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"YOU CAN'T GO TO WAR WITHOUT SONG": PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY
MOBILIZATION IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“You Can’t Go to War Without Song”: Performance and Community Mobilization in
Post-Apartheid South Africa

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This dissertation examines the role of performance in the constitution of activist community from the vantage point of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), one of many social movements that emerged in the wake of South Africa’s democratic transition. The study begins with the premise that performance is integral to activism, constituting the very groundwork through which queries of justice occur. It updates historical scholarship on the complicated roles of anti-apartheid performances in South Africa, providing insight into shifting responses to challenges arising in the wake of democratic transition and the adoption of neoliberal economic policies. APF members actively adapted anti-apartheid songs and created new expressive forms to inform and comment on their struggles for access to water,

electricity, housing, education and health facilities, the costs of which have been prohibitive due to their privatization. Based on 16 months of fieldwork involving participant-observation, interviews, and archival research, I investigated adaptations of anti-apartheid performances to changing social dynamics including changes in activists' relationship with the state, articulation of gender issues, emerging class-consciousness, and intergenerational linkages. The project considers performance in its multiple dimensions, ranging from routine enactments that secure, sustain, or weaken political outcomes to more practiced creative expression. I show how routine negotiations and artistic displays shaped APF's collective identity. Furthermore, through an integrative bodily approach to the study of political performances, I consider sensory experiences and their mediation, revealing how these experiences influenced the mobilization activities that activists pursued. Particularly in moments of creative expression, sensory experiences generated positive associations that made collective political struggle desirable. In contrast, however, sensory experience also yielded aversions: combativeness generated stress, eroded solidarity, and alienated many APF members. With consideration of these varied effects, the dissertation provides an expansive analysis of mobilization, emphasizing the role of performance in the conduct of politics.

Dedication

“For our dead, not a moment’s silence, but a lifetime of struggle.” This refrain echoes through activist communities across the globe, including at the anti-G8 protests in Genoa, among Unión Patriótica activists in Colombia, and to honor an APF comrade who passed away in South Africa in 2012. I offer this work in memory of APF comrades who have passed on, including Comrades "Rose" and "Paballo."

Dedicated to ACB—*always*.

Dedicated to the grandmother who raised me, Victoria Adebanke Bedu—*Mama, I was born to know you, and call you by your name*. For my ancestors, and all those who watch over me.

*Listen more often to things than to beings
Tis the ancestors' breath when the fire's voice is heard
Tis the ancestors' breath in the voice of the waters
—adapted from Birago Diop's poem, "Breaths"
by Ysaye Maria Barnwell*

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A few weeks ago, I was processing a challenging moment with a friend. As I detailed frustrations, he began laughing. I immediately accused him of being callous. “Here I am on the verge of tears, and you are laughing,” I said. “Isn’t that the nature of our relationship?” He asked. “That you laugh at my pain?” I retorted. “No,” he responded, “that I laugh to keep you from crying.” With that statement, I started laughing too. I quickly forgot my tears as his response revealed farcical dimensions of the challenge I was experiencing. By emphasizing its laughable elements, his response allowed me to recover in good humor. This statement, “I laugh to keep you from crying,” stayed with me as illustrative of the innumerable and unexpected ways in which I have been supported in my graduate training and in completing my dissertation. Furthermore, the statement revealed just how entwined we, as individuals, become in one another’s lives to the extent of such receptive intersubjective emotional engagement. Such is the depth of gratitude I would like to offer at this juncture.

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I first became interested in examining political performance in South Africa upon viewing the documentary *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony* (2002) as an undergraduate. The film's focus on the role of freedom songs and political

dances in the country's anti-apartheid liberation struggle inspired my examination of performance within post-apartheid political collectives. I would like to offer my gratitude to the filmmakers, Lee Hirsch and Sherry Simpson-Dean, for the research they pioneered. I am also grateful for their support, collaboration, and generosity over the years. I am filled with hope for the work we will continue to do together. Peter Alegi is very much a part of that journey, and I am grateful for his investment in actualizing our shared visions for *Amandla!*

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Table of Contents

Abstract of the Dissertation	ii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	
Introduction	1
Part One: The Performance of Politics	46
Chapter One: Emergence and Post-Apartheid Political Formation	54
Chapter Two: Dignity and the Activist Sublime	92
Part Two: The Politics of Performance	136
Chapter Three: Freedom Songs	144
Chapter Four: Gendered Counter-Mobilization	178
Chapter Five: Youth, Performance, and Collective Activism	214
Conclusion	244
Bibliography	255
Curriculum Vitae	271

introduction

The World Cup Comes to South Africa (or “Where is the Budget for that?”)

On June 11, 2010, the opening day for the 19th FIFA World Cup held in Johannesburg, South Africa, members of the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) planned a mass rally in protest against the opulence of the event. Activists within the APF contested the World Cup as benefiting political and corporate elites at the expense of impoverished South Africans, such as themselves. The mass rally they planned would, according to their vision, disrupt the opening march, leverage international media presence, and draw attention to their struggles. In early planning, APF intended for 10,000 protesters to gather and march right up to the FNB opening stadium in Soweto. This number was later reduced to 5000 protesters upon a series of meetings to negotiate the march with the South African Police Service. On the day of the march, however, fewer than 50 people had gathered by 11:30AM, when the march was to have concluded.

Even with consideration of the numbers lost when road closures and traffic diversions blocked 9 of the 12 buses carrying protesters from getting to the venue, it was clear that expecting 5000 protesters had been particularly ambitious. Yet, there were moments in APF’s history when such turnouts were exceeded without difficulty. In 2002, APF mobilized more than 20,000 protesters in a procession targeting the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) convened by the United Nations in Johannesburg. This 2002 march, among the organization’s first

mass rallies, demonstrated the extent of support that the organization could summon earlier in its formation. By the time I came to know the APF between 2009 and 2010, such numbers were not assured and the World Cup march highlighted this lag.

There was a moment of uncertainty about how to proceed with diminished numbers, which nonetheless included APF activists from Soweto, Central Johannesburg, and Tshwane (Pretoria).¹ Those gathered also included students from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University), members of allied organizations such as the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front, Landless Peoples' Movement, and the One Voice of All Hawkers Association.² Also present were a researcher from the Netherlands, a documentary film crew from the United States, and this anthropologist. One APF organizer wanted to issue a statement that as buses were stuck in traffic, the march could not go on because the amount of people gathered "would not make an impact." Another organizer wanted to have the march anyway, deliver the memorandum of grievances and still make the statement that buses were stuck in traffic, which was why the march did not have that many people.

In the lull of internal decision making among organizers, those gathered were dancing the *toyitoyi* to APF's CD compilation of freedom songs, *Songs of the Working*

¹ Tshwane is the name of the Metropolitan Municipality to which Pretoria belongs, and there is an ongoing saga regarding changing the city's name to Tshwane as well.

² APF reached out to stadium hawkers who were banned from selling at the stadia during the World Cup due to two Special Measures Acts of 2006 that created exclusion zones surrounding stadia and fan parks.

*Class, Vol. 1.*³ A pair of large speakers, propped up on the bed of a truck, blasted songs including “isibhamu into yami,” which can be translated literally as “the gun is my thing.” Matt and Wesley,⁴ two members of the Immortal Art Group, a youth performance troupe from Quagga Estates in Tshwane, danced next to each other jumping from foot to foot with synchronized flair. Those around them swayed and offered their own grooves in response to the song. When the music was suddenly cut off, it interrupted a shared moment. Kanelo, an APF member also from Quagga Estates, had the microphone, and started singing the song’s leading line, perhaps to prolong the moment beyond its rupture. Before she could complete this line however, the large speakers offered a different song from the CD, “We Nyamazane (Yiyo Ehlal’ Ehlathini),” which refers to “an animal residing in the forest.” The group quickly found their bearings with the new song and resumed their *toyitoyi* inspired grooves.

To begin the day’s proceedings, Bongani, the first organizer who had initially wanted to cancel the march, asked those present to gather. He requested that someone lead a song.⁵ A young man who appeared to be in his late 20s, wearing a baseball cap and sweatshirt began the song, “Eli Lizwe logogo bethu, sizabalaza eli lizwe” (“this country belongs to our grandmothers, we are fighting for the country of

³ The *toyitoyi* is a protest dance form emphasizing jumps from foot to foot while simultaneously pumping one’s fist in the air. It combines movement and chant and was often used by unarmed protesters to intimidate armed soldiers and riot police of the apartheid government. Post-apartheid, it remains prominent in protest gatherings.

⁴ In order to protect the confidentiality of the activists with whom I worked, I either withhold names or use pseudonyms except in already published accounts, in oral history interviews that I did not conduct, and to maintain continuity with others’ interviews when my own accounts overlap. The latter exception usually involves public figures including organizers and facilitators.

⁵ In Zulu, he said “asishay’ ingoma Comrades,” which translated literally means “let’s hit (or strike up) a song, Comrades.”

our grandparents”). After a few songs, Kanelo from Quagga Estates requested speakers from organizations other than the APF to offer comments and support for the protest. As this was happening, the police drove up—they had been driving by the meeting point all morning. One officer asked John, an APF office bearer, for a private conversation. Other organizers joined them. After that consultation between the police and APF leaders, Bongani came to the microphone and announced that the police wanted us to have the march and so we were going to have a “symbolic march” up to the intersection of the main road, which was only around the corner. As we got to the main road, the police stood in one line blocking the marchers from going further. Activists’ speeches and songs addressed the stand-off. But the march eventually dispersed, leaving the bitter taste of disappointment with organizers regarding unfulfilled visions and potential.

In meetings, members often expressed frustration about the decline of the APF, and there was a pervasive feeling that the organization had passed its glory days. Some were hopeful that the collective spirit could be recaptured, while others were more cynical. In my very first research visit with APF members, which took place in a community called Bophelong in the Vaal region, a conversation ensued among two youth members. Tshepang, 24, felt that APF’s spirit had declined. APF had been immediately recognizable in the past, he said. When you wear a red t-shirt, people would know that this was the APF.⁶ Tshepang expressed concern that the organization’s performances no longer existed as strongly as before. “We could

⁶ Ironically, driving to Sharpeville from Bophelong, we came across a woman wearing the APF t-shirt. I wanted to stop her and ask about the shirt’s significance, but as we were driving, I didn’t have the opportunity to do so.

revise that,” a fellow activist, Prudence, 19, offered. In response to this, Tshepang queried, “where is the budget for that?”

Performance and Community Mobilization

In his concern with the strength of APF’s performances, Tshepang introduces a key consideration for this dissertation: the connections between performance and politics. Regarding this, the World Cup march demonstrated the intrinsic ties of protest to performance in the practice of many South African activist communities. Even as negotiations to actualize a protest event were taking place, those gathered sang and danced to freedom songs that also blasted prerecorded from speakers at various moments.

Performance often appears in community life not as isolated artistic forms of dance, separated from theatre, separated from music, separated from politics, but as an integrated expression that is politically meaningful. In South Africa, community performances, including freedom songs and accompanying dances, played a significant role in mass mobilizations to combat apartheid. Freedom songs and activist performances have not died with the apartheid regime, however, and such persistence reveals continued discontent among the country’s marginalized populations. Protest performances remain relevant as South Africans adapt anti-apartheid songs, slogans, and symbols to contemporary struggles, including those for economic equality.

While liberatory movements of the apartheid era converged around common condemnations of a repressive state, no such unity exists for struggles emerging

after apartheid. A profusion of political stances and strategies are evident in different struggles around class, racial, gender, and health inequities that developed in the wake of South Africa's transition. These struggles also offer divergent perspectives on the civic responsibilities of the state and strategies of opposition in relation to the state. This dissertation therefore examines the constitution of activist community when affinity and solidarity cannot be taken for granted.

In particular, I am concerned with how performance practices facilitate the cultivation of activist community. In addressing this concern from the vantage point of the APF, one of many social coalitions that emerged since South Africa's democratic transition, I am able to consider the role of performance in activist politics over a long time frame. APF served as an umbrella body that coordinated the collective activism of a fluctuating number of protest organizations in about 34 communities in the Johannesburg metropolitan area, which included Tshwane (Pretoria), the East Rand, and the Vaal. It was founded in July 2000, flourished in its protests over the years, but was essentially defunct by early 2011.

APF's story allows me to detail the eruption of politics, and to proceed further beyond incipience in order to examine the resulting processes of formation: once collectivities are formed, how are they sustained? Furthermore, how and why do activist formations stop working? While it does not address the eventual causes of APF's demise (as I was not present over the course of those ultimate events), the decline of the movement is a significant backdrop for the analyses I present. In its profile of the waning period of one social movement, the significance of activist community is therefore accentuated by its felt absence.

I argue that performance is not epiphenomenal to activism but rather constitutes the very groundwork through which queries of justice occur. Even with this felt decline, the relevance of performance for political formations can be perceived in the interpenetration of the everyday with the spectacular, for example, through the prominence of freedom songs, dances, visual representations, and other displays of creative refinement in protests. I examine these creative expressions, particularly the integration of freedom songs with protest dances, at length. Such attention benefits from approaches that emphasize performances as heightened communication distinct from the mundane.

Performance and Culturally-Specific Display

In a classic article on verbal artistic display, Richard Bauman (1975) draws on the work of Erving Goffman (1974) and Gregory Bateson (1972) to develop the idea of performance as a frame that is keyed through metacommunicative devices that let the audience know that all that is enclosed within such a frame is intended as performance.⁷ Bauman distinguishes the performance frame, noting that performance entails the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence. He adds that the performance—that is the skill and display of competence of the performer—is subject to audience evaluation. In addition, performance enhances experience; it “calls forth special attention to and heightened experience of the act of expression, and gives license to the audience to

⁷ While Bauman distinguishes the performance frame from that of literal communication, he takes care to list other frames, suggesting that there is a “range of possible interpretive frames within which communication may be couched” (1975:293). These include joking, insinuation, imitation, translation, and quotation.

regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity” (1975:293). In these ways, Bauman highlights features of performance as specialized creative expression. Such expression is culturally specific as each community has its manners of distinguishing or “keying” the performance frame (Bauman 1975: 295-296; see also Ahearn 2012: 172-173; Madison 2005:153-155).

This cultural specificity of expressive convention is further highlighted by the term “cultural performances,” a formulation originally made by Milton Singer and further engaged by Victor Turner. Concerned with understanding India’s traditional culture as constituting a “total civilization” (Singer 1955:23) that was complex and evolving, Singer searched for units of observing the underlying cultural summation of the day-to-day experiences of his informants in the Madras area and how that contributed to India’s total civilization. In his search, he noticed “certain types of things” that were central and recurring “in the experience of Indians themselves” (1955:27; see also 1959: xiii). He called these things “cultural performances,” which included plays, concerts, lectures, prayers, ritual readings and recitations, rites and ceremonies, and festivals. Cultural performances were organized events or activities “with a set of performers, an audience, and a place and occasion of performance” (1955:27). They were discrete, observable, direct experiences through which members of a particular social unit could display and encapsulate their culture for themselves and for outsiders. They provided the “most concrete observable units of the cultural structure” (1959: xiii). Singer turned to performance as a way to bridge his units of cogitation with the experiences of those he studied. Even though they

were set apart from the mundane, performances provided an entry through which to understand a socio-cultural entity.

Victor Turner articulated a similar position regarding the role of performances within cultures:

Cultures are most fully expressed in and made conscious of themselves in their ritual and theatrical performances... A performance is a dialectic of “flow,” that is, spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one, and “reflexivity,” in which the central meanings, values and goals of a culture are seen “in action,” as they shape and explain behavior. A performance is declarative of our shared humanity, yet it utters the uniqueness of particular cultures. We will know each other better by entering one another’s performances and learning their grammars and vocabularies. (Turner quoted in Schechner and Appel 1990:1)

In this statement made in 1980, Turner provides a justification for the study of performance as necessary for promoting cross-cultural understanding. Cultural performances—that is the idea that cultures are self-consciously expressed in performances—imply the ethnographer or outside researcher as participative audience. Noting that fieldworkers “are occasions for, sometimes producers of, cultural performances that may range from reciting a set of kinship terms to putting on a full-blown ritual spectacle” (Fabian 2004:177), Johannes Fabian discusses the concept as a consequential description of the ethnographic encounter. Recognizing ethnography as cultural performance involving display and reception demonstrates its applicability and impact to wider endeavors to gain cross-cultural knowledge.

For Turner, performance is culture at work—the simultaneous movement between action, awareness and reflexivity. Cultural performances not only reflect “central meanings, values, and goals” of particular communities, but also shape behavioral paths. Turner states: “when we act in everyday life we do not merely re-

act to indicative stimuli, we act in frames we have wrested from the genres of cultural performance” (Turner 1982: 122). Anthropologists have extended these nascent views of performance as a totalizing presentation of a society to itself (see Geertz 1973), particularly by querying the homogenizing tendency of such approaches.⁸ Considering differentiation among a society’s constituents (see Burdick 1995:379-381) encourages us to grasp relationships among differently positioned groups vying for social transmission and seeking audience beyond themselves (Goldstein 2004:17-19). Daniel Goldstein in particular argues that “to speak of society or the public performing itself for itself is to miss the very thing that makes these performances valuable as sites of social analysis: their availability to differentially empowered groups...to produce alternative visions of the social world” (2004: 17-18). Performance is important therefore in studying marginalized communities, providing access not only to collective voices but also variations within collectivities (Burdick 1995; Gilbert 2005). The heightened display of collective performances offers resources for creative dissent and sociopolitical commentary.

Accordingly, my study builds upon scholars’ approaches to performance as simultaneously reflecting and producing social reality (Austin 1962; Singer 1972; Turner 1986; Butler 1988, 1990; Conquergood 1989; Bauman and Briggs 1990).

