵⁵

However, he had pleasant memories of the Chatsworth that he grew up in. His memories are also important in understanding what the notion of Magazine Barracks meant to the generation born in Chatsworth. Speaking about the pride that other children of former barracks residents born in Chatsworth feel, Solly explained:

Also I remember those days if you were from the barracks and you got into a fight and other guys knew you were from the barracks and they were from the barracks, you had support. And the non-barracks guys, they would fright for the barracks guys.⁵⁶

One limitation of this study was locating women's voices. While some women played a very important role in promoting the memory and legacy of the Magazine Barracks, including Pusphan Murugan, women from the Magazine Barracks who were approached by the researcher for interviews were reluctant to speak.⁵⁷ Instead, they referred me to men or to Murugan herself. The women who were interviewed spoke about many issues but were reluctant to speak about gender and when probed, their answers were very short and dismissive. In this regard they differed from some of the male respondents who were keen to speak about gender and initiated discussions around the topic.

For Deena, the Magazine Barracks was characterised by wives being 'submissive' to husbands. This changed in Chatsworth in the initial years because women had to go to work to cope with increased expenses. 'Only if the husband, worked they can't manage.' At the Magazine Barracks, 'the wife was a good housewife and the husband was the man of the house.' As wives became self-supporting they were exposed to different situations and many became independent. In his role as a religious leader and marriage councillor, Deena found that 'a lot of men were struggling with this, families struggling, children struggling. Lot of guys say "my wife was not like this (at the Magazine Barracks)." Bottom line: in Magazine Barracks, we lived as a family, very difficult to hear a man complain about his wife.'⁵⁸ He added:

See, our Indian culture, at that time, did not allow the women to go and work because the husband – he's the prime figure in the home, he's the stalwart in the home and, according to our Indian culture, the man of the house is the priest of the house and one of his prime responsibilities is to cater for his family, so the mother took care of her

responsibility of bringing up the children while the father will go and labour and come provide for the family. That culture was there right until the time we left for Chatsworth – and came into a modern culture, where the husband sits at home and the wife goes to work. It's reverse, it's so sad. ⁵⁹

While women undoubtedly entered the labour force in large numbers from the 1960s, others took a different view of the outcome. As noted in the previous chapter, Kiru spoke of the crucial role played by his grandmother in ensuring the family's survival. For Kiru,

One story I would like to tell is the story of women because I was always surrounded by powerful women, women who worked, women who fought, women who bashed men (if necessary). If you look at the history of the garment workers, clothing and textiles. If you look at the role of Indian women, there is a trajectory. Going back from, let us say, the urban working class, women entered the working class.... Men suffered from things like gambling and alcoholism. My father was an exception to this which was good for us. But, by and large the families around us suffered from things like this. These were deeply wounding processes but they also robbed men of masculinity. They were very dehumanising. The forced relocation meant that men had it very difficult. Even in the work place so many men took to alcohol. It is not an excuse but it is a sort of explanation for the male psyche. So if the wife was not there to take the wages, all the money would be gone. The forced relocation meant that men would stand behind powerless and see their homes getting destroyed. Men beat their own wives because they were getting beaten up somewhere else. Women would collect the wages because the husbands would gamble it away.⁶⁰

Sport

In the Magazine Barracks, sport was central to residents' life and leisure. Interviewees referred to the importance of the nearby beach, which promoted swimming, and the sport grounds where residents played soccer and cricket, while others participated in activities such as weightlifting, boxing, and cycling. The Magazine Barracks produced sporting legends, the best known probably being Sam Ramsamy, who led the move to boycott apartheid sports in the 1970s.⁶¹ As was the case with other activities, when residents arrived in Chatsworth, many did not continue playing sport due to the increased amount of time spent travelling to and from work, the lack of facilities, and the costs involved. Some interviewees explained that they would only return from work at night and would be too tired for leisure and sport. Although many of the clubs were disbanded, former residents united to form new clubs. Young Clydes, named after Young Clydes district in the Magazine Barracks and Buccaneers which existed in the Magazine Barracks were the two major clubs.