⁸ In a critique of Geertz, whose work exemplifies a totalizing view of cultural display, Vincent Crapanzano questions the notion of a unitary collective interpretation occurring on a societal level asking “how can a whole people share a single subjectivity” (1986:74)? For Crapanzano, Geertz in his metaphor of culture as text to be illuminated through literary analysis ignores a fundamental element of literary criticism—the indeterminacy and multiplicity of interpretation (1986:51-53). Addressing similar issues of interpretation, Laura Ahearn (1998) proposes a “practice theory of meaning constraint” that considers textual *and* contextual analysis, metacommentary, and spatial configurations among other elements to locate constraints on meaning.

Performance also serves as an arena for reinforcing social order or inciting change through “licensed criticism,” a term used by Leroy Vail and Landeg White in describing the frank expression that is socially permitted as part of a performance frame (Vail and White 1991: 41). Vail and White describe an aesthetic convention, that is “a set of assumptions held throughout southern Africa—and perhaps further afield...that criticism expressed in song is licensed criticism, [through which] the singers defined pungently and accurately the terms of their exploitation” (1991:41; see also Bakhtin 1984; Erlmann 1996; Gunner 1994; Peterson 2000; McAllister 2006; Madison 2010).

Performance allowed for covert critique during apartheid as protesters took advantage of language barriers between them and state officials. As the apartheid government caught on, they adopted ever more repressive measures but were unable to stem the flow of political expression through song and dance. Reinforcing this, the historian Shirli Gilbert discusses the analytical importance of songs for those studying oppressed communities. She writes that cultural activities, in particular music, “often constitute a valuable resource for social historians attempting to understand the dynamics of subjugated communities, particularly those communities for whom conventional channels of communication and expression are restricted or proscribed” (Gilbert 2005:11; see also Conquergood 1991:189).⁹ Performance is therefore an important arena not only for understanding creative political dissent but the very nature of power itself (Ebron

⁹ Conquergood writes: “through cultural performances, many people both construct and participate in ‘public’ life. Particularly for poor and marginalized people denied access to middle-class ‘public’ forums, cultural performance becomes the venue for ‘public discussion’ of vital issues central to their communities, as well as an arena for gaining visibility and staging their identity” (1991:189).

2002:5). Through performance, post-apartheid community activists build upon a history of culturally sanctioned displays that interrogate existing conditions and mobilize toward shared hopes.

Performance is much more than the display of artistry, however. As “an essentially contested concept” (Strine et al 1990: 183; cf. Carlson 2004:1-5), performance has been fruitfully studied as heightened specialized displays distinct from the mundane, and, inversely, as unmarked behavior constituting the everyday. In 1964, W.B. Gallie suggested that certain concepts are succinctly indefinable—these concepts have “disagreement about their essence built into the concept itself”:

Recognition of a given concept as essentially contested implies recognition of rival uses of it (such as oneself repudiates) as not only logically possible and humanly ‘likely’ but as of permanent potential critical value to one’s own use or interpretation of the concept in question. (Gallie 1964:187-8, quoted in Carlson 2004:1)

Performance as an essentially contested concept is developed by participants who “do not expect to defeat or silence opposing positions, but rather through continuing dialogue to attain a sharper articulation of all positions and therefore a fuller understanding of the conceptual richness of performance” (Strine et al 1990:183). Through contestation, scholars advance the relevance of the term for multiple usages. Opposition and rivalry in meaning become constructive; the reconciliation of differences is not a preeminent concern but rather differences become valuable in order to expand and enrich the concept. Particularly since “there appears to be little agreement” on its meaning (Palmer and Jankowiak 1996:225), the essentially contested nature of performance necessitates analytical clarity. As D. Soyini Madison notes on the ubiquity of performance in social life, researchers “must

describe and decipher its multiple operations in order to comprehend it and recognize it, not simply for its own sake,” but for what performance can contribute to social theory (2005:150). In the next section, I engage with approaches to performance that extend beyond emphases on specialized and heightened expressions.

Performance and the Constitution of Community

My concern with how performance cultivates activist community also draws on approaches to performance as constitutive of the everyday. Victor Turner’s work for example contrasts cultural performances with unmarked routine interactions and the effects of these interactions among individuals moving through social life (Turner 1982: 32-33; Madison 2005: 155-156). These performances are culturally scripted norms that diverge from group to group. Examples include eating, greetings, joking, and attire. Erving Goffman similarly discusses day-to-day interaction. Understanding performance as a form of impression management, for Goffman, performance is one way through which a social role or social relationship is developed. Such roles and relationships are reinforced through repetition and involve certain responsibilities—“rights and duties attached to a given status” (Goffman 1959: 16). This idea of responsibility, however, is different from responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence. In Goffman’s view, responsibility is in terms of maintaining a socially reinforced status through impression management. Many possibilities abound for the performer to be deceptive in the impressions s/he gives—“I assume that when a individual

appears before others he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation" (1959:15). Goffman's definition of performance as attempts to influence others within situated interaction must be understood within his larger project of delineating "the presentation of self in everyday life."

Focus on routine enactments is further clarified by attention to the effects of interactions as demonstrated by the performative. This term was first coined by the British philosopher, J. L. Austin, to distinguish utterances through which, when spoken in appropriate circumstances, a speaker performs a particular action. These utterances are not descriptive or in a sense verifiable. Austin writes that "they couldn't possibly be true or false" (1979:235). In making performative utterances, the speaker is not merely describing or reporting an action, but actually performing the act by making the utterance. Examples Austin provides include: "I do take this woman to be my lawfully wedded wife"; "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth"; "I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow"; "I apologize"; "I promise I will be there tomorrow," etc. These examples perform the act of marrying, christening, betting, apologizing and promising respectively.¹⁰ Austin further recognizes that it is not just these types of verbs that generate action in social life, rather all language is performative. He inquires: "When we issue any utterance whatsoever, are we not 'doing something'?" (Austin 1962: 92; see also Ahearn 2012:164-165). This broader

¹⁰ Austin's student, John Searle (1969) expands on this theory of performativity, by emphasizing individual intention. Jacques Derrida (1973) takes issue with speech-act theory, Austin and Searle's approach to performativity, including that it overlooked the historical and cultural basis of the effects and achievements of utterances.

view of language as social action has fostered further insights on the constitution of social life.

Judith Butler extends the concept of performativity in her discussion of gender. Butler draws on Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, George Herbert Mead, among others who espouse a phenomenological theory that social reality is constituted by the acts, gestures and other semiotic practices of social agents. Building on such scholarship, Butler argues against a view of gender as a stable identity but that gender “is an identity tenuously constituted in time” (1988:519) created through “a *stylized repetition of acts*” (1988:519; emphasis in original). The notion of an abiding gendered self is an illusion created through this institution of repeated acts. For Butler, that gender is performative means that “it is real only to the extent that it is performed” (1988:527). She explains gender as based on social convention constituted through time by means of the repetition and reproduction of *acts* of gender. She distinguishes her insights into gender performance from Erving Goffman’s (1959) suggestion of a self “which assumes and exchanges various ‘roles’ within the complex social expectations of the ‘game’ of modern life” (Butler 1988:528). For Butler, gender is not an external role assumed by an eternally abiding interior self. Rather, gender is a performative act—created and naturalized through performance. Noting that gender “constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority” (Butler 1988:528), for Butler, there is no interior self regulating gender’s performance. Rather this self is discursively constituted, and fictively interiorized.

These insights into performativity apply not only to the social manifestation of gender, but also of race, class, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity. I extend these insights towards collective formation. Routine negotiations of political sensibilities are performative acts that shape collectivity. Rather than existing without intervention, communities constitute themselves through repeated acts over time that reinforce and reproduce the reality of being together—as Bruno Latour notes, “if you stop making and remaking groups, you stop having groups” (Latour 2005:35). Accordingly, I examine the making, remaking and dissipation of an activist group that contributes to scholarship at the intersection of performance and politics.

Performance and Standards

In addition to examining specialized creative displays and the constitution of community through repeated acts over time, there is a third sense of performance deployed by the activists with whom I worked. In his *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Richard Schechner offered that “in business, sports, and sex, ‘to perform’ is to do something up to a standard—to succeed, to excel” (Schechner 2002:22). Attention to standards highlights collective actions as subject to evaluation. In his formulation that performance “consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence,” Bauman (1975:293) recognizes accountability as inherent in performance.

Furthermore, whether deployed in spectacular or mundane framings, performance is practice—it involves the enactment of an ideal. Here, I do not intend

a definition of performance as the imperfect enactment of linguistic competence (Chomsky 1965), a dichotomy that has been critiqued for its dismissal of language use in socioculturally specific contexts (see Ahearn 2012: 162-163). Analogically, I am not saying that there is a universal model for activism that can hypothetically be rendered perfectly if we did not have to account for human limitations. The expectations that activists have both of themselves and of their collectivity vary, and there is an ongoing evaluation of experience that yields the kinds of appraisals I encountered of APF's decline as a failure of performance. Attention to these formulations benefits from what Bauman refers to as the emergent—that there is an interplay among individuals, their goals, and social contexts such that any performance cannot be accounted for by the sum of its parts (Bauman 1975: 302; cf. Mayr 1982; Williams 1977). Emergence offers a means of considering the uniqueness of each performance act, in that its outcomes cannot be fixed ahead of time. This unpredictability or lack of fixity introduces the tensions and frustrations activists encounter between their guiding visions and an emergent organizational collectivity.

An Integrative Bodily Approach to Performance

A fourth and final consideration that distinguishes a performance-focused approach to collective activism regards the primacy of embodiment (see, for example, Madison 2010: 7-10). Conquergood (1991) writes that performance “takes as both its subject matter and method the experiencing body situated in time, place, and history” (187). With the recognition that embodied practices constitute

knowledge, Conquergood writes of the rise of performance within anthropology during the 1980s and 1990s as helping ethnographers address a textual bias in social analysis (see also Madison 2005: 166-167). My study furthers such an integrative bodily approach to the study of political performances. This entails attention to the body as the means of mobilization. If, as I argue, performative acts constitute community, then collective solidarity and social identity take shape through performance as the body in motion. Performance in this instance therefore refers to a variety of embodied and sensory practices (such as dance, song, speechmaking, designing and displaying posters, leaflets, banners, clothing and other symbolic materials) through which activists communicate with one another, and thereby produce or disrupt collective bonds. As my approach has been influenced by scholarly interventions drawing together micro and macro levels of analysis of collective politics (Martin 1998:9; see also Juris 2008a:16), I turn now to literature on social movements and collective activism.

Between Activism and Mobilization (*or What is the Movement in Social Movements?*)

The study of social movements originates in attempts to understand and theorize collective action. These attempts at understanding began with theorists of crowd psychology traceable back to the French Revolution of the late 1700s (1789–1799). The field of social movements originated in “the negative reactions to the horrors of the French Revolution and the outrages of the crowd” (Tarrow 1998:10). Academic engagement with social movements, however, is more widely traced back

to the 1960s as scholars grappled with the political upheavals of that decade (Della Porta and Diani 2006:1-2; Edelman 2001:285; Buechler 2000). Since its inception, a number of paradigmatic perspectives have furthered the development of theories of collective action. Such perspectives include examinations of “mass society” (Arendt 1951; Selznick 1970; Kornhauser 1959) and “collective behavior” (Le Bon 1960; Park 1967; Smelser 1962).¹¹ These “classic theories” (McAdam 1999) of the 1950s and 1960s account for the emergence of social movements in individuals’ attempts to relieve social-psychological disruptions, focusing on psychological explanations and overlooking movement activity as political action (McAdam 1999:17). However such perspectives also emphasize the importance of collective action in producing new patterns of social relationship (Edelman 2001: 287; Turner and Killian 1957: 3-19, 307-330). By the mid 1970s, scholars had developed social movement theory along two distinct approaches: resource mobilization (Jenkins 1983) and new social movements (Touraine 1988; Melucci 1989; Laclau & Mouffe 1985). “New social movements” theorists emphasized the roles of politics, ideology, culture, and sources of identity other than class in the emergence of collective action as correctives to the “economic reductionism” of classical Marxism (Buechler 1995:441-442). Resource mobilization theorists focused on the availability of resources including finances, access to the media, access to public space, and rights

¹¹ According to the mass society body of theory, in the absence of a structure of intermediate groups through which people can be integrated in to social and political life, people are socially isolated. This isolation leads to alienation and anxiety, the disruptive psychological state that then results in social movements (McAdam 1999:7). Kornhauser, one of the proponents of mass society, writes that “social atomization engenders strong feelings of alienation and anxiety, and therefore the disposition to engage in extreme behavior [social movements] to escape these tensions” (1959:32). Collective behavior drew attention to crowds, fashion crazes, panics, mobs, gangs, and mass movements as social-psychological phenomena arising out of the structural strain attendant with “modern conditions of life” (Park 1967:227).

to petition as constraining or enabling social movement formation (Zald and McCarthy 1979).

Resource mobilization analysis focused on societal elements or structural factors that support or constrain movements, including the availability of resources, movement connectivity to other groups, movement dependence on external support and the responses of authorities to inhibit or incorporate movements (cf. McCarthy and Zald 1977:1213). In many ways, APF functioned as a social movement organization, with an office, office bearers, staff members and others who were remunerated through stipends.¹² It secured resources in the form of international funding, and drew on support from other organizations that shared affinity with its aims. It cultivated its structure of membership and participation over the years. These organizational elements often enabled, but also inhibited, its members' collective investments in shared struggle.

Resource mobilization is but one aspect of the emergence, sustenance, and dissipation of the APF. The limitation of such institutional analyses lies in the occlusion of informal dimensions of activist practice. While formal organizations are key for some, not all social movements operate through this model. Piven and Cloward (1977) provide the instance of "poor people's movements" in which

¹² McCarthy and Zald define social movements as "a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society" (1977:1217-1218). They distinguish these preference structures from social movement organizations, which arise out of the internal organization of social movement-related populations. The social movement organization (SMO) pursues the goals and objectives of its constituents. A social movement industry (SMI) is "the organizational analogy of a social movement" (1977:1219) constituted by all the organizations that work towards the broadest preferences of social movement populations. The mobilization of resources then becomes the task of a SMO, which is dedicated to particular goals including gathering resources (money, facilities, labor), converting supporters of movement aims into constituents who provide resources for the organization, and drawing bystanders into movement activity and thus widening its resource base.

movement activity takes place despite scarce resources and employ “shadowy” strategies due to the dangers of overt organization (see also Scott 1985, 1990; Melucci 1989). In its declining years, many APF members came to view the resources they had mobilized, funding, in particular, as an obstacle because it promoted opportunism and conflict among themselves. Some went as far as denouncing funding altogether, with the assurance that their struggles would be furthered through collective self-reliance. These preferences make evident the complicated role of resources in movement work, and my analyses draw such complications into view.

By the 1990s, political opportunity structure and political process approaches were articulated by some of the same theorists who developed the resource mobilization approach. While resource mobilization focused more on organizational processes internal to a movement, some scholars advocated for analytical emphasis on “the mobilization of resources external to the group” as they are perceived or framed by movement actors (Tarrow 1998:77). These external resources referred to opportunities or constraints in the wider political environment including state strength and its strategies for social control, and the relationships among elites and other influential allies. These scholars argued that political opportunities and constraints played a crucial role in explaining the transformation of discontent into collective action. As structures of opportunity vary temporally and geographically, these were more reliably correlated with the emergence of collective action. Tarrow concedes that political opportunity is not enough to sustain movements. He points to three other types of “resources”

(1998:89) that are necessary to sustain movements: collective action frames, movement repertoires, and mobilization structures. The integration of these four elements—political opportunity among them—is the foundation of the political process approach.

The 1990s also saw increasing attempts to synthesize paradigmatic perspectives as well as to draw neglected arenas into focus. The four major paradigmatic shifts I outlined have incrementally enriched our understanding of the interplay of elements and processes relevant to social movements. It is important to appreciate each approach on its own terms, being aware of its limitations and analytic strengths; often these arise from the same source. As James Jasper reminds us: “to say or imply that one dimension of protest comes first, in the sense that it is important, is to foreclose certain paths of research, to predetermine what results one can find” (1997:67). Emphasis on one dimension may strengthen analysis and also weaken it by precluding other dimensions. Along these lines, there have been a number of theoretical interventions in the study of social movements that focus on particular concepts that were overlooked and undertheorized despite paradigm shifts.¹³ Two of these concepts are emotions and embodiment.

¹³ Angelique Haugerud offers recognition of “matters more ineffable” in social movement theory (Haugerud 2013:15). She notes that “there is space in the study of social movements or political activism for those who are attracted to definitive strategies and results, verifiable connections between intentions and outcomes, as well as those interested in the poetics of politics and those who approach agency as other than a “simple projection toward the future” (Haugerud 2013:15).

Emotions

In March 2010, I attended a community meeting in Orlando East, Soweto. The community and members of the Orlando Residents Association had requested a meeting with a Johannesburg municipal official to discuss, among other things, transportation infrastructure in the area. Standing outside the Orlando East community hall at the conclusion of the meeting, one of the leaders of the residents association and I conversed informally. I mentioned that I had attended a protest by the organization recently and asked if they planned to stage another one. His was a compelling response that makes a fitting consideration of the tensions between emotional spontaneity and organizational procedure. “We cannot plan protests,” he said continuing:

protests are an emotional position. We can plan meetings, we can plan gatherings, we can't plan protests because protests will be brought about when the people feel but now this is too much, then people protest...We don't organize protests. The protests are an emotional issue where people now react to something. That is something else of which unfortunately as community leaders we must be part because that is our constituency that we must be just be part of, and we must be a mouthpiece therefore that speaks for that constituency because they cannot all howl and speak.¹⁴

The residents' association leader presents a view of protest as extralegal emotional eruptions ensuing once other avenues have been exhausted. His response draws attention to the emotional dimensions of collective politics, which is deserving of analytical engagement.

My project benefits from and contributes to an emotional turn in social movement scholarship, which began in the late 1990s and continues into the present (e.g. Jasper 1998; Goodwin et al. 2001; Juris 2008b, Gould 2009). There are

¹⁴ Conversation with the author, March 16, 2010, Johannesburg.

a number of explanatory factors for the occlusion or distortion of emotions in prior social movement scholarship, the most significant of which is a Cartesian gap that separates emotions from rationality, and feeling from analyses of collective action (Goodwin et al. 2001:1-2; Aminzade and McAdam 2001:23; see also Farnell 1999). Goodwin et al. address the distortion of emotions in social movement scholarship referring back to “classic models” of irrational collective behavior in which emotions either “came directly from crowds” and had little to do with individual traits, or were reduced to internal conflicts that individuals sought to alleviate through participation in collectivities (Goodwin et al 2001:4). In relatively more recent formulations like those of resource mobilization theorists that dismissed explanations of social movements as irrational, emotions were similarly dismissed as “murky, dangerous and pejorative phenomena” (Goodwin et al. 2001:5) that were hard to analyze and therefore dismissible in “empirical, scientific, rigorous” approaches (Goodwin et al. 2001:5). Similarly, Aminzade and McAdam write that “a positivist epistemology of dispassionate investigation that views emotions as distorting observation and impeding knowledge...has produced a devaluation of those methods that can provide access to the emotional lives of activists and emotional climates and dimensions of their movements” (Aminzade and McAdam 2001:24).

Emphases on framing, collective identity and symbolic dimensions of social movements generated receptivity to emotions (Goodwin et al. 2001:9). Furthermore, feminist work has helped in delinking emotions and irrationality by interrogating these assumptions (cf. Goodwin et al. 2001:9; Aminzade and McAdam

2001:23; see also Lutz 1986). Arguing that “emotions can be strategically used by activists *and* be the basis for strategic thought” Goodwin et al. identify the empirical task as being one of investigating the interaction of emotions with other dynamics including cultural, organizational and strategic ones (Goodwin et al. 2001:9; emphasis in original). They view emotions as socio-culturally constructed particularly within the context of social movements:

Moral outrage over feared practices, the shame of spoiled collective identities or the pride of refurbished ones, the indignation of perceived encroachment on traditional rights, the joy of imagining a new and better society and participating in a movement toward that end—none of these are automatic responses. They are related to moral intuitions, felt obligations and rights and information about expected effects, all of which are culturally and historically variable. (Goodwin et al. 2001:13)

Goodwin et al. describe the role of emotions in the emergence and sustenance of social movements. They note that in charged moments of shared emotion, people discover a capacity for collective action that they had not known before (2001:19). Perhaps it is recognition of such a transgressive charge that fuels the Orlando leader’s disinclination towards advanced protest planning.¹⁵ The authors also note the work of emotions in building solidarity manifesting in the “values, symbolic objects, stories, occasion, roles and personae” (2001:18) of movements. Finally, pleasures of participation arise from shared and reciprocal emotions: “the joys of collective activities such as losing oneself in collective motion or song can be

¹⁵ I am drawing here on the distinction Dwight Conquergood makes between transcendence and transgression. His construction of performance is relevant for political potential of heightened emotional encounters more broadly. He writes: “instead of construing performance as *transcendence*, a higher plan that one breaks into, I prefer to think of it as *transgression*, that force which crashes and breaks through sediment meanings and normative traditions and plunges us back into the vortices of political struggle” (Conquergood 1998:32). Emotional insurgence is transformative as a critical, legitimized expression and experience of collective power. I have found however that the Orlando leader’s insistence that protests are unplanned eruptions belies the often stimulating, sometimes routinized, coordination and staging involved in their manifestation.

satisfying even when done with strangers—who no longer feel like strangers” (2001:20).

Along these lines, I acknowledge emotions and affective circulation are integral to the performative and embodied unfolding of movement work. Strong emotions imbue activist communities, catalyzing their emergence and influencing their sustainability and dissipation. Furthermore, emotions (for example rage, joy, terror and togetherness) circulate affectively within collectives, that is through bodily sensations and perceptions that are not always consciously expressed or expressible in words (Ahmed 2004; Brennan 2004; Ramos-Zayas 2012). A consideration of affect brings into view those sensations and registers that do not neatly fall under prevailing emotional categories. A significant theme within this project is therefore how these dimensions of registered emotions and affective sensations influence the mobilization experiences that activists pursue or abandon.

Embodiment

The Cartesian gap prevalent in the assumed irrationality of emotions relatedly manifests in the absence of embodiment in theories of mobilization. Mobilization has been theorized in ways that reduce it to a matter of calculated interests, resources or cognitive strategies, which creates a conflict, as dance scholar Randy Martin notes:

No matter how intimate with actors one became, their social activity was still largely cognitive, disembodied acts spurred on by locally generated common interests. However much the importance of subjectivity to account for mobilization was recognized, it remained an interest, an ideational form that could not account for what kept people in motion, for what maintained or mobilized participation. Even in its most sophisticated forms, resource

mobilization theory could not account for what separated the inner life of participation from the outside effects of mobilization. (1998:9)

This conflict is an inability to bridge gaps between cognition and embodiment, between the ideal and the real, between the inner life of participation and the outside effects of mobilization, between the means and the end of mobilization.

Martin positions attention to dance as one way to bridge these gaps or “to indicate the practical dynamic between production and product” (1998:4). He defines mobilization as “what moving bodies accomplish through movement,” that is the materialization of identities and political accomplishments through the performativity of movement. He writes: “mobilization foregrounds this process of how bodies are made, how they are assembled and how demands for space produce a space of identifiable demands through a practical activity” (1998:4). The dynamics of mobilization can be seen only in the movement of actual bodies, a movement that is connected with thought not separate from it. As Martin writes, and has been recognized by performance theorists, reflection and experience are two interconnected moments of the same activity (1998:5; cf. Turner 1982:105; Pineau 1995: 46). Martin’s work connects with a tradition of anthropologists’ inquiry into the moving body as a way of illuminating larger societal processes. Brenda Farnell (1999) highlights movement as integral to social action. For Farnell, attention to the moving body would expand scholars’ abilities to understand agency as individuals agentively produce meaning through the physical movement of their bodies.

Understanding mobilization as constituted through kinesthetic movements that consolidate, reproduce and have the potential to disrupt convention facilitates the investigation of the “inner life of participation” in social movements (Martin

1998:9)—the variety of acts and processes that aggregate into collective action in its many forms, be it a community meeting, a protest march, or a women’s group fighting to empower their voices. Although he was concerned with understanding dancers’ political activity, Martin’s critiques were prescriptive for social movement scholars as he did not examine the role of dance in social movements directly. Others working at the intersection of dance and politics have advanced inquiry into the contributions of a choreographic lens in analyzing protest tactics (Foster 2003; see also Franko 2006).¹⁶

My research furthers these concerns through inquiry into a nonprofessional world wherein local communities mobilize through performance that includes dance. I advance a view of mobilization that foregrounds the moving body, with particular attention to physical and psychological processes that occur within and among individuals during embodied events. These processes include, for example, attempts to heal through individuals’ rallying of their personal bodies (a different conceptualization of mobilization) as they participate in collective action. Mobilization, I argue, figures in all identifiable stages of collective action and provides avenues for assessing the transformative impact of such action—especially considering that the most significant impacts might be on individuals themselves.

¹⁶ Foster proposes to reconstruct protests, not as dances—as that would decontextualize the event—but by interrogating them through questions a dance scholar might raise: “what are these bodies doing?; what and how do their motions signify?; what choreography, whether spontaneous or pre-determined, do they enact?; what kind of significance and impact does the collection of bodies make in the midst of its social surround?; how does the choreography theorize corporeal, individual, and social identity?; how does it construct ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality?; how have these bodies been trained, and how has that training mastered, cultivated, or facilitated their impulses?; what do they share that allows them to move with one another?; what kind of relationship do they establish with those who are watching their actions?; what kinds of connections can be traced between their daily routines and the special moments of their protest?; how is it possible to reconstruct and translate into words these bodies’ vanished actions?; how is the body of the researcher/writer implicated in the investigation?” (Foster 2003:396-397).

Mobilization needs to consider the body (Gouws 2005: 227), not just materially but affectively in terms of relationships of care.

Perhaps there is no better example of mobilization as intimately embodied than the experience of a woman I met during a Gender at Work peer-learning workshop that members of Remmoho, a women's group affiliated with APF, attended in May 2010. When the workshops first started about a year and a half prior, Ma Lindi, a leader of a different organization, became so ill that she was reluctant to attend. "I just could not walk and I didn't want to be exposed or come into contact with new people because I saw pity in their face," she explained to me in an interview. As we sat in her room during the overnight workshop, the stout middle-aged woman recalled her illness:

My feet were just sore and I could not walk properly and because when you go to the hospital they always give you Panado [aspirin] and not take you seriously and then I became even worse... I was told that my body was not able to drain the water, my heart had enlarged. I had so many problems.¹⁷

Through encouragement from Nomvula, a Remmoho member with whom Ma Lindi was quite close, Ma Lindi came to the workshops. At the workshops, she was introduced to a variety of relaxation exercises. Amelia, the facilitator of the workshop I attended, commented on how delicate Ma Lindi's health had been, raising the worry that she might not make it. Ma Lindi, however, improved through consistent use of the physical exercises Amelia taught her, as well as through meditation and prayer. She started practicing finger holds, holding one finger at a time for a number of minutes, noticing that this helped activate her overworked organs and to drain the water her body had not been able to. Points in the finger

¹⁷ Interview with the author, conducted May 29, 2010, Johannesburg.

correspond with different organs and energy centers in the body, Amelia had explained.

[Amelia] said the small [finger] is the one attached to the heart and the small intestines and then the next one is the spleen, the lungs and then the fourth one is the kidneys and then the big one, the thumb is the big intestines. So by touching all these parts you are reconnecting yourself to the parts of your body in your system and if you were asleep, you are waking up once more.

Finger holding became a consistent part of Ma Lindi's daily routine and health practice replacing the tablets that kept her "in the loo for the whole day" in order to drain water. This practice facilitated not just a physical reconnection to herself but also reawakened a spiritual and social reconnection. She explained that her emotions had been broken, making her reclusive, "but as I'm able to drain this water and I'm feeling much better I can now talk to people." She could attend the Gender at Work workshops, and participate more readily. She could also progressively continue her work as a community leader. When I met her that weekend, she leaned heavily over a cane as she walked, and would often insist on slowly making her own way—she still did not want to register pity on the faces of those around her. In order to participate in the collective, Ma Lindi had to heal herself, and cultivate her fortitude in confronting responses to her physical challenges. One cannot take the collective for granted if the individuals that compose it are not well.

Other women also took on the physical exercises in their daily lives, sometimes to similarly profound results. Among them was Ma Patrycia, who, having had kidney cancer for the past 25 years, found that the exercises helped energize her throughout the day: "since I've been doing these exercises, I can go everyday, everyday nothing stops me and I don't feel pains or nothing." She began teaching

and practicing the exercises with women in her community. Ma Lindi and Ma Patricia's experiences highlight my conception of mobilization as individuals' rallying of their personal bodies in order to participate in collective action, as well as the need for what Naisargi Dave calls "affective, cohesive sociality" (2011: 6). Such sociality is evident in the impact of Nomvula's encouragement on MaLindi's participation. As Deborah Gould notes: "the *movement* in 'social movements' gestures toward the realm of affect; bodily intensities; emotions, feelings, and passions" (2009: 3) that activists cultivate among one another and in seeking audiences beyond themselves.

Performance and Mobilization Revisited

For the activists with whom I worked, the movement of "bodily intensities, emotions, feelings, and passions" (Gould 2009:3) involved performance: affect, mobilization and creative expressions were interrelated. Consider the words of an elder female protester that I discuss in chapter 3, where I examine the role of freedom songs in protest events:

When I sing these songs, I feel pain from inside [*tapping her chest*] I take out the pain by singing these songs, and even if that person on the street passes by, they would see and feel the same pain through the songs that this person is hurt. And it's going to be easy for them to understand why am I singing those songs.

Song became an avenue for this elder woman, alienated from a broader society as evidenced by her pain (see Scarry 1985; Daniel 1994), to transmit her sentiment to a passerby and overcome an inexpressibility that would leave her in society's margins. Indeed music, dance, gesture, and symbolic enactments (ritual) provide the

means to transcend (or transgress) prevalent boundaries so that marginalized individuals and collectivities can “restructure patterns of inclusion” (Goldstein 2005:19).

As an outcome of its transmissive potential but also as a preferred mode of sensory experience, performance was a necessary component of the activist events I attended (see Bauman 1975:299)—whether as the integration of song, dance, and ephemera at protest events; singing together to tide over the breaks at organizational meetings; or providing an audience for fellow participants’ creative outputs during commemorative programs. Performance was also a preferred manner of representation such that in January 2010, when an Australian media crew sought to film conditions at a squatter camp in Itereleng, on the outskirts of Pretoria, Bongani, an APF organizer I mentioned earlier, urgently tried to get in touch with its residents so that they could organize the community. He wanted them to meet the camera crew singing. When I asked why this would matter, he responded “to show that they are in the struggle, that’s the international media there, they have to be seen chanting.” What these activists prioritize also anchors my analysis (Dave 2012:20). The intersection of performance and activist politics allows me to interweave my abiding concern for embodiment, affect, and broader consideration of political aesthetics into this narrative of the internal dynamics of mobilization.

Being in the field

On Friday, August 28th 2009, I departed from New York to Johannesburg and returned about 16 months later on January 12th 2011. During this time at my research site, I was able to fulfill much of my intentions in ways that exceeded my expectation. As I had intended, I worked primarily with the APF, although the process of securing permission to proceed with research unfortunately took six long weeks. This delay was revelatory of some of the cracks in the APF's organizational solidity that would later prove relevant for its decline. I had visited the organization about two years earlier in 2007, secured my ties with its primary organizer, who mediated my access to the organization; he was a significant point-person. By the time I returned in 2009 however, he and two other key organizers (all male) were embroiled in a bitter legal and disciplinary process regarding sexual misconduct. The eventual expulsion of these three men not only affected APF's organizational capacity but the divisiveness among its members eventually resulted in significant personal, social, and organizational fallout. When I arrived in August, it was the equivalent of starting over with an already diminishing organization, although I did not know this then. I presented myself and my work to the organization anew once I was able to secure a meeting with its office bearers. I am grateful for this process as it helped to clarify my role in ways that I would have missed had I had a more amorphous or unchallenged transition to the field.

While I was waiting for this meeting, my affiliation with the Department of Anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand (henceforth Wits) tided me over. I met with a scholar-activist in the Department of Sociology in a conversation

that prefigured ensuing observations. She and her partner had been active in the APF but more recently felt alienated from the main organization. While she carried on her work with the community-embedded Orange Farm Water Crisis Committee, an affiliate of the APF, she viewed APF's current moment with a practiced cautiousness. At the time the organization started, there was much energy and activity about "trying to imagine ourselves differently," she said. The intention was to depart from old forms and methods of struggle and bring about something new. Yet there were also issues with these activities of imagination and representation particularly in the tendency to celebrate without being too critical of internal contradictions, she said. People who wrote on new social movements at its nascent period including herself perpetuated these forms of representation, partly because they were thrilled to find alternatives to the past and to the status quo. I examine this movement from the effervescence of activist emergence to organizational decline in the first two chapters of this dissertation. For now, it is worth pointing out that I arrived at a moment when APF's activists and intellectuals (not exclusive terms at all) were self-reflexively assessing their role and representations, and I was able to capture some of these frustrations in my concern with organizational performance.

My research in a sense began with this conversation as the sociologist was able to refer me to other key figures in tracing the history of APF's performance practices. While it seemed my work with performance would be recovering the remnants of APF's more active flourishing—as I do in chapter 5—I discovered many ongoing practices that revealed the primacy of these practices among activists

themselves. In addition to an insistence I mentioned earlier that communities “have to be seen chanting” so as to demonstrate that “they are in the struggle,” several other moments demonstrated the immediacy with which performance, ritual, and cognate practices were adapted to shifting politics. This dissertation engages these at length. Furthermore, as my view of performance is not limited to artistic displays, investigating APF’s history and contemporary practices more generally furthered my analysis of the performative emergence and dissipation of the movement.

Although securing access was and remains an ongoing dynamic, my first meeting with APF’s office bearers in October 2009 allowed me to enter and integrate into its organizational space. I began by shadowing APF’s part-time organizers, attending their weekly coordination meetings as well as other meetings of office bearers. As these organizers and APF members came to know me, they invited me to events including protest marches and meetings in their communities. I documented 38 such events through photographs and video-recordings, and attended many more meetings and protests than I sought to visually capture. At such events, I sought to understand the dynamics among gathered actors (movement participants, non-participants, bystanders, and representatives of the state that have recurrent contact with community activists including the police). Through these events, I came across a range of freedom songs and dance movements. I experienced activists deploying these performance forms in a variety of situations including heated exchanges with the police and rousing meetings at communal halls. I videotaped protests and key organization meetings; such footage became pertinent for the interviews I conducted. Through feedback interviews

(Stone and Stone 1981), I solicited responses to past events using the video footage and photographs I collected. My footage along with field notes proved useful for capturing event dynamics such as the placement of bodies, their orientation to space, the sound configuration, other sensory details, and the construction of meaning through these elements. I also conducted intercept surveys (Bernard 2006:161) at protests, soliciting bystanders' and protesters' interpretations of the unfolding events and their reception of the performances. These surveys served as opportunistic conversations that would be impossible to count. They involved the convenience sampling of those present, recruiting based on willingness to provide quick responses to questions about the event. Feedback interviews and soliciting responses in the immediacy of the moment allowed me to investigate more concretely events that can be quite amorphous.