Jay, who played for the Young Clydes Soccer Club and thereafter served as chairman for many years, stated that when they arrived in Chatsworth, some members stopped playing soccer and some clubs were disbanded. The remaining players were absorbed into clubs such as Young Clydes and Buccaneers. Those that remained continued to thrive in Chatsworth. Indeed, soccer was the means by which Jay kept contact with his old friends from the Magazine Barracks who settled in different parts of Chatsworth.

In 1965, residents of Chatsworth established the Chatsworth Football Association (CFA) and teams from the Magazine Barracks were very successful. In 1968, the finals for every trophy on offer at the CFA were contested by two teams from the Magazine Barracks, Young Clydes and Buccaneers, with Young Clydes winning every final. This happened again in 1973. Today, Young Clydes remains one of the major teams in Chatsworth. Jay left recently to give a younger member the chance to chair the team.⁶² One of the most famous teams in the CFA was Dimes which was established in 1966 for members of the trade union DIMES.⁶³ Young Clydes came to be regarded as a ‘nursery’ for Dimes.

Many other residents spoke of the quality of soccer played by residents of the Magazine Barracks and their children, including Vassie and Danny. Danny, explained that he was a successful player for some of the clubs that existed in the Magazine Barracks, and even when he stopped playing he continued to attend important matches as a spectator. Despite not settling in Chatsworth, he explained that soccer kept him in touch with his old friends from the Magazine Barracks.

We kept in touch, no phones, phones were rare those days, not many of us had phones. But where I worked in 1961, I started working for Marshall Industrial in that time many Barracks’ youth also worked for Marshall Industrial. Those of them had moved to Chatsworth would give me the current happenings, about the football club, now we were fanatical about soccer. We had one of the best soccer players, to emerge from Magazine Barracks. At one time there were five members from Magazine Barracks in the South African team, and that will indicate to you the high standards.⁶⁴

Danny's reference to the 'South African team' refers to the South African Indian team. Provincial Indian teams competed for the Sam China Cup every two years and a composite national team was chosen at the end of the tournament.

Concluding remarks

Writing on the impact of forced removals on residents of Lady Selborne in Gauteng, who were forcibly resettled in Ga-Rankuwa, Kgari-Masondo argues that 'a factor that has been ignored is the impact that forced removals have had on people's perception of themselves.' Kgari-Masondo's research found that displaced residents of Lady Selborne, who were removed from a fertile area where landownership had economic, religious, and social significance, expressed a sense of lost identity and sense of self. They had a cultural and religious respect for their land and the ways in which they utilised land for subsistence agriculture were important to their sense of self.⁶⁵ However the Magazine Barracks largely different to places such as Lady Selbourne, where people had formed an attachment to their land over centuries. The Magazine Barracks was an overcrowded utatitarian form of mass housing to provide cheap accommodation. It indented to function as a temporary solution to a labour shortage as the city of Durban expanded. It its residents who came from backgrounds with a rich rich religions and cultural heritage aimed to transmute that space into a home. Likewise, the ways in which former residents adapted to their forced relocation too was unique.

The residents of the Magazine Barracks, who were removed from a closely confined space where they lived alongside one another in structured districts, see their move as affecting them in

multifaceted ways. Forced removals are portrayed by some as a force that transformed residents of the Magazine Barracks from living a communal lifestyle characterised by sharing and a strong cultural and religious tradition, to a more 'modern' lifestyle, features of which were the nuclear family and greater individualisation, and loss of the vernacular. They felt displaced and dislocated by the move and as soon as they could, set about trying to remake the institutional structures of community, including places of worship, sports teams, and vernacular schools. However, this move also coincided with improved employment and education opportunities, and some interviewees, and more especially their children, were able to take advantage of these opportunities to achieve economic mobility.