Seeking, along with other aims, to understand the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion among APF's potential constituents (Burdick 1995), I conducted 46 semi-structured interviews with current members and non-members selected through a combination of judgment and snowball sampling (Bernard 2006:189-194). As I familiarized myself with the organization, I developed affinity with some participants, including leaders and organizers, whose perspectives I sought. I requested interviews from among those involved in events and activities that were key to my research. These included participants that stood out at protests (whether or not they were APF members), activists who were involved in performance initiatives, and those who participated in Remmoho, the women's group that cultivated embodied wellness practices among its members. At the conclusion of

each interview, I asked interviewees to suggest others whom I could contact with insights and experiences relevant for my research.

Among APF members, I inquired into the history of their involvement with the APF and with community organizations in general. I also solicited their insights and personal responses to collective protest performances within the coalition. Many of the non-members I interviewed were participants at the protests I attended. In interviews, I sought their interpretations of the significance of collective protest performances. I also inquired into reasons for their non-participation in APF, as well as their historical and contemporary involvement in other forms of collective action. In such interviews with non-members, I did not encounter major differences in their orientation towards collective protest performances. In fact, these performances drew evocative interpretations and responses from members and non-members alike. My analytical focus on the internal dynamics of the APF in this dissertation entails a commitment to understanding members' experiences. I therefore draw on my interviews with non-members only to amplify or clarify the story of APF.

My ethnographic data is augmented by historical research drawing on South African History Archive's collection of transcribed oral histories of the APF, as well as ephemera from the movement. The collection is publicly accessible, upon registration, through an online exhibition as well as at the South African History Archive in Johannesburg. As part of the collection, Dale McKinley and Ahmed Veriava, two APF activists, conducted 36 oral history interviews of selected APF leaders, past and present. McKinley wrote a final project report that profiled APF's

history and highlighted key themes emerging from the oral history interviews. The historical insights gained from this collection have been invaluable for my analysis, and I am grateful for its availability. The first two chapters, in particular, draw on these oral history interviews in addition to my own ethnographic data. These interviews, conducted by McKinley and Veriava, are acknowledged as they appear within the text.

In the interest of reciprocity and to facilitate the reader's understanding of the partiality of this work, it is necessary to elaborate my inner life of participation. As I write, geographically and temporally removed from the settings I describe, it is with an awareness that I did not give everything to the movement in that I did not let it consume me. I had gone to the field with ideas of kinesthetic apprenticeship (Downey 2002:497-500) that would facilitate my understanding of the experiences of people I care about. What I found were my own limits as I negotiated physical safety and mental integrity. To be clear, I never confronted physical danger but these were ongoing considerations. I benefited from a fleeting phenotypic solidarity that marked me as native until I was recognized as an outsider (Jackson 2004)—people meeting me for the first time assumed I was a black South African, that is until I spoke. I shifted my national categories of belonging in negotiating access and safety. I would emphasize pan-African connections rather than my relative though temporary class privilege as a globally mobile American. Yet concerns about xenophobic attacks in the wake of South Africa's hosting of the 2010 Fifa World Cup led me to de-emphasize aspects of my background. An astute colleague, Andile Mngxitama (2010) described the xenophobic dynamics of post-apartheid South

Africa as “afrophobia in disguise.” These concerns were raised by an encounter in the Vaal, when a male bystander walked towards me after a protest and pointed at me (I am still not sure if it was in address or reference) saying something to the effect of: “after the World Cup, all foreigners must go.” Following this moment, I understated my Nigerian origin and hoped that America, an already problematic ascription, would work for me. Being a Nigerian who had lived in the United States for thirteen years (I am now a US citizen), I was not a typical Nigerian in South Africa, if there is such a thing. I did not embody the linguistic or physical accents of other Nigerians whom those I worked with encountered and with whom they lived in proximity. Such insights reveal how my being in the field was interpreted and consciously rendered.

My concern about falling victim to xenophobic violence was an instance in which my body was on the line without my choice. Yet there were other instances where, much as it was rationally appealing, I could not place my body on the line. In attending protest events where I had initially expected to participate by singing and dancing as my South African co-participants did, I found that it felt particularly awkward to inhabit that activist positionality. In chapter 3, I discuss how such bodily comportments and protest expressions were constituted through a learned process. While I was acting in solidarity, it felt presumptuous to even attempt to bridge that subjective distance. My camera, as a bodily appendage, came to facilitate my participation at protest events. It gave me something to do, a platform of belonging that acknowledged my distance and the quality of my proximity to protesters. I usually recorded from my gut (see Wilson 2004; Csordas 1999:184), by

which I am drawing on figurative implications but also to mean that I placed my camera around my lower abdomen rather than using a direct optical viewfinder. This freed my eyes to observe so that I was not solely taken with the camera but could more fully absorb a wider perspective.

I secured approval for this project from the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University. I obtained consent to videotape events in enclosed spaces from organizers. In the more public spaces of protests, where consent was impossible to obtain from all present in a crowd, I turned the camera off or diverted its focus if anyone present indicated reluctance to be captured on screen. Public protests were often videotaped and photographed by news media, event organizers, and by the police. The typical assumption was that I was a journalist, and many approached me to cover their stories as a result. APF members who knew me vouched for my association, and I made sure to identify myself as a researcher whenever I approached or was approached by anyone present.

The footage and photographs allowed me to refer to specific moments in my feedback interviews. As a result, I was better able to guide interviewees' reflexive awareness and interpretations of their actions. As I listened, I sought to demonstrate my receptivity as people shared the things that profoundly affected them. This was through verbal and embodied affirmation as facilitated by what some performance studies scholars call "copresence."¹⁸ The manner of my listening,

¹⁸ For example, Conquergood writes of "an ethnography of the ears and heart that reimagines participant observation as coperformative witnessing" and goes on to describe this as a "hermeneutics of experience, relocation, copresence, humility, and vulnerability" (2004:315). Also see Spry (2006) for more on copresence.

the phrasing of my questions, the embodied experiences that I offered of myself facilitated intersubjective engagement. I asked questions of sensory experience—“how do you feel in your body when you are singing these songs?” I asked questions of taste or aesthetic preferences—“which is your favorite song and why?” In our feedback interviews, my interviewees and I probed fleeting moments together and, however partially, attempted to fix their meanings—“why did you raise that song at that particular moment?” “What did you sense that called forth that song or made it fitting for what was going on?” “Why did you change the rhythm of your clapping, right there?” These questions yielded insights into aesthetic preferences and distinctions among constituents—like the tempo male youth would rather feel in their bodies as distinct from tendencies of mass gatherings to slow down (see chapter 5); or the tension of uttering colorful vulgarity in songs that older participants sought to bar from the mouths of youth causing one interviewee to note an age-restriction in some songs (chapter 3). These questions also yielded insights into concerns that consumed my interviewees including issues of health and physical integrity (chapter 4); feeling inhabited by “spirits within you which nobody else can relate to” (chapter 3); and suspicion of fellow activists as being out to sabotage one’s efforts (chapter 2).¹⁹

¹⁹ The challenge of articulating one’s experience, as well as that of apprehending another’s, persists in making meaning of these research encounters. In light of such a challenge, I turn to my interviewees responses, as well as my own perceptions, as points of entry in disclosing and evoking the “seemingly impenetrable interiority of experience” (Downey 2002:487-488). Of language and experience, Csordas notes “one need conclude neither that language is ‘about’ nothing other than itself, nor that language wholly constitutes experience, nor that language refers to experience that can be known in no other way. One can instead argue that language gives access to a world of experience in so far as experience comes to, or is brought to, language... language is itself a modality of being-in-the-world” (Csordas 1994:11). Attending to the sensory co-production of the social (Chau 2008), and inversely,

On “You Can’t Go to War Without Song”

The title of this dissertation is drawn from an encounter in which my interviewee proclaimed that protest was like a battle, and “you can’t go to war without song because that’s the only thing that will keep you going.”²⁰ While he was referring to his vulnerability as a protester to potential police hostility, the ascription of activism as war echoed in other activists’ experiences. Ironically, the combativeness that prevailed in APF activists’ reflections was often in reference to dynamics internal to the movement, and was not just due to opposition stances external to the movement. In a meeting that I examine in chapter two, one APF member described how the suspicion she encountered from a fellow comrade alienated her to the extent that she felt that her activism was a war. Against such tensions, performance and allied practices served a variety of mitigating roles—offering refuge, sustenance, and the possible reconfiguration of problematic dynamics in the constitution of activist community.

Structure

The chapters of this dissertation are divided into two parts so as to provide a fuller context for appreciating the interconnections of performance and politics that lie at its core. Part one, “The Performance of Politics,” provides a historical and ethnographic background of the APF, drawing on theoretical reflections on the role

the social production of the sensual (see, for example, Downey 2002) the sharing of intersubjective experience.

²⁰ Feedback interview with the author, conducted January 22, 2010

of aesthetics in political formations. In chapter one, I detail the origins of the APF, including its founders' attempts to inaugurate a new modality of activism that would resolve the shortcomings of previous apartheid-era mobilizations. APF founders championed an organizational form that sought to prioritize community struggles by recognizing three categories of membership. These attempts at greater inclusivity through recognition of the heterogeneity of its members nonetheless contributed to a complex imbalance of power that manifested in the organization's internal dynamics. My historical investigation into the exuberance of its origins clarifies original intentions against which to grasp the tensions devolving into APF's gradual decline.

Chapter two completes the narrative through its focus on the ruptures in activist community that deterred APF's organizational efficacy. If chapter one shows the achievement of mobilization, chapter two is concerned with its collapse, and the impact of that collapse on APF members. I examine ruptures in the internal solidarity of the movement through an emphasis on dignity as a critical focal point in activist practice. In writing and reading both of these two chapters together, I aim to "do justice" (Cornell 2002:xx) through my remembrance of APF as an organization that is no more. Justice, in this sense, entails uncovering the efforts of the APF within the context of its own struggles. While my narrative is not celebratory, my portrayal emerges from a challenging commitment to be fair to the organization and its constituents.

By focusing on the organizational opportunities and constraints of post-apartheid collective activism, part one throws into relief the significance of spaces

that enable inclusive political participation in ways that the impact of this participation can be more immediately experienced. Such is the significance of creative expression within social movements, which constitutes the focus of the second part of this dissertation, “The Politics of Performance.” In the third chapter, I explore the embodied aesthetics of freedom songs in protest events. In particular, I detail how musical qualities of antiphony, repetitive variation, and embodied rhythm facilitated activists’ political interventions.

Performance provides access not only to collective voices but also variations within collectivities (Burdick 1995; Gilbert 2005). The remaining two chapters examine performance practices that complicate views of gender, as well as intergenerational relationship. The fourth chapter considers gendered approaches to protest performance. I discuss my work with Remmoho, the women’s group within the APF that sought to challenge problematic gender roles in the organization. Its members employed what one facilitator described as “radical methodologies” to empower themselves in their homes, communities, and political organizations. These methodologies involved the adaptation of performance techniques (including singing and the construction of rituals) towards their own wellness as well as to contest male domination in collective activist endeavors.

The active engagement of youth has been common to efforts within the APF to use performance as a deliberate organizational tool. Appropriate to these developments, the fifth chapter examines the cultivation of performance practices among youth activists as well as the generational dynamics of community mobilization. I examine the processes through which young people became involved

in their communities' political struggles, thereby challenging portrayals of post-apartheid youth as decidedly apolitical and driven more towards enjoyment than civic engagement. I also examine how, despite their enthusiasm as generated through notable performances, youth participants eventually became demobilized from activist formations.

Together these chapters present an ethnography of the Anti-Privatisation Forum through the lens of performance. The project makes two broad contributions: 1) a consideration of performance in its multiple dimensions, ranging from more routine enactments that secure, sustain, or weaken political outcomes to more practiced displays of creative capability; 2) an expansive analysis of mobilization that foregrounds "the inner life of participation," and highlights intersubjective dynamics that tend to be occluded due to the legacies of earlier approaches to social movements. The dissertation updates historical scholarship on the complicated roles of anti-apartheid performances in South Africa (Coplan 1985; Bozzoli 2004; Gilbert 2007), contributing to ongoing debates regarding the adaptations and continued relevance of these performances (Gunner 2007; Ansell 2004; Bourgault 2003). Beyond South Africa, the project draws from and contributes to the study of collective mobilization through social movements (Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Burdick 1995; Edelman 2001; Nash 2005), as well as through broader considerations of activist practice (Hodgson and Brooks 2007; Dave 2012). Finally, the project is in keeping with more recent interventions at the nexus of politics, performance, and political aesthetics (Wolfe 2006; Panagia 2009; Mascia-Lees 2011; Mookherjee and Pinney 2011).

Part I

THE PERFORMANCE OF POLITICS

Introduction: Situating the Political

In this section of the dissertation, I am concerned with detailing APF's coming into being, as well as the organization's dissipation in its latter years. In telling my story of the APF, I have been influenced by French philosopher Jacques Rancière, who argues that politics becomes possible due to a shared "distribution of the sensible" that bounds a community (Rancière 1999; Rancière 2004: 12). As Katherine Wolfe expounds, "a community itself begins with something in common...[and] the commonality upon which a community is founded is *sense*" (Wolfe 2006:n.p.). This shared sense is two-found—shared logic as well as shared sensory experiences.¹ Such a shared distribution of the sensible "defines what is visible or not in a common space, endowed with a common language, etc" (Rancière 2004: 12-13). It is akin to Kant's *sensus communis* (Kant 1931: 170-171)—a common sense upon which any community is premised.

Rancière's distribution of the sensible is based on a view of aesthetics not as sensory experience itself (from the Greek *aisthetikós*, meaning "perceptive by

¹ Panagia (2009) describes the twofold nature of the sensible as "both 'what makes sense' and 'what can be sensed'" (2009:3). He writes that our modes of attending to the world are grounded in "the self-evident dispositions of a sensing body: we always already know what it means to sense, what seeing, touching, and hearing are" (2009:7). The relationship among our sensory organs and acts of perception reinforce normative orders, and "such assurances and the practices of sense making that enable them are, by definition, political. They relate our bodies to the world, but also determine the conditions through and by which we might sense the world and those who occupy it; in short, such regimes of perception confer what counts as common sense" (Panagia 2009:7).

feeling,”). Rather, it draws from Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, which defines aesthetics as “the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience” (Rancière 2004:13; original emphasis). In other words, aesthetics refers to the structural systems through which human sense experience is conditioned and organized. As a result, we get to understand that not everything that presents itself to sense experience can be accounted for; not everything is sensible or perceivable (sense-able). There are delimitations between what is intelligible and unintelligible to sense experience: between the visible and the invisible, between speech and noise. The distribution of the sensible that a community shares establishes not only the boundaries of the perceptible but these boundaries also define positions within the shared distribution. It “reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed” (Rancière 2004:12). Politics then is the disruption of common sense and the eruption beyond established patterns of belonging into “previously unthinkable emergences” (Dave 2011:4). Politics is shaped by aesthetics as a domain that conditions social life and through which rupturing interventions can occur.

In his concern with the limitations of perceptibility that renders certain people without recognition within the community, Rancière is describing life on the margins of a society. His concern intersects interestingly with Clifford Geertz’s work on common sense. “Common sense represents the world as a familiar world, one everyone can, and should, recognize, and within which everyone stands, or should, on his own feet” (1983: 91). Operating not through esoteric but as natural

categories, it is a characteristic of “all solid citizens.” It works as “totalizing frame of thought” (Biehl 2005: 15), justifying “which kinds of lives societies support,” and which lives are systematically devalued and neglected. Ethnographically, Daniel Goldstein found that despite proximity to loci of official power, “invisibility is the critical condition facing marginalized people in urban Bolivia” (Goldstein 2005:29). Countering this invisibility spurred spectacular collective displays of public vigilante justice, a break in the social order that is at the heart of Rancière’s definition of politics. Other scholars have grappled with this liminality between visibility and invisibility, between perceptibility and imperceptibility. In a different project, João Biehl traces one individual’s passage from social belonging into being rendered invalid and foreclosed from social capability (2005:11). Understanding her “not as an exception but as a patterned entity” (2005:13), Biehl queries: “what kind of subjectivity is possible when one is no longer marked by the dynamics of recognition or by temporality?” (2005:11). These two projects demonstrate the spectrum of my considerations: how do marginalized individuals constitute oppositional publics? What are the interiorities of such opposition? Rancière’s focus on the distribution of the sensible is useful for considering individual subjectivity, intersubjectivity and mobilizing collectives in the case of the APF.

Rancière’s turn to Kant in his treatment of aesthetics would seem to be at odds with attempts to reclaim the aesthetic as embodied experience. Mascia-Lees (2011: 3-6), for example, in critiquing the Kantian-derived transmutation of aesthetics away from its reference to the corporeal, advocates a Merleau-Pontian conceptualization of the term. She and others treat the aesthetic “as a form of

embodiment, a way of being-in-the-world" (2011:6; see also Buck-Morss 1992; Kester 1997). This is a conceptual commitment that I share. Towards this commitment, Rancière's approach offers a view of aesthetics as precondition for sensory experience, which reinforces the reminder that while the body is the substance and seat of sensory perception, this perception does not occur in an unmediated way. Perception is not "private, internal, ahistorical and apolitical," rather sensory perception is culturally enabled and shared "within the context of communal sensory orders" (Howe 2005:4-5), which are inevitably political. Susan Buck-Morss finds it necessary to maintain the unmediated nature of aesthetic experience. As she asserts in a 1997 interview: "bodily experience is not always, already culturally mediated" (in Kester 1997: 39). Allowing for this unmediated nature raises the possibility of resistance at a sensory level:

Not feeling good in my skin was my way of criticizing the definition my culture was giving to the situation. Cultural meanings are sensed bodily as being wrong. Just plain wrong. How else are people capable of social protest? If we were in fact always, already produced by our respective cultures, how could it ever come into our mind to resist them? (in Kester 1997: 39-40)

These questions are in vital conjunction with Rancière's concerns as he defines politics to constitute a disruption of the sensible and eruption beyond its boundaries.² He locates these tensions that Buck-Morss describes as unmediated sensory experience in his formulation of "politics," whereas Buck-Morss achieves a similar goal by asserting the primacy of embodied experience in her reclamation of "aesthetics."