This helps to explain why the respondents were ambivalent during the interviews, describing the GAA in entirely negative terms and later in the same interview noting that the move to Chatsworth was beneficial. Mrs Pillay's account is a good example. She was happy to move and excited to get a larger house because at the Magazine Barracks she was part of a large extended family living in a tiny house. Living conditions were 'much better' in Chatsworth. Yet, she misses the barracks because 'there was much more talent in the Magazine Barracks.' By talent, she meant the Tamil schools, dancing, singing, sport and joyous celebrations. She described her life at the Magazine Barracks as 'very wonderful' because of this rich 'culture' but remains happy that they moved to Chatsworth.⁶⁶ Mrs Pillay and most residents felt that the move to Chatsworth resulted in material progression for some, but at the expense of the vibrancy of life and the close-knit community that they remember as having existed at the Magazine Barracks.

In terms of conversion, the Magazine Barracks community reflected the wider community of Chatsworth's relationship with Christianity. There has been substantial conversion to Pentecostal Christianity, perhaps as many as 40 per cent, although accurate figures are not available because the 2011 census did not record religious affiliation. Hinduism is no longer the glue that holds the Magazine Barracks community together. However, it was also evident during the course of my interviews and ethnographic research that religion is not divisive or a source of tension. There is acceptance and tolerance, partly because members of virtually every household and family have converted, and because they coalesce around being from the Magazine Barracks.

¹ John Kisten, interviewed 12 December 2012.

² Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.

³ Aroo Naicker, interviewed 7 February 2013.

⁴ Aroo Naicker, interviewed 7 February 2013.

⁵ Sintha Munien, interviewed 14 February 2012.

⁶ Sintha Munien, interviewed 14 February 2012.

⁷ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

⁸ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

⁹ Victor Morgan, interviewed 4 April 2013.

¹⁰ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.

¹¹ Vassie Muthen address to Durban Municipal Pensioners Club meeting 23 January 2013.

¹² Mrs Pillay interviewed 15 April 2013.

¹³ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.

¹⁴ Mrs Pillay interviewed 15 April 2013.

¹⁵ John Kisten, interviewed 12 December 2012.

¹⁶ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.

¹⁷ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

¹⁸ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.

¹⁹ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.

²⁰ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.

²¹ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 December 2012.

²² Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.

²³ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.

²⁴ In the face of massive conversions to Christianity, there has been criticism of this view by some Hindu leaders. For example, in 2009, Thillayvel Naidoo, an executive member of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha and a Tamil linguist, said that Muthen's approach was 'tricks to entice gullible people to convert to Christianity. Those who reject their religion lose the right to be completely Indian. Muthen is distracting people with his Tamil preaching and hymns. Just because he preaches in Tamil does not mean anything, and I condemn it.' See 'Ignorance, Hate, or just another manifestation of the new NRI Sangh syndrome?' Johndayal's blog, 30 April 2009, Available at <https://johndayal.wordpress.com/category/hinduism/>. (Accessed 22 November 2015).

²⁵ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.

²⁶ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.

²⁷ Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.

²⁸ In 1946, 88 per cent were Hindu, 10 per cent Christian and 2 per cent Muslim. See Naidoo, 'Survey,' 42.

²⁹ See Pillay. *Religion at the Limits?*

³⁰ In 1921 Hindus constituted 65 per cent of the population of Indians in South Africa while Christians constituted 5 per cent. By 1960 Hindus represented 68 and Christians 7 per cent. By the 2001 census Christians made up 24 per cent of Indians in South Africa. The 2011 census did not account for religion, but the Hindu component of the Indian population is an estimated 40 per cent.

³¹ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

³² Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

³³ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.

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- ³⁴ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ³⁵ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ³⁶ John Kisten, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ³⁷ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ³⁸ See Rajend, 'Language Shift.'
- ³⁹ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴⁰ Mrs Pillay interviewed 15 April 2013.
- ⁴¹ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 December 2012.
- ⁴² Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ⁴³ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴⁴ John Kisten, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴⁵ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴⁶ Solly Kuppan, interviewed 30 November 2012.
- ⁴⁷ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴⁸ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.
- ⁴⁹ Naddie Perumal, interviewed 5 February 2013.
- ⁵⁰ Mrs Pillay interviewed 15 April 2013.
- ⁵¹ Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.
- ⁵² Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.
- ⁵³ Solly Kuppan, interviewed 30 November 2012.
- ⁵⁴ Solly Kuppan, interviewed 30 November 2012.
- ⁵⁵ Solly Kuppan, interviewed 30 November 2012.
- ⁵⁶ Solly Kuppan, interviewed 30 November 2012.
- ⁵⁷ See Murugan, *Lotus Blooms*.
- ⁵⁸ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.
- ⁵⁹ Focus Group discussion conducted by Hannah Carrim and Goolam Vahed 21 March 2009.
- ⁶⁰ Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.
- ⁶¹ See Ramsamy, *Reflections of a Life*.
- ⁶² Jay Pillay, interviewed 9 April 2003.

⁶³ For an account of the establishment of the CFA and affiliated teams see Logan Naidoo, 'Kicking Back: Soccer in Chatsworth,' in *The Making of a South African Township*, ed, Goolam Vahed and Ashwin Desai (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013).

⁶⁴ Danny Pillay, interviewed 28 December 2012.

⁶⁵ Kgari-Masondo, 'A Superstitious Respect for the Soil,' 250.

⁶⁶ Mrs Pillay, interviewed 15 April 2013.

Conclusion

This thesis focused on the impact of forced removals on the former residents of the Magazine Barracks, the majority of whom were settled in the newly created township of Chatsworth. It examined the making of the Magazine Barracks' community over almost eight decades, the systematic forced removals which were put in motion in the 1950s but eventually implemented in the early 1960s, and the remaking of community in Chatsworth during the formative years, roughly until around 1980, when there was little by way of amenities and other aspects of 'community' that had been lost in the removal from the Magazine Barracks.

An examination of the above mentioned aspects of the forced removals, and the experiences and the memories of that process on some former residents of the Magazine Barracks, shows some of the ways in which one group of South Africans are negotiating the past in the present and how the various laws imposed upon them affected their past lives and remain powerful in influencing their identities in the present. In this sense, History is more than just documenting what happened in the past. It is a living part of people's sense of who they are, and it is important to examine how, and why, the past is reworked and remembered in particular ways in the present.

The so-called 'miracle' of South Africa's transformation, which now appears to be unravelling two decades into the post-apartheid period, has had very different outcomes for South Africans and the country remains highly stratified. This makes it all the more important in the present juncture to critically engage with the past and analyse how various structural forces have come to shape people's identities. This thesis sought to make a modest contribution to this endeavour by

examining past changes through the lives and perspectives of some of those who lived through this period.

The story of Indian municipal workers since the 1870s shows how their living conditions were constantly shaped by the racist capitalist forces which so fundamentally determined the trajectory of South Africa's social, economic, and political growth. After Natal's incorporation into the Union of South Africa in 1910, the factors that governed and restricted Indians and Africans living and working conditions not only remained but the laws that aimed to segregate the city's Indian and African populations intensified in subsequent decades. The Magazine Barracks was primarily established to enable the DCC to have a cheap and manageable labour force at their disposal. However, residents made it into their home. Indian municipal employees were not passive victims, but adapted to the circumstances imposed upon them by creating a unique lifestyle within the Magazine Barracks, giving names to the various sections to reflect sub-identities, creating religious and cultural institutions and structures, producing a rich sporting and academic heritage, and taking advantage of their location within the city to supplement their income in creative ways. While actual living conditions, as documented by contemporary studies, differ from residents' memories, such nostalgia is not unusual.

Although many outsiders assign pejorative connotations to the term 'barracks' and its residents, for its former residents it is a term that is revered and holds special value because it is a reminder of their 'humble beginnings,' as some respondents put it, and how so many of them 'progressed' despite their difficult circumstances. This supposedly intrinsic quality of seeking to succeed against all odds helped the residents to cope with life at the Magazine Barracks and they felt that

it also helped many to improve themselves materially in Chatsworth. However, it was not individual success but the community working together which helped uplift many in the process. Respondents describe their family histories as a kind of ‘rags to riches’ story. This ‘success’ and progress is crucial to the identities of interviewees.

The former residents of the Magazine Barracks were also keen to emphasise that it was impossible for an outsider to understand what the barracks meant to them, particularly the passion and camaraderie that existed there. That may be the case, but in addition to one-on-one interviews, I interacted with former residents during the weekly meetings of the Durban Municipal Pensioners’ Club which deepened my appreciation of their links to the Magazine Barracks. It was apparent that respondents were selective in what they chose to highlight as that is how they would like the narrative represented. A key theme was to ‘honour’ their forebears’ sacrifices and upward mobility.