² The sensible here again refer to what fits within prevailing normative orders delimiting "what can be sensed" and "what makes sense" (Panagia 2009: 3).

The aesthetic experience that Rancière ascribes to the disruption and eruption of politics benefits from Kant's attention to the sublime in his *Critique of Judgment* (see Wolfe 2006). The disruption of politics also means an eruption of the unknown that transcends previously established practices. This eruption is akin to Kant's engagement of the sublime as a discordant mode of aesthetic experience that occurs when one experiences the limits of one's sensory capacity and critical faculties are forced to extend beyond themselves. It's an overwhelming attempt to account for the as-yet-unaccountable that pushes the boundaries of the *sensus communis* towards the generation and integration of a higher, more inclusive form. Because politics erupts with an imperative potency that is unrecognizable according to a previous distribution of the sensible, it drives a transcendent movement from what is to what ought to be.³ I further develop this idea of an activist sublime through an elaboration of the sublime's relationship to human dignity in the second chapter. In that chapter, I also draw on Drucilla Cornell's (2002) transformation of the *sensus communis* from a concept useful in discussing the sensory foundations of an established polity to one focused on the community of shared feeling that *awaits* us in the search for justice.

Returning to critiques of Kant's treatment of the aesthetic as a disembodied autonomous realm,⁴ it is important to indicate that I am reading Kant from a different set of scholars that reinterpret some of the very elements for which he has

³ In Kant, this would be a movement towards the Ideas. As Wolfe noted: "where previously the faculties operated in the name of the cogito, the 'I think,' they hereby come to operate in the name of the cogitandum: that which ought be thought" (Wolfe 2006:n.p.).

⁴ See Mascia-Lees (2011:3-4) for an overview of these critiques. See also Bourdieu (1984) and Buck-Morss (1992).

been critiqued. While my purpose here is not to serve as Kant's advocate, there are some divergences in interpretation that mark his relevance for a consideration of political aesthetics. For this, I am thinking Kant primarily through the works of Davide Panagia, Drucilla Cornell, Katherine Wolfe, and of course Jacques Rancière.

One charge is that Kantian aesthetic theory is particularly disembodied because it argues for disinterest, through which aesthetic experiences can thus be rendered distant cognitive acts. In contrast, I would say that Kant seeks to preserve aesthetic experience from conceptual frameworks or regimes of value. He presents aesthetic experience (of the beautiful and the sublime) as an immediate encounter in which one is unmoored—there is a suspension of conceptual frameworks “a relief from the burdens of normativity” (Panagia 2009: 31) As a result, the possibilities embedded in such encounters are unpredictable and impossible to legislate. Davide Panagia has termed Kant's to be a radical democratic project in that it is accessible regardless of privilege. As Kant asserts: “there can be no rule according to which anyone is to be forced to recognize anything as beautiful” (Kant 1931: 62). In other words “anyone can have an aesthetic encounter because no one can determine the conditions of its existence” (Panagia 2009: 31). An aesthetic encounter serves as the grounding for politics because in the moment of being unmoored, when our conventional interpretive frameworks are suspended, it compels us to reconfigure the way in which we attend to the world.

It is such considerations that guide the questions I seek to answer in this section of the dissertation: How did the APF emerge? What existing state of affairs did this collective emergence disrupt? Toward what visions or possibilities did the

APF's political formation erupt? I show that as the APF came into being, South Africa was already in a process of post-apartheid transition that jarred with activists' ideological commitments and direct experiences. APF's emergence was due to a disruption of South Africa's adoption of neoliberal economic policies. It was also due to the convergence of heterogeneous communities, who had been variously affected by South Africa's neoliberal transformation. This convergence produced unforeseen political possibilities that APF organizers sought to harness through the development of democratic structures that would sustain the newly formed collectivity beyond its inception. I consider the tension of normalization that is attendant with sustaining a nascent collective beyond its initial prominence—if politics involves the disruption of existing conditions, can such transformation be made durable without itself becoming a constraint?

In this first part of the dissertation that emphasizes the process of political formation, sustenance, and dissipation, I am also concerned with performance because it is integral to a conception of the eruption of politics into normative social orders. As Daniel Goldstein notes, “by calling explicit attention to things or relationships that often escape notice in the flow of everyday life, [performance] can also operate as a critique of the existing social system by presenting alternative forms of living and social ordering” (Goldstein 2005:16; see also Guss 2000; Mendoza 2000; Turner 1986: 22). The potential for critique within any performance is conditioned yet enabled by established patterns of interaction. My treatment of performance in this first part, however, is not to focus on creative expressions—this I do in Part 2. Rather, I am concerned in this section with performance as human

behavior and interaction that enacts social categories and constitutes collective forms. This is inherently, then, an attention to performativity. I also engage, in this section, with activists' appraisals of their social movement's performance in terms of its success (or lack thereof) in fulfilling activists' expectations.

*chapter 1***EMERGENCE AND POST-APARTHEID POLITICAL FORMATION**

In 2009, nine years into its formation, the Anti-Privatisation Forum had established structures and practices that defined the movement. These included a relatively active schedule of meetings, as well as public visibility through protests and campaigns. Given the pronouncement of its demise less than three years later, the assumed stability of the movement compels analytical engagement. In this first chapter, I am concerned with tracing the emergence of the APF and its institutionalization so as to reveal the performative elements of its organizational durability. APF's structure as a social movement organization was not a one-time achievement, but was forged through choices and practices that became normative over time. Beginning with a snapshot of APF's normative practices as I came to know the organization in 2009, this chapter reconstructs APF's formation, offering the developments and decisive changes that gave rise to the structures I encountered. My narrative seeks to complement previous scholarly profiles of the movement (e.g. Buhlungu 2006), which APF activists themselves disputed as overlooking the nuances of APF's emergence and character (see Veriava 2008).

In reconstituting the history of APF's formation, I am taking my cue from Naisargi Dave's trifold model of the "normalizing imperatives of political engagement" (2012:3; see also 2010; 2011). In language resonant with Rancière's view of politics, Dave discusses activism firstly as a disruptive emergence from and critique of normalization, a term by which she refers to the "narrowing of

possibilities to conform to institutionally legitimized norms such as identity, community, national belonging, and the language of law and right” (Dave 2012:9). Secondly, beyond this moment of critique—driven by a critical reflection that Foucault would call “problematization” (Foucault 1997; Faubion 2001)—is the work of inventing alternatives to existing problematized norms. This invention is one of envisioning previously unimaginable possibilities, that is, possibilities inconceivable according to a previous distribution of the sensible. Beyond the imaginative labor of invention is the third element of activist practice—the inhabiting or practice of these newly envisioned possibilities. A challenge throughout these three exercises of activist formation is the drive to normalization attendant with the inauguration of sociality, even those social forms conceived as radical alternatives to problematic norms. If the critical practice of politics is forged in opposition to normalization, it is also nurtured by it. “[Activist] sociality takes the form of a commons in which the radical, creative possibilities that the commons enables must also, to some extent, be enclosed within itself in order for those possibilities to thrive, thus always reproducing certain disciplinary apparatuses” (Dave 2012:8-9). If, as according to Rancière, politics is the disruption of community towards the inauguration of another more inclusive one, then, with this inauguration comes another form of delimitation that repartitions the sensible. Dave, however, views this inevitable containment—“the fixing of potential into certain normative forms” (Dave 2012:203)—to be productive rather than restrictive as critical practices are constituted through an engagement with norms. In the section that follows, I

describe the normative forms and practices of the APF that I knew. Subsequently, I describe how these norms were constituted and maintained.

The APF in 2009-2010

Organizational activities in the APF centered around its office, located on the 6th floor of a building dubbed “the house of movements.” The building was owned by Khanya College (hereafter Khanya), an NGO established in 1986 that served anti-apartheid activists and post-apartheid social movements by providing educational and infrastructural resources to these groups. The house of movements was located in central Johannesburg, glass doors served as its otherwise nondescript entrance. Attached to the building was a pink-painted halaal restaurant and “take away” establishment where APF activists would often get hot drinks, snacks, and meals including “fat cakes” (fried dough) and chips (potato fries) that I could indulge in as a vegan option. On the other side of this entrance was a computer and cellphone dealer’s shop, which was always useful for cellphone repairs and batteries. Lying beyond its foyer, the house of movements had two elevators; rarely did both elevators function at the same time. If neither was in working order, foot traffic was relegated to the stairs. Once on the sixth floor, a metal gate guarded the entrance to the APF office in addition to its wooden door. The APF administrator or an office bearer was usually responsible for opening the office in the morning and for locking up at the end of the day. The gate served as a security measure. Those without keys would have to be let in by the administrator, who had a buzzer under her desk, or by an APF member already in the office.

The APF entrance opened to a waiting area with seats and newsletter offerings, including current and past issues of the APF newsletter, “Struggle Continues.” On the left of the entrance was its primary meeting room, where most workshops and organizational meetings were held. Space for larger meetings and conferences (in excess of about 40 people) would be negotiated with Khanya and were usually held on the second floor. On the other side of the waiting area was the administrator’s office, which led into the former organizer’s office. With the suspension of the organizer, the last office became space for APF’s four part-time organizers to meet. Each part-time organizer served one of APF’s four designated regions, and had been hired through funding from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.¹

In the administrator’s office, the multipurpose printer-photocopier-and-fax machine was reason for many comrades to come to the office. When activists mentioned resources available through the APF, they referred in part to access to document services—printing and photocopying flyers and announcements of meetings and protest events. The telephone was another critical resource, and the administrator was often responsible for making phone calls informing activists of scheduled meetings at the office or within particular affiliates.

Of its meetings, there were multiple structures including an Annual General Meeting (AGM), which among other functions served to elect office bearers. The office bearers (OBs) consisted of a Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary,

¹ The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation is a German foundation named after Rosa Luxemburg, a Marxist theorist and economist. With offices across the world, the foundation supports political education and considers itself part of the movement for democratic socialism. It is funded by the German federal government.

Deputy Secretary, Treasurer, and Campaign & Project Coordinator. The OBs formed their own committee and met regularly as an extended group that included part-time organizers and regional coordinators. At the beginning of my fieldwork in 2009, the OBs meeting had been reduced to once a month because of a mandate to cut down expenses due to diminished funding. In their meetings, the OBs addressed concerns immediate to the functioning of the organization, and as much as possible, decisions were deferred to other meeting structures. APF had affiliates based in four designated regions: the Vaal, Johannesburg and the inner city, Pretoria/Tshwane, and the East Rand. Each region had its own officials including a regional coordinator who participated in OB meetings by virtue of his or her position. Each region also had a part-time organizer who received a monthly stipend and participated in OB meetings. A coordinating committee (CC) met on a quarterly basis and was the highest decision-making body between AGMs. The CC consisted of multiple delegates from each affiliate as well as the OBs. Executive committee (exco) meetings were to set the agenda for CC meetings and guide APF activities in accordance with CC directives. The executive committee consisted of a representative from each affiliate, the office bearers, and the coordinators of sub-committees and of regions. Sub-committees were comprised of representatives from APF-affiliates and included media, and legal subcommittees as well as those devoted to education, housing, and labor. Any given week at the APF office might involve meetings of APF leadership structures, sub-committee meetings, and part-time organizers' meetings; in addition the Johannesburg region would often meet at the APF office. These meetings brought varying numbers to the office.

While Buhlungu (2004) estimated a “support base” for APF of about 10,000 in 2004, without a membership database, it is impossible to provide an account of APF’s total individual members as it evolved in its latter years. In 2010, APF was composed of 34 nominal affiliate organizations based in communities across its four regions, as well as at least two political groups that were not embedded in particular communities. During its annual general meeting in April 2010, when the APF had documented attendance according to gender, 26 out of 34 affiliates sent 95 male and 67 female members for a total of 162. According to its constitution, each community-based affiliate could send ten delegates, while political groups could send five, any participant in excess of those numbers would serve as observers. Only four affiliates sent in the allotted 10 delegates out of the 26 in attendance. The coordinating committee meetings I attended were comprised of about 80 to 90 APF members in addition to the office bearers. An executive committee meeting might number between 30 and 40.

For these meetings, very few activists drove to the office in private cars; and of those who could afford private transportation, one drove a motorcycle. Most would arrive on Johannesburg’s formal and informal public transport system. Some came from Johannesburg’s immediate metro area, others from as far afield as the Vaal, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni. Many attendees at these meetings often got there using mini-bus “kombis,” Johannesburg’s informal and inexpensive transport industry with its unwritten convention of hand signals. Along with kombis, larger-capacity buses also served the road. Some activists, especially those from the Vaal, would travel to the APF using the train, which from the Vaal netted a less expensive

fare than kombis. During a workshop on women and public transportation, one activist regaled us with stories of the unique sub-cultures peculiar to train travel. Each car had its dominant group. The first and last cars usually served gamblers. Church congregations also jostled for space and held services during workers' commutes. There were "staff riders"—train surfers who risked riding on top of trains—as well as "cheeseballs," a term I never got to clarify. On these sometimes overcrowded trains, riders (particularly women) risked theft and sexual violation.

Much of the social base of the APF was composed largely of the unemployed (particularly women and youth), casualized workers, those in the informal sector, and the elderly. Many relied on government subsidies in the form of pensions or child grants, lived in overcrowded households in dire conditions, and were being pressured into "narrower survivalist modes" (McKinley 2012:17) due to South Africa's intensifying socio-economic crisis. The APF had implemented a number of institutionalized procedures that recognized the impoverished economic status of its primary constituents. The APF had a policy of reimbursing travel costs to the office with fares varying by region. Furthermore, meetings that extended over a full day often merited the provision of lunch or money for its purchase. Yet there were limits to APF's address of the economic inequalities faced by much of its members.

As I present the history of APF's emergence in this chapter, it is therefore with attention to the existing constraints that APF founding activists contested, their attempts to establish a new modality of political engagement and the delimitation of their political practices. As APF stabilized, what possibilities of its potential were enclosed and foreclosed? Relatedly, how were these moments of emergence and

oppositional formation facilitated through affective attachments? I show APF's emergence amidst political uncertainty in the wake of South Africa's post-apartheid transition. Considering this transition as itself a culmination of long-endured political struggle, the emergence of oppositional mass mobilization in such a moment should not be taken for granted. APF was forged through a timely convergence of spatially dispersed dynamics. It was established first as an activist forum, later becoming transformed towards a mass grassroots orientation. As it became stabilized and attained a level of security particularly through transformations in its organizational structure,² some strategies became prioritized, and some forms of legitimacy were authorized over others in ways that shaped the overall organization's identity.

Temporal Emergence and Precursors to Mass Mobilization

To explain how political uncertainty became channeled into the potential for mass action, the immediate wake of South Africa's post-apartheid transition (mid-to-late 1990s) must be reexamined. The long history of political opposition to state politics in South Africa was crucial in securing the country's democratic transition. However, following the 1994 democratic election that brought the African National Congress (ANC) into national governance was a particularly ambiguous period in regards to popular movements.³ Ballard et al. (2006) claimed that in the immediate

² Of the containment of activist potential, Dave notes that "it is in containment that there is security, which is not always identical with normativity" (Dave 2012:203). I am using security here in that context, as an experience of durability that fosters assurance in the organization's continued existence.

³ On the myriad contradictions of South Africa's democratic transition in community life, see especially Ashforth (2005), and Besteman (2008).

aftermath of South Africa's political transition, former anti-apartheid organizations that worked in opposition to the state became allied under the leadership and governance of the newly elected African National Congress (ANC). This shift from state opposition to more collaborative political engagements created a vacuum of opposition to the ANC's democratically elected government. According to Ballard et al., the new social movements that emerged from the late 1990s onward came to fill this void.

In contrast, Marcelle Dawson (2010:268-269) argued that Ballard et al. overstated the lack of popular opposition in the immediate post-apartheid transition. Although there was a hiatus in grassroots struggle—as “people held their breath in awe of the dawning of a new era” (Ngwane 2010:3)—this awed suspension did not last for long. Criticism of the ANC's policies began in the mid-1990s shortly after it took power. The government's Reconstruction and Development Programme was criticized as a dilution of the aims and demands of the liberation struggle. When the ANC changed its guiding economic policy from Reconstruction and Development to the more neoliberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme, criticism of the policy came from within its factions as well as from broader South African civil society. These developments therefore contradicted claims that there was an utter void in state opposition in the immediate post-apartheid transition. Despite Dawson's contentions, it is clear that in the ascendance to power of the country's leading anti-apartheid movement was

demobilization as many liberation-era organizations came into alignment with the ruling party (Bond 2006:115-116).⁴

In interviews, APF activists characterized this transition as an unsteady moment for political opportunity. In particular, Claire Ceruti, an APF founding member, described how the immediate aftermath of the ANC's ascendance to power enabled further struggle in her activist sphere; the hiatus in mobilization did not come until three years later, in 1997. In a 2010 interview, Claire discussed how after South Africa's first election, the focus of mainstream political organizations were now consumed with governance, thereby creating "a vacuum in politics."⁵ At the same time however, confidence in the impact of collective struggle emboldened communities in their expectations of change. Since 1987, Claire had been a member of the International Socialists of South Africa, a Marxist reading group that sought to tie class struggle to more mainstream struggles for national liberation. In this moment of transition, the International Socialists of South Africa were first able to connect their ideologies to mass-based action:

The recent history was, we got this far by major struggle and therefore we... you know there was a real willingness to just go on the streets sort of thing, you know. So we as this tiny little organisation of fourteen people were able to hold mass meetings in Hillbrow over rent control for example. There were things like the Spar strike which I think was a piece of history that still needs to be properly documented where a couple of workers got fired for going to

⁴ This demobilization is despite contrary intentions by the ANC government to support and cultivate social movements and civil society organizations. According to the 1994 *Reconstruction and Development Program*: "Social movements and Community-Based Organizations are a major asset in the effort to democratize and develop our society. Attention must be given to enhancing the capacity of such formations to adapt to partially changed roles. Attention must also be given to extending social-movement and CBO structures into areas and sectors where they are weak or non-existent" (African National Congress 1994: Chapter 5, quoted in Bond 2006:116).