Despite the passage of five decades since relocation, interviewees continue to refer to the Magazine Barracks as ‘home.’ In his study of white former citizens of Rhodesia, Uusihakala wrote that ‘nostalgic reminiscence and perpetual self-reflection was a major preoccupation in the ex-Rhodesian community. Reflexivity about a sense of belonging to a place as well as to a culturally and historically distinct community seems everywhere to be intensified when people are displaced from what they conceive of as their rightful place of belonging, their Homeland.’¹

The Magazine Barracks produced a powerful shared experience, albeit a racially exclusive one in relation to Africans, but also one where the former residents of the barracks are keen to counter

the stereotypes that other Indians have of them, associating them with ‘thuggery’ and ‘violence’ and the general negative qualities of being working class. They ignored and downplayed the disadvantages of their lives before forced removals and portrayed the barracks in a positive light as a place of prestige to have come from.

During the 1960s when the Group Areas proclamations were implemented in Durban, the Magazine Barracks was home to nearly 10 000 people. Apart from the practical benefits of living near to the city centre where municipal employees worked, residents resented vacating what had been their home for so many years. This they had in common with the millions of others affected by the GAA. Some former residents stated that what alarmed them most was being split from their neighbours who they regarded as family. Houses with running water and electricity eventually appealed to some following their relocation to Chatsworth, even though most residents were unhappy about being forcibly evicted from their homes. The NIC’s ineffectiveness in challenging Group Areas, and the role played by those deemed to be ‘leaders’ at the Magazine Barracks in actually facilitating the move to Chatsworth minimised the anger and possible large-scale protests by residents, many of whom seemed to take the position that since they had ‘no choice’ they should make the best of their situation.

This in itself was not unusual in the way Group Areas was implemented nationally. While removals conjure up terrible memories among victims, there were pockets of resistance but little mass systematic protest. Dubow writes with regard to Sophiatown that ‘the resistance to removals was neither uniform nor constant. The state prised people out by driving wedges between Africans and coloureds, as well as landlords, tenants, and squatters. For the latter, the acquisition of matchbox

brick houses and waterborne sewerage represented a material gain, whatever the ensuing loss of freedom and community.’² While there were no racial distinctions at the Magazine Barracks, there were class distinctions (even though everyone was ostensibly regarded as ‘working class’), and this was reflected in the different standards of accommodation, wages, and living conditions, as well as family size, which made the move to Chatsworth tolerable for many.

The physical violation of their community initially made residents of the Magazine Barracks angry and resulted in a sense of powerlessness as well as disorientation in the new township. Group Areas did not just mean that individuals were thrown out of their homes, but entire communities and a way of life which was created over decades were suddenly reduced to shreds. It is thus perfectly understandable that those who were displaced spoke of their losses and described the GAA as a destructive force. Despite getting their own homes, Chatsworth was initially a bare housing scheme with no amenities. Houses were plagued with structural problems, roads were inadequate and dangerous gangs flourished. The extended family system was altered, the cost of living increased considerably, especially due to inadequate and higher transport costs, and many former residents were separated from neighbours that they had known for several generations. However, in the long term, residents were able to extend their homes and benefit from expanded educational and other opportunities, as well as running water and electricity.

The impact of the GAA, brutal and inhumane as its implementation was, is thus complex. It clearly had profound consequences for those removed. Dubow notes that the enforcement of Group Areas provisions helped the government achieve its ‘primary objective of dividing communities according to presumed racial and cultural hierarchies.’³ Yet, Dubow also points out that some

people benefited from the relocations, despite the short term disruption to their lives, due to improved housing and running water, or better amenities such as schools. It could also be argued that these gains resulted in the removees focusing ‘on the tangible benefits rather than the larger picture of overall racial rule.’ He added that ‘in subsequent years this made generalised resistance to apartheid domination all the more difficult to mount.’⁴ As Ann Kelk Mager and Maanda Mulaudzi write, after the initial panic in Natal, ‘the state’s promise of new middle-class neighbourhoods for Indians softened the blow, and poorer residents looked forward to the prospect for better housing.’ This included those who were tenants of rack-renting landlords and who were given sub-economic homes in Merebank and Chatsworth. Despite its high profile in the 1950s, the NIC failed ‘to create awareness of the political significance of group areas.’⁵

The same thing happened to the middle classes who acquired homes in newly-established suburbs like Reservoir Hills, Parlock, and Westville, where they turned their segregated suburbs into places of wealth and warmth. The creation of places like Chatsworth helped to forge and entrench a sense of Indianness. Group Areas’ restructuring of the geographical landscape brought large numbers of people of the same ‘race’ into closely proximity. Not only were people living together, but all-Indian schools, police stations, hospitals, and sporting clubs nurtured this racial identity. Edward Ramsamy writes that one of the consequences of racial segregation was the failure to forge non-racialism and a persistent fear of majority rule amongst Indians as non-racial democracy loomed. Although there have been concerted efforts amongst political leaders from both groups, Indians and Africans, there is distrust and suspicion which exist influence by decades of separation enforced by segregated living spaces. While the ANC embraced ‘non-racialism’ that emphasised a common South African identity in order to provide a counter-rhetoric to the racially exclusive

doctrine of apartheid, it had difficulty in garnering support from the Indian and Coloured communities during the transition to democratic rule.’⁶ This was due to fears of majority rule in terms of the likely impact of policies such as affirmative action.

An important aspect of this study has been not just to assess the impact of Group Areas but investigate how the forced removals are remembered and whether and how they are commemorated. Despite the vast body of literature on forced removals, until recently the perspectives of ordinary people were largely ignored, with most emphasis on government policy and an excessive focus on victimhood. Museums such as the District Six Museum in Cape Town and South End Museum in Port Elizabeth allow people to tell their own stories.⁷ Much thought and planning has been put into these projects, and they try to capture memories of anti-apartheid activism and the effects of forced removals through interviews, photographs and newspaper reports. In the South End Museum one gets the sense of a multi-racial, close-knit community destroyed by Group Areas.

What of Chatsworth? One cannot speak of ‘Chatsworth’ as a homogenous unit but rather of attempts to institutionalise memories of the Magazine Barracks through the MBRA. The MBRA was established in 1997 in response to the new ANC land restitution programme. The act which aimed to ‘produce reconciliation and “healing” of the country through the return of, or compensation for, lost land rights’ and was administered by the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights (CRLR).⁸ As Anna Bohlin argues, although the CRLR aimed to address the past suffering and injustice carried in living memory by those who were personally affected, the impact of the commission has been academically analysed almost exclusively in terms of its legal,

administrative, and organisational dimensions. Missing from the literature are the ways in which land claims have led to people engaging with the past in new ways, and consequently the production of new memories.

In order to claim compensation for land lost, those who were forcibly displaced under apartheid were required to provide documentary evidence of their dispossession. Many people provided old photographs and oral testimonies situating their personal experience of displacement in a grander narrative of GAA removals. For Bohlin, one important ‘side effect’ of this process has been the production of a collective memory. Bohlin’s study of Kalk Bay, a small fishing community in the Western Cape, found that since only a small number of residents were forced to relocate (around 120 people, mainly Coloureds and Indians), many residents were not even aware that Kalk Bay was affected by Group Areas and the land claim process was important in producing a new collective memory.⁹

In the case of the Magazine Barracks, as with other areas affected by the GAA, this was a lived experience for thousands. Even before the ANC government’s land restitution programme there were active attempts amongst former residents to preserve some form of Magazine Barracks memory despite, and because of obstacles such as the separation of neighbours. The recreation of the Chatsworth Magazine Barracks Shree Vishnu Temple and the naming of the Depot Road Memorial School are examples. Soccer clubs and other social ‘clubs’ such as school committees were ways in which residents attempted to maintain the bonds and linkages that had existed at the Magazine Barracks. The activities of the MBRA are different in several ways. In the first instance, these identities are being produced in a different context. For example, in the post-apartheid period,

there are fears of marginalisation amongst Indians and this process provides a means of communal identity. Also different is that over the decades many of the former residents of the Magazine Barracks acquired professional qualifications and other skills and this social capital was important in organising the community and preparing relevant documentation. The various mass meetings of residents over the past 15 years helped to forge a collective memory amongst former residents who were able to actively reminisce with one another about the ‘good old days.’ Nostalgic recollections of the values and benefits of communal living at the Magazine Barracks and a narrative of progression and upliftment of community were promoted at such meetings.