⁵ Interview with Claire Ceruti, conducted by Dale McKinley, February 23, 2010, Johannesburg. All of the quotes attributed to Claire in this chapter are from this interview. Interview housed in the Anti-Privatisation Forum collection of the South African History Archive.

Mandela's inauguration and there was basically a national strike over this issue. And we related to that and so on and then especially in Potchefstroom in particular where our comrades there were able to actually be quite instrumental in leading a number of struggles over relocations and over services and this was not long after 1994.

The vacuum therefore presented new possibilities as these activist-intellectuals could connect their political visions nurtured through long-term intellectual labor to community-based practical struggles. For Claire, "that was a kind of period where you know you were able to be a revolutionary in a very practical way about very day-to-day issues to say look we can really push the envelope at the moment, we can win some victories." I characterize the nascent opportunities of this moment as unsteady because the connections made were not sustained or coherently focused around abiding political visions. The communities they had rallied became disillusioned when they confronted opposition from a government they had expected to be on their side, and their fostering of a bigger movement quickly diminished in a span of three years. Struggle fatigue set in:

So basically we got back to that point where we were sort of back down to four people in a room - it is not that all those other people disappeared completely, but a lot of members just got burnt out because it was a really high level of, you know we really were... we did nothing else for three years except the struggle. You know there were just so much happening and so much potential but there didn't seem any point and then when that stopped getting results then people just... you can imagine, people just collapse.⁶

In seeking alternatives, Claire and others in her activist circle joined the South African Communist Party (SACP). Participation in the party, however, came to feel constraining for them. The International Socialists of South Africa took on the name

⁶ This narrative complicates Dawson's characterization of the immediate aftermath of political transition by showing that there were realms in which activity flourished. The fatigue described here is different from that of Dawson's portrayal, which was due to the hard-won attainment of political freedom (Dawson 2010:268). Here the fatigue is due to sustained activism with little results.

“Keep Left” to highlight the desired ideological commitment that its members wanted to promote during the country’s transition even as they expanded their participation in a more mainstream organization. Keep Left would later be a founding political group within the APF.

Unrelated to the efforts of Claire’s group, grassroots protests started to take hold in some South African communities also in the mid-to-late 1990s as the South African government began harshly enforcing cost-recovery approaches to the provision of basic services. These protests were characterized by an imaginative militancy that was again legitimized by South Africa’s political transition. In Tembisa for example, residents reconnected themselves to the electricity grid after having their electricity disconnected, a tactic that would be sustained in the new social movements. Though somewhat sporadic and inchoate, through these “popcorn protests” (Ngwane 2010:4), a few South African communities began responding to the dashing of their hopes and expectations in the dawn of democracy. They protested electricity cut-offs and the lack of municipal infrastructure. In other instances, people invaded unoccupied land and erected shacks thus claiming “a place in the sun and a piece of the pie” (Ngwane 2010: 4).

If the immediate advent of democracy constituted a first phase in the history of post-apartheid community mobilization (Ngwane 2010), this phase was marked by uneven tendencies. It was a period of hope and expectation invested in the newly elected government, while at the same time, the impact of political freedom meant assurance among some grassroots activists in their capability to agitate for change. It meant an opening of possibilities and fledgling imaginative militancy even as these

were quickly confronted with disillusionment stemming from ANC's shifting economic policies from a development program of RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) to a neoliberal strategy of Growth, Employment, and Redistribution.

Activists believed that trade unions, in particular COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions), which was in a tripartite leadership alliance with the ANC, would challenge such policies (Buhlungu 2006). However, attempts to do this within the ruling alliance were stifled, sometimes rather harshly. Dale McKinley recalled being part of the opposition within structures of the tripartite alliance, and the level to which such contention was suppressed:

I had been through a huge amount of really rough kind of politics but I had never experienced a situation where I had been physically prevented from attending meetings and physically threatened because of the stance of opposition that we took. In other words the politics turned very nasty very quickly for those that had a dissenting voice to this kind of agenda and we lost that battle, as was clear a few years onwards when it was unveiled as the official policy of the ANC.⁷

Dale McKinley was among those activists whose criticisms of the three institutions constituting the alliance (the ANC, COSATU, and SACP) resulted in expulsions from these organizations. Dale McKinley was expelled from the South African Communist Party. Trevor Ngwane (from his vantage point in local government as a municipal councilor for Pimville in Soweto) criticized the cost-recovery model negatively impacting his constituents and was expelled from the ANC, thereby losing his appointment (Ngwane 2003). John Appolis, who was critical of COSATU's

⁷ Interview with Dale McKinley, conducted by Ahmed Veriava, March 1, 2010, Johannesburg. The quotes and comments from Dale McKinley in this chapter are from this interview. Interview housed in the Anti-Privatisation Forum collection of the South African History Archive.

participation in the alliance, lost his job as a union regional secretary. Each became key founding activists within the APF as it emerged. Their experiences underscore the harsh constraints and inadequacies of already existent political structures in addressing concerns inimical to the government's burgeoning alliance with capital (Bond 2006: 115).

The unevenness of oppositional activities to these structures during this period is a key characteristic of what Raymond Williams has identified as the emergent. Recognizing that "new practice is not, of course, an isolated process," Williams indicated that the ushering in of oppositional forms was "likely to be uneven and is certain to be incomplete" (Williams 1977:124) due to the interaction of these nascent forms with more dominant modes. Emergence, then, is not an issue of what is fully reconcilable in the present, rather "it depends on finding new forms or adaptations of form. Again and again what we have to observe is in effect a *pre-emergence*, active and pressing but not yet fully articulated, rather than the evident emergence which could be confidently named" (Williams 1977:126; original emphasis). The unevenness of the period revealed engagements that were not fully defined but taking place in the interstices of past liberation struggles and the anticipation of a politics that was not yet confidently named.

The legacy of this first period included such tactics as reconnection and land invasion that would be elaborated in a second phase of community mobilization. In the early 2000s, the formation of social movement organizations—including the Anti-Privatisation Forum, the Treatment Action Campaign, the Anti-Eviction Campaign, Jubilee South Africa, Landless Peoples Movement, and Abahlali

baseMjondolo—heralded this second phase of post-apartheid oppositional mobilization.⁸ Although these organizations pursued divergent tactics in engaging the post-apartheid state (Dawson 2010:269), they flourished for some time. A little more than a decade into their formations however, many of these movements experienced organizational crises leading to their decline. Despite this, community protests continued to flourish—becoming even more widespread—independently of such formations. Such developments encourage the periodization of a third and current phase of community mobilization that recognizes uprisings embedded in particular communities functioning beyond the scope of the preceding social movements (see Alexander 2010). These developments also become cause to re-examine the role of the social movement organization in collective activism. In this chapter, I am concerned in particular with the first phase and its yield into a second—how do we explain the emergence of social movements such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum when the contours of oppositional politics were as yet short-lived and unclear?

APF was formed through the convergence of differently located political strivings. In detailing this convergence, I show how one of APF's formative strengths was that it fostered linkages among diverse movements—including student movements, labor movements and community-based movements—to overcome fragmentation and build a common struggle. I begin with a view embedded in one of the communities that came to constitute the forum.

⁸ A significant body of work details the emergence, ideologies, and dynamics of these new movements (see for example Ballard et al 2006; Bond 2006; Desai 2002; Gibson 2006; Naidoo and Varieva 2005).

Convergence

I don't set the formation of the APF in July 2000, when it was formally announced, I set the formation of the APF around a bunch of things that came together.
—Dale McKinley⁹

One of the first land invasions in a changing South Africa took place in anticipation of the general election of 1994 that marked the end of apartheid. Backyard dwellers in townships around the Vaal Triangle, a heavily industrialized urban complex south of Johannesburg, decided “as a final nail in the coffin of apartheid” to resettle in an unused open space outside the community of Small Farm. Anti-apartheid activism in the Vaal had been particularly combative. Vaal communities initiated widespread campaigns including the “Asinamali” rent boycotts of 1984, which grew to national fervor. Ten years later, in 1994, backyard dwellers were concerned that they would initiate black-on-black violence should they intensify the rent boycott by withholding payment from their landlords, the fellow residents whose backyards they leased. They decided it would be best to claim their own land. “Thulani,” one of the early squatters, recalled: “We shouted this slogan for, ‘Land back to people! Land back to people!’ That’s what we wanted to say to everyone to say: ‘Now we are free, let’s get our land back!’”¹⁰ They wanted through their actions to ensure that the scheduled elections would not be postponed:

because there was this thing of saying, “27th of April will be the elections, now to be postponed,” So our aim was to make sure that they don’t postpone

⁹ In an interview of Ahmed Veriava, conducted by Dale McKinley, February 19, 2010, Johannesburg. Interview housed in the Anti-Privatisation Forum collection of the South African History Archive.

¹⁰ Interview conducted by the author, August 25, 2010, Johannesburg. All quotes attributed to Thulani are from this interview.

this day. So we needed to make sure that there is something happening around here for that day so we invaded this land.

The “invasion” itself was quite chaotic. Taking place on the 16th of April, about 10 days before the elections, the new residents brought zinc and other materials to construct their homes, claiming their space as they found it: “you just put your yard here then you stay here, it’s your home.” The new community defended their claim against apartheid government soldiers and police. Government officials in the new dispensation also tried to remove the residents citing lack of essential services in the area, and already at this early stage, the residents encountered continuities in their experience of the state. “They said, ‘Guys, there is no water here.’ We said, ‘Yes we’ve lived here with no water...we are okay here, just leave us alone.’” In 1997, the ANC government called the community to a negotiating table to formally demarcate the area, which was eventually formalized in 1998. When it came time to name the place they had claimed, community leaders chose Kanana, after Canaan, the biblical land of milk and honey.

Residents formed the Kanana Community Development Forum in 2000 as a community-based organization independent of any political party, including the ANC, so as to lend greater legitimacy to their demands. “We had a problem that when you demanded something, somebody will say, ‘No, Comrade you know, you know using that title (Comrade), you are also a member of the ANC, how could you fight the ANC?’” To avoid such a conflict of political affiliation, Thulani and others decided to ground their claims in the community. Around that same time, Thulani was invited to “eruptions” taking place at the University of the Witwatersrand

(Wits) by one of the legal advisors he had come to know from his community advocacy.

He said, "Look, there is a meeting at Wits so will you participate there?" I said, "Wits?" He said, "Yes" I said, 'What time?' He said, "6 o'clock at night" I said, "But how am I going to get back home?" He said, "Comrade don't worry just go."

At that meeting, taking place in 1999, Thulani met other community-based activists and academics coming from the Johannesburg metropolitan area including the East Rand and Soweto.

The gatherings taking place at Wits that Thulani attended sought to mobilize against a series of neo-liberal restructurings proposed by the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. These restructurings came under the iGoli 2002 plan, a strategy that entailed the increased involvement of the private sector in the provision of basic services. Prepared in 1997, the iGoli 2002 policy allowed the outsourcing of management and basic service distribution to private companies. City officials believed that the introduction of commercial management practices to the delivery system would allow for greater autonomy and flexibility (City of Johannesburg 2001: 32). The driving tenets of the policy included cost-recovery as a model in municipal service provision in which "the objective is to recoup the full cost of production" (McDonald 2002:18). Given Johannesburg's significance as a key industrial capital then generating 16% of South Africa's economic production (Beauregard et al 2003), the city's proposed neo-liberal restructuring, among the nation's first, was a crucial battleground.¹¹

¹¹ Interview with Dale McKinley, conducted by Ahmed Veriava, March 1, 2010, Johannesburg. Interview housed in the Anti-Privatisation Forum collection of the South African History Archive.

The South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) firmly opposed the policy, lodging a formal complaint against the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council in 1999. As both municipal workers and consumers, SAMWU members were doubly vulnerable to the proposed changes, which would result in increased costs and job losses (especially for municipal workers). In their opposition, SAMWU members reached out to Trevor Ngwane, the ANC municipal councilor who had been expelled for speaking out against the iGoli 2002 plan. As the only councilor who had spoken out against the plan, Ngwane was invited to speak at SAMWU marches. Ngwane and others created alternative spaces for those affected to engage with the plan; this included a workshop that was organized by the Campaign Against Neoliberalism in South Africa (CANSAs). Those present at the workshop decided to start an anti-iGoli forum with the idea of drawing local communities into the workers' struggles: "because the government's main argument then was, 'The workers are selfish, this is good for the communities.' And it made sense because the first line of attack was the workers."¹² The importance of linking workers' struggles with the concerns of the communities in which they were embedded cannot be overstated particularly when considering social fragmentation as an effect of globalized neoliberal capitalism (Gill 2009; Harvey 2005). Ngwane was describing such fragmentation in recalling government rhetoric that pit the interests of workers against those of community residents, thus alienating one from the other and obscuring the "relationships and associational forms" that could shield them "from the brunt of market forces" (Gill 2009: 668).

¹² Author's interview with Trevor Ngwane, November 14, 2010, Johannesburg. The following quotes and comments from Trevor Ngwane are from this interview.

At that time, not everyone was sold on the detriments of neoliberalism as Ngwane recalled: “of course you can’t believe it now... but there was debate about whether privatization was a good thing or a bad thing in society.” Communities were also ambivalent about opposing the government:

for many people the struggle was against the legacy of apartheid. And so let us all join hands and roll back the legacy of apartheid through reconstruction. The main line was, “Let us not fight the government, let’s be partners with the government!” And the government’s idea was, “Let’s privatize.”

The anti-iGoli Forum sought to clarify this ambivalence and bridge divides between workers and their broader community base as well as between township struggles (for basic services) and forums happening in town.

One such forum was in formation at Wits University in response to the University’s own restructuring program. In 1999, University administrators announced a strategic plan called Wits 2001 that was designed to financially reposition the university and reorganize academic departments by financial viability promoting more market-oriented logics. Among other measures, the program entailed outsourcing support services including cleaning, catering, maintenance, grounds and transport, which threatened the jobs of the university’s support staff. Along with the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU)—the union representing these campus workers—concerned academics, students and staff mobilized in opposition to Wits 2001. Many of these formed the Wits University Crisis Committee.

Members of the Anti-iGoli Forum supported the campaigns of the Wits University Crisis Committee as both groups were witnessing connected neoliberal onslaughts. The overlapping of membership in these groups provided activists with

integrated perspectives, resulting in the need to build a more inclusive campaign. Ahmed Veriava, a student at the time, described the moment as one when “on campus... we kind of realized that it’s going to be very difficult for us to win this campaign without broadening it.”¹³ The campus protests became a platform for establishing connections with opposition to the iGoli plan, and community struggles happening elsewhere. As Ahmed recalled, “we saw in these the hopeful possibility of potentially making more kind of real connections with, or kind of establishing something of a broad front against neo-liberal privatization.”

It was to these efforts of the Wits University Crisis Committee against Wits 2001 that Thulani referred when he described the first meeting he attended in town. After the 6PM meeting he attended, Thulani decided to stay on for a roundtable discussion on privatization. Inequalities of mobility were already of concern despite eagerness to connect with others in struggle. That first evening, having no way of getting home and no other place to go, Thulani slept at Park Station, the transportation hub of the city. The very next day, having slept at the station, he was already in town to attend a march in support of the Wits workers.

Formation

When the Wits University Crisis Committee, the Anti-iGoli Forum and other similarly invested groupings decided to integrate their efforts, they called a joint meeting of their members. One of the conveners named the meeting a gathering of

¹³ Interview with Ahmed Veriava, conducted by Dale McKinley, February 19, 2010, Johannesburg. The quotes and comments from Ahmed in this chapter are from this interview. Interview housed in the Anti-Privatisation Forum collection of the South African History Archive.

the “Anti-Privatisation Forum.” As Trevor Ngwane recalled, “what [else] could he write because it was Wits Crisis Committee, and we were called Anti-Igoli?” He continued: “so he just said this is the Anti-Privatisation Forum for activists so this is how the APF was formed like an activist forum.” The forum brought together a wide range of activists including those from the South African Students Congress (SASCO), the South African Municipal Workers’ Union (SAMWU), the National Education, Health and Allied Workers’ Union (NEHAWU), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union (IMATU), “left wing” groupings including Keep Left and the Democratic Socialist Movement as well as the Johannesburg Branch of the South African Communist Party, and community organizations including the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee. These organizations formally allied with the APF in its initial formation.

APF’s formation was forged through feeling generated by direct action, revealing how affective experience mattered. Activists recollected the collective’s commitment to direct action as a key bond distinguishing this new formation from its antecedents. As Ahmed Veriava recalled:

I think what was specific about the APF and what separated it from previous, similar kinds of discussion groups like CANSA even the Anti-Igoli Forum itself, was that this particular activist forum was orientated towards forms of direct action and building a kind of common, a kind of sense of belonging together as a political entity through actual forms of struggle and that was immediately expressed in its foundational activities. And in my somewhat kind of generous narrative of this, I do somewhat link this also to the presence of a particular group of students, who were keen to kick in doors and those kinds of things.

Wits students had earlier recognized one advantage of their relative autonomy.