Leaders in the MBRA who spoke of the origins of the association situate its existence in the collective drive to help one another in any way possible; a trait that they say existed at the Magazine Barracks. This is evident in Vassie’s recollection of the origins of the MBRA:

Then when we came to Chatsworth, then we fought, we fought very hard, the Magazine Barracks Remembrance Society fought very hard. It was one day when I was sitting here at home, and then a call from the late Captain Marimuthu. He said, ‘Ah what are we doing, we are sitting back and not even thinking of collecting some sort of compensation for being forcibly removed from Magazine Barracks.’ And he put me on to a female lawyer, Samba who was from Magazine Barracks. As a young girl she was there and then she qualified as a lawyer, and then I phoned Danny, and then a long conversation and then with our late secretary, and we said we have to help those who are in need and cannot do this on their own. Our late secretary [Nelson Veerasamy]

and Danny together worked tooth and nail, they worked very hard, they worked very hard.¹⁰

Although forced removals were effected in the early 1960s and the MBRA was only established in 1997, Vassie's narrative, and those of others, point to the idea of continuity. Vassie added that after they started the organisation they had to interview families to get the details and documentary evidence from each of those that were resettled. This was a mammoth undertaking and members of the committee personally conducted interviews with those who were displaced. Kisten pointed out that it would have cost thousands of rand for each family if they had got outsiders to compile the documentation and that is why they volunteered. For example, Deena provided his services as a commissioner of oaths and Danny would leave his business early to help sort out documents.¹¹ Kisten said that they did it 'out of love for our community.... We got the documents, we went out of our way to make sure they were in order, and we never charged our people... You will go throughout the world and you will never find a community like that.'¹²

In 1998 the association organised sessions at the New Bethesda Church Hall, the Chatsworth Youth Centre, and the Greenvale Primary School to conscientise former residents about the process and to help them prepare their applications.¹³ Representatives of around 2 000 displaced households from the Magazine Barracks came forward and these applications were submitted to the KwaZulu Natal Lands Claims Commission on 17 December 1998 with payments made from 2003. Not everyone was happy as some claims were rejected and successful claimants were paid R20 000 each as opposed to the R50 000 paid to other claimants because they did not own the land at the Magazine Barracks.¹⁴ The human suffering was not given appropriate weight.

Although initiated for the purpose of land claims, the process and the MBRA became a platform to promote memory of the Magazine Barracks amongst a younger generation. Discussing the origins of the Association, Deena emphasised its importance in preserving bonds which once existed and the notion of one large Magazine Barracks ‘family,’ something that was lost because of their dispersal to various units in Chatsworth. While the idea of being a ‘family’ at the barracks is itself nostalgic, Deena believes that ‘we were no more that one family. Now to keep that thing going we started the Magazine Barracks Remembrance Association... to ‘get the people together, to come together to eat supper, keep that family unity.’¹⁵

The Association has several ideas to ensure that these memories will not be lost. One is to compile a book to remind future generations of ‘where they came from,’ in Kisten’s words. During the land claims procedure, many families had to dig into their past and tracked their ancestors and the history of their families. They also charted the financial improvements made by families after they settled in Chatsworth, which was seen as a story of triumph. Unfortunately, this process was delayed by the death of their secretary Nelson Veerasamy in 2008 and they have not been able to locate all the information which was gathered from these interviews. They were cooperative in the research process for the current study, and some saw it as a means to kick start their own project and use the information that I gathered.

Another project that the founders of the MBRA have in mind is to build a hall and house a museum within it. Deena said that,

Danny is looking for an area where we can purchase land – we want to bring back something in Chatsworth that would be a memory, a legacy, you know, that future generations will know where their grandparents and their parents came from – the Magazine Barracks – because that place where we lived, every person was very, very, very culturally, culturally orientated and it's so unfortunate that we were put into this place – Chatsworth – we've lost our culture.¹⁶

Respondents born at the Magazine Barracks and interviewed for this study, as well those who spoke during the many municipal pensioner meetings that I attended emphasised that the notion of a 'Magazine Barracks identity' was, and still is, important to them. This also applied to children of residents of the Magazine Barracks who were born in Chatsworth. For many of them, the Magazine Barracks remains a focal point of reference. For example, Kiru said that his parents and grandparents saw the Magazine Barracks as an 'exclusive club.' When they spoke to each other 'they reminisced about the districts in which they use to live.'¹⁷ While Kiru is open to people of all race, religious and class backgrounds, he too believes that there is that unidentifiable something that binds them together.

Most former residents believe that Group Areas destroyed their rich and close-knit community even while facilitating material progress for many and providing a solution to the severe overcrowding at the Magazine Barracks. Vassie and others believe that unlike most others who were resettled in Chatsworth, the former residents of the Magazine Barracks are unique in that they did not lose their attachment completely and that this has strengthened in recent years.

Kisten supported the notion of a Magazine Barracks identity which helped residents to overcome some of their challenges in Chatsworth in the past and the present: ‘if I hear someone [from Chatsworth] has a problem, I run to assist because we came from that humble beginnings. We have not forgotten our roots,’ he said in reference to his voluntary civic work in Chatsworth.¹⁸ Deena also said that the voluntary schools, medical clinic and feeding schemes which he runs today at no charge are the result of his upbringing at the Magazine Barracks and the ethos of community self-help that was ingrained in him by his father who always taught his children to serve others.¹⁹

While these sentiments are understandable, and the project to build a hall and museum is feasible, this is unlikely to happen in the short term. It is almost five years since I began this research and the idea was first mooted, but little progress has been made due to various factors. These includes a lack of funds to acquire land, waning enthusiasm once the land claims payments were made, and the fact that founder members are getting older and there is no ‘new blood’ emerging at leadership level. Members acknowledge that recent events failed to generate the same high levels of enthusiasm and attendance. The project remains ideologically attractive but will be hard to achieve.

¹Uusihakala, 'Memory Meanders,' 5.

² Dubow, *Apartheid*, 57.

³ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 59.

⁴ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 59.

⁵ Ann Kelk Mager and Maanda Mulaudzi, 'Popular Responses to Apartheid: 1948-c1975,' in *The Cambridge History of South Africa Volume 2 1885-1994*, edited Robert Ross, Anne Kelk Mager, Bill Nasson, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 386.

⁶ Edward Ramsamy, 'Between non-racialism and Multiculturalism: Indian Identity and Nation building in South Africa,' *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 98: 4 (2007): 468.

⁷ See Palesa Kadi, 'The Group Areas Act and Port Elizabeth's Heritage: A Study of Memorial Recollection in the South End Museum' (Master's diss., University of the Western Cape, 2007).

⁸ Anna Bohlin, 'Claiming Land and Making Memory: Engaging with the Past in Land Restitution' in *History Making and Present Day Politics: The Meaning of Collective Memory in South Africa*, ed. Hans Erik Stolten (Stockholm: Nordiska Afrika Institutet, 2007), 118.

⁹ Bohlin, 'Claiming Land,' 127-128.

¹⁰ Vassie Muthen, interviewed 12 December 2012.

¹¹ Focus Group discussion conducted by Hannah Carrim and Goolam Vahed 21 March 2009.

¹² John Kisten, interviewed 12 December 2012.

¹³ Carrim, 'History and Nostalgia,' 79.

¹⁴ Carrim, 'History and Nostalgia,' 79.

¹⁵ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.

¹⁶ Focus Group discussion conducted by Hannah Carrim and Goolam Vahed 21 March 2009.

¹⁷ Kiru Naidoo, interviewed 26 November 2012.

¹⁸ John Kisten, interviewed 12 December 2012.

¹⁹ Deena Muthen, interviewed 1 December 2012.

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