During the Wits 2001 protests, union workers had to undergo labor mediation

processes before they could undertake protest action on campus, and they were limited in their activities to lunchtime protests. In consideration of this, as Ahmed recalled, “we saw certain opportunities to perhaps use the cover that students had, to undertake somewhat more antagonistic actions.” These included the occupation of the Vice Chancellor’s office by mainly student leaders. Proclivity towards direct action continued in such a mold within the newly formed APF, and was critical to the effervescence of APF’s formative moments.

One of the first demonstrations of the new collective occurred during the Urban Futures conference that took place at Wits in 2000. Wits University and the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council jointly organized the conference, a collaboration of the two main targets of anti-privatization activism in Johannesburg that caused particular concern. Activists interpreted the conference as an effort “to showcase the sale of our city and our university” to financial institutions including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, fraternal proponents of neoliberal policies (Ngwane and Dor 2000:n.p.). The activists acted with a sense of urgency, and drew inspiration from anti-globalization initiatives that most notably cohered in the 1999 Seattle disruptions of the WTO Ministerial conference.¹⁴ They protested the conference, which ran over a week from July 10th to July 14th at three different venues—the Wits University campus, the Johannesburg City Hall and the Newtown Cultural Precinct. Activists decided to disrupt the final conference ceremony, which was to be addressed by Colin Bundy (then the Vice-Chancellor of

¹⁴ As Ahmed recalled: “at least from our side the targeting of that conference did owe something to the inspiration of Seattle, a kind of conference bashing and I think we wanted our own mini-Seattle.”

the University whose administration was responsible for the retrenchment of support staff under Wits 2001).

Two participants describe the unfolding of this action:

As we approach the Great Hall, the venue for the closing ceremony of Urban Futures (and our target), we get excited at the sound of singing (our comrades are here). But the singing is coming from a mass of workers spilling out of a lecture hall – there has just been a memorial service for a NEHAWU member who recently passed away. We quickly spread the word that we are about to disrupt the final ceremony of the conference that we've been protesting all week, the showcasing of the privatisation plans of Wits University and the Johannesburg City Council. Someone asks whether there'll be food again. Laughter and quick retellings of the action earlier in the week, when we took over a water discussion of the conference in Newtown, ensue. We walk on to the Great Hall, now a sizeable number, to meet other comrades who've gathered. The session has begun inside and the doors have been shut. There's a little bit of confusion as to what's to be done. Do we just stand here outside and sing quietly while their conference closes or...? And who is supposed to decide? In little groups it's agreed that we will try to force our entry into the Great Hall. We bang on the doors, scuffles break out with security guards, and finally the doors are kicked open – Colin Bundy and neoliberalism's legion of consultants, academics, and policy experts gathered cannot believe their eyes. A motley crew of student activists, academics, workers, unionists and political activists take over the stage as Bundy is hurriedly ushered out to a press conference next door. They are not going to get away with proclaiming that their neoliberal projects are the answers to the needs of the poor. We choose comrades to represent our positions, and over a loudhailer delegates are reminded of the role they are playing in selling out the lives of the poor. Toyi-toyiing continues. Someone shouts that Bundy shouldn't be let off the hook and we move, almost instinctively, to the press conference next door. Security guards are already well positioned at the doors. A few comrades make for the doors. As fights begin between us and the security guards, Bundy emerges – his press conference has had to stop. Comrades at the door threaten him. Someone grabs him by the scruff of his neck. Another comrade intervenes. Bundy breaks away and makes a run for his office. We chase after him... back into Senate House concourse, by now deserted... but at least the feeling that we're strangers in this place has disappeared for a moment. For the first time in a long while it feels like we're a force again, like there is the possibility for further struggle. We leave Wits through the same turnstiles – we mock them, laughing with comrades, arguing with security, patting each other on the backs, a new energy to fight on... (Naidoo and Veriava 2005: 28-29; original italics)

This recollection illuminates interconnected considerations of activists' practices in that nascent moment: the prominence of song and its significance for conveying comradely presence; the responsive process of decision-making; the mobilization of support from potentially aligned bystanders; the buoyant experience of collective vigor; and finally, the inspiration drawn from immediate outcomes. While I expound on the relevance of sung protest in a later chapter, the process of collective decision-making is worth examining here. This narrative immediately demonstrates attempts towards inclusive decision-making, structural issues that remained persistent in the formation's later years. In this moment, the leader directing the flow of protest is conspicuously absent which yields momentary confusion: *"what's to be done. Do we just stand here outside and sing quietly while their conference closes or...? And who is supposed to decide?"* A consideration of power is attendant with the question, who is supposed to decide; in other words, who among the gathered comrades establishing themselves on equal footing will be individually empowered to make such a decision? This challenge is overcome through the achievement of consensus in smaller groups. Later on when individuals are privileged, they are highlighted not as leaders but as loudhailers representing collective stances. An activist's suggestion—that Bundy be held accountable—contributes further momentum to the gathering, which then shifts from the closing ceremony to the press conference next door. A moment of detrimental violence is interrupted when one comrade intervenes after another comrade had grabbed Bundy "by the scruff of his neck," in a situation that could have escalated irreparably. Such shifts show the decidedly unprompted nature of this gathering, which yields a receptive collectivity testing its own limits.

Finally, the narrative concludes with a resonant sentiment: *“For the first time in a long while it feels like we’re a force again, like there is the possibility for further struggle.”* This statement draws attention to a crisis of relevance that the Urban Futures protest perhaps helped to mitigate.

Given the unevenness of prior oppositional attempts—especially recalling Claire Ceruti’s assessment of activists’ burned out withdrawal and the stifling of dissenting voices within ANC’s alliance—the uncertainty many activists felt as to how to proceed in the new political dispensation is all the more appreciable (see also Buhlungu 2004:2). In Naidoo and Veriava’s contextualization, the exhaustion of defeat is palpable. They recount many losses in the developing struggle. In the case of Wits University, 613 workers had lost their jobs with only 250 being re-employed under contract with outsourced service providers at a fraction of their former salaries and without access to health insurance or other benefits to which they were previously entitled (Van der Walt, et al., 2001). As Naidoo and Veriava noted:

When the Urban Futures conference came up in July 2000, it presented the perfect opportunity for all those who had begun to feel the effects of the implementation of GEAR (at the university, in the city, in Soweto, in the unions, and in the ANC and Congress-aligned structures such as SASCO, SANCO and the SACP) -- and *the exhaustion of trying unsuccessfully to fight it from within the ANC Alliance* -- to come together in a symbolic show of the willingness to fight privatisation at all costs, whether this meant taking on the ANC Alliance or not. (Naidoo and Veriava 2005:40; emphasis mine)

Confronting such defeats rather than cowering to them, the experience of collective capability during the Urban Futures conference was an affirmation invigorating *“a new energy to fight on.”*

The APF at this stage was part of a long line of attempts at opening up political space, and many of Johannesburg’s leftist progressives had begun assessing

its potential. The Urban Futures disruption presented this grouping in hopeful novelty and as a stem upon which to hang a variety of political visions. In Ahmed's assessment:

I think when it actually happened, when we took over the stage and when there were certain kinds of expressions of collective power, I think it gave people a certain kind of confidence in whatever this formation was and the desire to perpetuate it in some way as well as focus it. But also remember that in its very constituent parts it brought together at the time, the unions, students, the communist party, a range of activists within Johannesburg. So in terms of what it was, it was in itself novel, something that people were quite excited about and I mean from the kind of people making plans on white boards in a kind of small Trotskyite circles and those people within that kind of union movement... who even coming from those similar kinds of politics also had an experience of mass politics or wanting to build a broad front of what was the watchword there - a kind of neo-liberal privatization.

Privatization had become a rallying point in the convergence of city and township-based politics in particularly instructive ways. Due to an articulation of the global with the local, leftists were already vigilant against its encroachment on South African shores. The retreat of the nation-state from spheres of social provision did not yet have the same connotations or seismic significance as with more European or American originations. Even as it became a watchword in leftist circles, there was an uneven grasp of its significance in South Africa's context. It therefore required an understanding of South Africa's transition in a shifting political trajectory that coincided with the deracialization of capitalism (Bond 2006). Ahmed described learning about neo-liberalism through the ensuing struggles to oppose it: "our actual giving flesh to those concepts of neo-liberalism and privatisation actually took place in a mode in which we confronted these things at different levels...in various struggles that arose." Through such struggles, the global watchword

attained a deeper meaning and was “given its own particular inflection in our political context.”

Township struggles in particular provided insight into the day-to-day impact of neoliberal policies. When Soweto households experienced drastic cut-offs due to an increase in their electricity bills,¹⁵ many illegally reconnected themselves by bribing Eskom employees. Such discrete practices came to be politicized in the formation of a mass organization called the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee that was a founding organization in the APF. Regarding these reconnections, Trevor Ngwane recalled:

when we raised the question in mass meetings it would come as a relief to everyone to find that their neighbours were illegally connected too—they’d all been hiding it from each other. We turned what was a criminal deed from the point of view of eskom into an act of defiance. It was good tactics and good politics. (Ngwane 2003:47)

These reclamation practices established, as Ahmed described, what the strategies of resistance to the awaited privatization “were to be.” For the SECC, and for the APF, coming together finally meant the articulation of pressing though ambivalent practices as acts of definition and defiance—giving organizational solidity to previously hidden (and thereby fragmented) commonality. By opposing privatization as a central point of critique or problematization (Dave 2012:8; Foucault 1997), political potential established its contours and found its name.

¹⁵ Under apartheid, there were fixed payments for services, however under the ANC, the parastatal Eskom electricity agency started charging per kilowatt hour.

Transformation and Stabilization

In September of 2000, the APF held its “founding conference” on the 10th floor of the COSATU House. Representing the conglomeration of organizations that constituted the forum, including trade unions and student congresses, Sibongile Radebe of the South African Students Congress (SASCO), and John Appolis of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) Wits Region, were elected co-chairs of the new Forum. In 2001, however, the COSATU Regional Executive Committee decided to withdraw from the APF due to the forum’s increasingly oppositional stance towards the ANC. Several other organizations also lapsed in their participation without formally declaring their withdrawal. As APF cultivated its antagonistic opposition to the ANC’s policies, maintaining affiliation with the Forum became increasingly untenable for those organizations that were part of ANC’s tripartite alliance with the South African Communist Party and COSATU. Activists affiliated with the trade union, including John Appolis, who wanted to maintain their involvement with the APF could only do so as individual activists and not as representatives of these unions.

As the participation of some of its constituting organizations faded, community-based activist groupings became more involved with the forum. By mid-2001, the number of APF community-based affiliates had increased from the three at the founding conference to eight community organizations. These community-based groupings were reaching out to one another to establish solidarity in their struggles. In one example from my interviews, an activist recalled receiving a phone call from an organizer with the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC). The

organizer had heard a radio interview about a march the activist's organization had held that day. The SECC organizer called offering recognition of shared struggles and a desire to unite. The Lenasia-based activists visited the SECC and cultivated a relationship with one another. Activists in the SECC eventually introduced the Lenasia-based Thembelihle Crisis Committee to the Anti-Privatisation Forum.

In 2002, APF was a key organization (under an alliance called the Social Movements Indaba) that mobilized for a march targeting the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) convened by the United Nations in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September 2002. Following the World Conference Against Racism in Durban in 2001, this was the second international conference that APF targeted in collaboration with other organizations. During the WSSD march, which took place on August 31st, more than 20,000 protesters took to the streets in a procession that moved from the impoverished township of Alexandra to the far more opulent Sandton, where the summit was held. The government had warned against any disruptions to the summit, and that became a challenge that oppositional forces like APF sought to counter by mobilizing as many people as possible outside of the official routes of participation in the event itself. By numbers, this was thus far its largest oppositional gathering, and its success marked a turning point in APF activities.

If the possibility for struggle had been uncertain before, the march demonstrated the extent of APF's potential base. As Claire Ceruti reflected: "it showed was that there really was a space for organizations outside of those mainstream organizations to do something, to get something together and I think it

also showed that that space was open.” The event further affirmed a spirit of common purpose among activists. Silumko Radebe reflected on the march thus:

Seeing a lot of people out there in the streets and everybody joining in singing...I think it was electrifying at the same time exciting to say our voices are also going to be heard outside your original movements which were there. It’s a memory that someone will carry on for quite a long time and I think it brought some excitement to say hang on we are on to something new here and something is going to develop. Unlike being within your affiliate where you think it’s only us and a very few people who have similar sort of outlook to things and how things should be, it is quite a well, bigger number and a bigger network that was quite exciting.¹⁶

Through the march, APF earned greater visibility and more communities and individuals came to affiliate with the organization.

There were other effects as well. In 2001, before the summit, the APF had secured a three-year funding award from the UK-based War on Want that allowed it to open an office in the COSATU House and hire an organizer and administrator as full-time employees. Following the WSSD in June 2003, the APF was evicted from its COSATU premises at the behest of the ANC. Such an unapologetic break served to clarify APF’s oppositional politics, marking the closure of potential for collaboration with the ANC-aligned labor congress. The APF eventually came to its offices at the Khanya College “house of movements” following this eviction.

Furthermore, recognizing that mobilization on such a massive scale as had happened for the march was hardly sustainable, the WSSD protest provided impetus for the APF to consolidate its organizational structure even as it clarified its commitment to mass struggle. In its early years, APF had functioned as a forum, that is, as a loosely structured gathering place that ensured the autonomy of its affiliated

¹⁶ Interview with Silumko Radebe, conducted by Dale McKinley, February 23, 2010, Johannesburg. Interview housed in the Anti-Privatisation Forum collection of the South African History Archive.

groups. In 2002, those with experience in mass-based organizations argued for a more grassroots-oriented structure. Such a transformation—the cultivation of one possibility over others that “had to be foreclosed” (Dave 2012: 37)—was not without debate. John Appolis provides a view of this moment and elaborates the importance of organizational development:

I think we sort of decided to harness that mood, that militancy that was displayed at WSSD into a much-more stronger, solid organizational form and hence we started moving in the direction of formalizing the APF...I think there were comrades who were opposed to this kind of internal organizational consolidation and building of organization and wanted to continue with a kind of big event sort of politics. I remember those debates where people used to argue that if you don't take to the streets, you are not struggling...I didn't support that kind of approach to struggle. I mean you can't be in permanent action, you know people get exhausted, you need to consolidate, you need to develop your organization, you need to develop the perspective of the militants, you have to provide certain training and political understandings, you know for them to sustain the organization and carry the organization through.¹⁷

Such insights are critical particularly when considering earlier experiences of post-apartheid mobilization that were not coupled with long-term vision; recall Claire's assessment of the struggle fatigue experienced within her political group after three years of persistence. Cultivating the organization's structure would therefore facilitate the longer-term sustainability of the movement and act as a safeguard against such potential loss of cohesion. As APF members gained confirmation of the feasibility of further struggles, they were driven to develop a different conception of activism. Inherent in such a formative moment was the possibility of discarding old forms of struggle and the excitement of bringing about something new. In its formation, APF members were imaginatively challenged to do organizational work

¹⁷ Interview with John Appolis, conducted by Dale McKinley, March 17, 2010, Johannesburg. Interview housed in the Anti-Privatisation Forum collection of the South African History Archive.

differently. This has yielded compelling evolutions in the APF's organizational structure.

Despite wariness towards the bureaucratization that formality would bring, following the WSSD, APF further consolidated this structure. Between 2002 and 2003, it adopted a "memorandum of association" that later became the basis of its constitution. By this time, there were 12-14 community-based affiliates, and regional structures were established in order to decentralize and facilitate more local connections among these communities. In addition, the Memorandum of Association captured a shift in organizational formation that recognized an APF Council (comprised of representatives from all community affiliates and political groupings) as its highest decision-making body. Further, an Executive Committee was to coordinate the routine practicalities of organizational work, and sub-committees were to focus on specific issues, e.g. education, and media. Elected office bearers were to include a chair, secretary and treasurer. The memorandum acknowledged three categories of membership—1) community groups such as the SECC and Thembelihle Crisis Committee; 2) political groupings such as Keep Left and the Socialist Group and the Democratic Socialist Movement, which were Trotskyist in orientation, and the Bikisha Media Collective, which was anarchist; and 3) individual unaffiliated activists. In 2004, the APF held its first Annual General Meeting (AGM), this time with 19 community-based affiliates present. When its final constitution was adopted in 2007, the APF council had shifted towards designation as a "Coordinating Committee"; elected office bearers included a Chairperson, Deputy Chair, Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Treasurer and a Campaigns and Project-

Coordinator. The Executive Committee and sub-committees persisted. The Constitution outlined the timing of meetings, with AGMs to be held annually and election AGMs held every two years. The constitution also clarified APF's membership structure including procedures for admitting new affiliates, as well as the rights and obligations of affiliates. Such a structure prioritized community-based organizations, granting them more representational weight than political groups.

The intent of such articulated priorities was to create more representative structures and promote internal organizational democracy—breaking with the organizational tendencies of South Africa's past liberation movements that limited avenues for open contestation. The APF was also trying to counter the dominance of individuals, an imbalance that came about due to the movement's reliance on the efforts of those with monetary and other resources since its formation. A key challenge therefore became one of increasing the involvement of members from Johannesburg's impoverished communities by promoting decentralized and non-hierarchical coordination. The shift in APF structures achieved such a purpose through the interplay of established and emerging organizational practices. These include linguistic plurality through meetings conducted with interchanges and translations between Zulu, Sotho, English, and other languages spoken by its members. In interactions, members addressed one another as "comrades." Debate was also critical to the openness APF sought to foster, and was prominent in many of the meetings I observed.

However, there remained some unresolved aspects of its stabilization as an organization. This included the perceived delegitimization of political groupings due

to concerns that the struggle not be predetermined by ideological commitments but rather grounded in the experiences of APF's working class constituents. This stance against predetermined ideology was an attempt to break with the past experiences of many APF activists who had participated in the country's liberation movements.

Claire Ceruti elaborated this dynamic:

the issues of politics was really in some ways more about the ANC and so on than about an organization like Keep Left, but obviously it did start to come over to say somehow any kind of politics is not allowed. So I kind of remember that being one of the... big points as things started to kind of settle and to solidify if you want to put it that way, organizationally is that that was one of the big arguments, like should an organization like Keep Left be able to affiliate as a political organization. It wasn't just us there were other organizations as well. So there was that period where there was a bit of a debate about whether only community organizations were legitimate and what gave you that legitimacy.

Such destabilization of legitimacy represented one of the possibilities that was lost in APF's transformation, prompting Claire to lament that "I think it was a shame to lose the activist forum in some ways." For Claire, political direction and organizational unity felt much more organic and she recalled the forum as "an impromptu front...of organizations that were being swept along together...in the same general direction." Formalizing its structures, however, authorized some forms of participation at the expense of others particularly as a focus on organizational affiliation overlooked the participation of individuals. Activists came to participate as representatives of their affiliates, with unaffiliated individuals at a further associational remove. This complicated the voicing of perspectives as some affiliated individuals felt their personal choices were constrained by the organizations they represented, while unaffiliated individuals were often without

claim to the experiential legitimacy that organizations granted in the new structural formation. In Claire's perspective:

when we moved towards the sort of representative structure, if you want to call it that way, but without somehow making a way for individual members to also be represented that I think there was, I mean I am speculating quite honestly about other peoples motives, because I could always still speak through Keep Left. But I think maybe there was a thing that people maybe then felt unsure about standing up and saying I am arguing my point here as one person, and that maybe drove a lot of things underground, so that was an issue.

Such issues of personal and organizational representation got submerged into a playing out of politics that I elaborate in the ensuing chapter that focuses on the internal dynamics among APF members. The constraints brought about by such an approach were of such significance that when some female members of the APF started a separate women's forum, they designated its membership would occur on an individual basis as women participating for themselves rather than as representatives of anyone else.

While its organizational formation aided its long-term presence—APF withstood the disintegration of several other post-apartheid movements that had begun around 2006—it was also a normalization that established patterned procedures that conditioned the experiences of its members both positively and negatively for years to come. When I came to know the APF between 2009 and 2010, the organization had about 34 community affiliates and two or so political groups. A few individual members that had been key to the APF's formation had waned in their participation, and there was much conflict within the organizational space. It is this dynamic that I attempt to disentangle in the chapter that follows.

Recovering History and its Implications

The eruption of politics is hardly spontaneous but embedded in the cultivation of oppositional sensibilities. APF emerged at a period of transition in which a dominant economic system was consolidated as the anticipated trajectory for South Africa. Despite the potential for change that the culmination of the anti-apartheid struggle heralded, the adoption of neoliberal policies exacerbated already dire living conditions while privileging a market logic that exposed workers and students to greater risk. Simultaneously the repression of dissent within the ANC-led tripartite alliance, in many cases through expulsion of contentious members, demonstrated the limits of engagement within already established systems. The convergence of efforts by those affected by privatization in their various spheres—whether in student organizations, labor unions, or communities—launched a heterogeneous and plural oppositional formation that at first cohered through commitment to concrete direct action to oppose the encroachment of neoliberalism. Following Dave's model, the collective formed in opposition extended beyond its critiques towards envisioning alternatives by "creating the space for the imagining of an alternative society in which basic services are delivered through the direct collective action of people and the reorganization of social life outside of the framework of the market" (Naidoo and Veriava 2005:45). For the movement, the ensuing challenge became one of channeling the energies of successful mass demonstrations into sustainable organizational structures that would transcend the problematic tendencies of earlier formations towards elitism and hierarchy. These attempts at inaugurating new modes of internal democracy necessarily foreclosed

other possibilities including the more expressly horizontal relationships fostered by an activist forum.

Before I consider the relational practices fostered by APF's stabilization as a representative structure, it is important to keep a key insight recovered from APF's history in mind: APF was forged through the interlinking of shared struggle by bringing together the variously located campaigns at Wits University, among labor unions, in Johannesburg and its neighboring townships. This recovery is all the more significant as it shows a potential embedded in APF's formative years to prevail over the social fragmentation due to neoliberal policies that would pit the interests of one grouping against another. This sense of commonality eroded over subsequent years rendering doubts regarding the legitimacy of certain forms of participation among APF activists. The erosion of collective spirit demonstrated how the envisioned struggle that inaugurated the formation had narrowed. Such a narrowing, which as according to Dave (2012) is to be expected, was tantamount to the establishment of values and norms within the movement against which subversive practices arose.

*chapter 2***DIGNITY AND THE ACTIVIST SUBLIME**

During the very first office bearer's (OB's) meeting I attended in 2009, the number of confrontational exchanges among those present caught my attention. One such exchange took place between the deputy secretary, who was perhaps in her forties, and the media coordinator, a younger woman (she was then still completing high school). During a finance review in which affiliate requests for monetary campaign support were considered, the media coordinator suggested that one of the requests be forwarded to the APF-allied Coalition Against Water Privatisation since it had to do with water. The deputy secretary vehemently disagreed saying that the request was not just regarding water but also housing, and electricity. Although I did not catch the media coordinator's response, it was sharp enough to elicit a word of caution from others in the room. The chair, an activist in her early fifties, told the young media coordinator that she should consider that the deputy secretary was sitting across from her and could jump across the table to get her. The media coordinator brashly responded that she can also jump. Upon the deputy secretary's complaint about being disrespected, the chair asked the media coordinator to apologize. However, the young woman insisted on receiving an apology herself. The meeting eventually moved on. This antagonistic interaction was not an isolated one—even the chair herself got pulled into a similar confrontation with the project and campaigns coordinator. In my reflections from the day, I wondered what was boiling under the surface of APF meetings.

The next day I was at the office, the chair and I had an opportunity to debrief the meeting since we were both the first people to arrive. As we walked from the elevator towards the APF office entrance, she explained that these confrontations had not always been prevalent in APF meetings, that the APF used to be more focused but hostile exchanges came as a result of people taking things personally and holding grudges against one another. That hindered the organization. She equated it with childish behavior saying that she had already raised her children, who now had children of their own, and that she was here for the struggle. Similar frustrations were voiced in other spheres including assessments made during Remmoho meetings that “gossip and undermining each other will destroy this organization.” Another APF-member who did not participate in Remmoho declared: “what I hate most in APF is this gossip because it doesn’t build communities.”¹ These frustrations obstructed the sense of collectivity critical to APF’s endeavor.

Having witnessed the extent of personal attacks and the atmosphere of suspicion that pervaded APF’s internal practices, I was therefore not surprised to read an article pronouncing the APF’s demise entitled “Lessons of Struggle: The Rise and Fall of the Anti-Privatisation Forum” that appeared on the South African Civil Society Information Service in February 2012. It was, however, immediately sobering. I had witnessed some dynamics that needed to be addressed during my fieldwork. Yet I had assumed that the longevity APF had accomplished through various evolutions over the years would persist. I was in no way prepared for the

¹ Interview with Kgothatso Mola, conducted by Dale McKinley, February 9, 2011, Johannesburg.

news of APF as a movement that was no more. This news immediately pulled me into a space of mourning.

In her book *Between Women and Generations: Legacies of Dignity*, Drucilla Cornell discusses an integral connection between dignity and mourning, asserting that “we cannot mourn those whom we do not respect” (Cornell 2002:xx). Mourning entails recognition of the person or entity beyond the constraints of their lives, beyond evaluations and judgments of their shortcomings, beyond disappointments in unfulfilled visions. Excavating or at least attempting to imagine “who or what they might have been in their struggle” attributes dignity to those fallen, who we mourn (Cornell 2002:xx). Such an excavation is a particular ethic of remembrance. In a footnote, Cornell points out:

With the recognition that it is always a being with history, finitude, and limits—not some phantasmic object—we have lost, mourning becomes not simply an act of remembering the other but a long, difficult process of being called to do justice *through* remembrance. (Cornell 2002:195, footnote 7)

I began this effort at ethical recollection in the first chapter as I sought to reconstruct the various trajectories that converged in APF’s formation and evolution. In the space of mourning, I recall other passings during my time in South Africa and since I have been away. The precarious lives of many APF activists already demands a familiarity with illness and passing that has thus far proven too frequent for comfort. In particular, I recall my friend, “Paballo,” an activist affiliated with the APF who, in her passing at the age of 35, I keep closer to me. I have a postcard of her name right by my front door so that in my coming and going I remember her. In seeing her name at my door, I recall this woman so full of love who lamented in an interview with me that “life in Joburg is not like [back home]. If

you can see Tayo there is love because love is from God but there are no people for loving. Now it's about money." This woman felt so unvalued, her worth unrecognized in the city to which she relocated that she declared an absence of love among people who focused instead on monetary assessments. So she decided to quit romantic relationships. Months after our interview, she discovered that she tested positive for HIV, a condition which eventually led to her passing. With a sense of bitter irony, I felt enraged in wondering from which partner or in what manner she might have contacted the virus. My rage at her passing and my sorrow at her inability to access the spiritual and personal development resources she desperately yearned for spurs the choices I make. I keep her close to me as an incitement to do justice to her memory through the ways that I live my life.

This chapter is thus a further response to what Cornell aptly describes as the charge to "do justice *through* remembrance." Justice in this sense entails a recognition of dignity, maintaining a vision of worth in the being that we have lost so that we can uncover "who or what they might have been in their struggle." This is not an attempt to temper the past with exoneration but to consider the entity that is no more on its own terms, with recognition of will and intention, recognition of a humanity that transcends life as rendered by circumstance. With the APF, the entity I mourn is a social movement organization, a constellation of individual and group affiliates. The decline of the movement and the significance that members attached to this decline forms the core of this chapter. If chapter one reveals one aspect of APF's formation—how various decisions and practices over time achieved a particular kind of collective mobilization—this chapter presents the underside of

that achievement. I am concerned with the disconnect that colored members' frustrations in the latter years of the movement—when they lamented the loss of love, interpersonal integrity, and affirming connection among one another.

In order to appreciate the significance of such losses, I begin first by constructing activism as premised on ethical collectivity. Activism is not a mere matter of interrogating the failings of the present normative order but of constituting shared beliefs, ideals, desires and imaginings of what ought to be, and how to be together. A consideration of dignity and the sublime is critical to the theoretical framework I present here. I demonstrate how APF's targeted constituents—those living under dire impoverishment—confronted routine indignities that activated their participation in collective oppositional action. Furthermore, these routine indignities raised the significance of reinforcing humanizing practices in interactions with one another. For example, terms of address such as “comrade” index the integral alignment activists sought to create with one another through the sharing of political and ideological orientation. Such practices support the premise of activism as ethical collectivity. However, I show how the APF as a stratified coalition fell short of this potential during its declining years.

APF members were anxiously aware of the organization's shortcomings. One member, Buyisiwe, who was 34 at the time of our interview, described APF's decline as a failure of performance. Revealing his expertise with cars and appreciation for music, he had installed custom subwoofers in his car (so as to really “feel” the music) that blasted as he pulled in, windows down, to the parking lot for our

interview. Given his skills, it is unsurprising that vehicular functionality served as his chosen metaphor for the role of performance in activist struggles. For a car to have good performance, he said, two different components—the engine and the gearbox—had to be functioning well. Applied to community activism, performance had to do with similar efficacy—achieving intended outcomes through proper leadership that was attuned to the communities they represented. His assessment of APF was that despite achievements of the past, performance was “now low”: “today, I don’t see more action and activity and that hype you know, I mean for me the struggle today, eish, drags slow.”² He presented APF’s decline as a failure of performance, an interpretation that is particularly insightful for this chapter, in which performance can be understood in relation to the gap between activist ideals and the inadequacy of experience.

In its latter years the bulk of APF’s meetings were dominated by bickering, personal attacks, confrontational exchanges, and other alienating practices including gossip. I argue that these practices were not directly problematic, but rather symptomatic of power struggles that manifested in the cultivation of tacit and oblique political practices that eroded collectivity. Thus, I am not interested in pronouncing the failure of APF’s engagements. Rather, this chapter continues the effort I made in chapter one by tracing the coming together of various trajectories leading to APF’s activist space. I focus on the variety of ways differently situated individuals came to constitute the organization, however unevenly. They did this

² Author’s interview, June 16, 2010, Johannesburg.

through interactions with external forces and with one another in which they strived to uphold their dignity.

On Dignity and the Sublime

It is not just the loss of being able to afford the basic things of life it is also the loss of *dignity* that destroys people and their communities.

—From “Platform Adopted at Right to Work Conference,” Undated. APF internal document; original emphasis

Why is dignity a critical focal point in recounting political practice? At stake in politics is the recognition of human dignity. Dignity inheres in a mutual, reciprocated reverence and recognition of one another’s infinite worth as human beings. Activism often coheres around an insistence of dignity. Cornell writes of dignity as “a claim on ourselves that signals a world that might be faithful to our freedom. To claim dignity when it has been denied...is already to transform the world” (Cornell 2002:2). Many of the activists with whom I worked confront routine denials of their dignity in their living conditions, in their bureaucratic interactions with government and other officials, in their media depictions and scholarly representations, and even in their intimacies. To maintain dignity in the face of abject conditions is to assert a fullness and vitality of human life that is not constrained by deprivation. It is to envision a world beyond the immediacy of circumstance and to uphold a self-image that transcends the disdain of a world that is not “faithful to our freedom.” This vision of the self and of the world turns abjection into a source of creative energy (Gikandi 2001: 319; see also Njoya 2010) and captures an understanding of the sublime put forward by theorists including Immanuel Kant.

My turn to the sublime contrasts with commonplace usage of this term to denote experiences of awe-inspiring beauty or grandeur. In Kantian philosophy, the sublime is an encounter that exceeds the faculty of the imagination, thus doing violence to it. The sublime is not a characteristic of an object, rather it is occasioned by encounters with formless objects, resulting in an awareness of boundlessness that exceeds the human ability to comprehend or attribute purpose. It inheres in the mind's response to sensory disruption inciting us to "*think* more than we know" and to "set ourselves above natural conditions" (Schiller 1993: 23; emphasis in original). In an encounter of the sublime, we realize that there is more to this natural world, which results in a recognition of our own finitude and limitation. At the same time this awareness of the possibility of transcendence discloses a different "non-sensuous" standard of judgment that can grasp and subsume infinity as a unit thus affirming human pre-eminence. Kant writes:

The irresistibility of [nature's] might, while making us recognize our own physical impotence, considered as beings of nature, discloses to us a faculty of judging independently of, and a superiority over, nature; on which is based a kind of self-preservation, entirely different from that which can be attacked and brought into danger by external nature. (Kant 1931: 125-126)

Through this disclosure of human discernment, independent of material circumstances, that is enabled by the experience of the sublime, human dignity is preserved even in the face of dominion.

Thus, humanity in our person remains unhumiliated, though the individual might have to submit to this dominion [of external nature]. In this way nature is not judged to be sublime in our aesthetical judgments, in so far as it excites fear; but because it calls up that power in us (which is not nature) of regarding as small the things about which we are solicitous (goods, health, and life), and of regarding its might (to which we are no doubt subjected in respect of these things), as nevertheless without any dominion over us and our personality to which we must bow where our highest fundamental

propositions, and their assertion or abandonment, are concerned. (Kant 1931:126)

Kant's discussion of the sublime as occasion for the self-preservation of human dignity provides a critical perspective on attempts to prevail over overwhelming suffering. As Drucilla Cornell writes, the sublime "simultaneously combines how small we are, in the natural scheme of things, with the inscrutability of our being irreducible to physical and contingent circumstances that induce us to judge an object, an encounter, or a person as sublime" (Cornell 2002:86).

In the lives of the activists I describe, the sublime relates to experiences overwhelming in the depth of ugliness and the expanse of time over which the experiences are routinized. Although Kant draws examples of the sublime from nature, he acknowledges that the sublime does not inhere in any object (Kant 1931:103, 109). Through such an acknowledgment, we can come to comprehend the concept in terms of encounters that arouse particular "mental representations." Kant summarizes it thus: "the sublime is that, the mere ability to think which, shows a faculty of the mind surpassing every standard of Sense" (1931:110). In the discombobulation of Sense, lies the assertion of human will.

In his ascription of the sublime to the tension of "mental" faculties of imagination and reason (1931:119), one risks losing embodiment. Kant could be said to elide the senses in his suggestion that "nothing, therefore, which can be an object of the senses, is, considered on this basis, to be called sublime" (1931:109; see also 169-170). However, an encounter of the sublime is, at the same time, particularly embodied. Kant writes of the sublime as an experience of negative pleasure, that is "a pleasure that arises only indirectly: viz. it is produced by the

feeling of a momentary checking of the vital powers and a consequent stronger outflow of them” (Kant 1931:102). The discombobulation of Sense (both reason and sensation) calls into question the body’s condition. In an experience that can perhaps be likened to vertigo, one’s vitality is questioned, confirmed and in response affirmed all the stronger. Although an encounter with the beautiful encourages restful pleasure (120), an encounter of the sublime *agitates* mental and sensory faculties—“the mind feels itself *moved*” (120)—while drawing out awareness of our own human freedom. We can unite this focus on the body with our earlier discussion of the sublime as presenting an opportunity to appreciate self-preservation and the maintenance of dignity even in the face of dominion. Keeping the body in mind, we see that human will is asserted, therefore, in a way that integrates the rational disclosure of one’s independence from the domain of natural objects with the embodied affirmation of one’s vitality.³ This integration yields an experience of self as pre-eminent over the challenges we face even when (especially when) the body is subjected to violence. That is the crux of dignity.

Many among APF’s target constituents met with extraordinary violence especially in their encounters with the police. Even more so, given their class positions, these activists grappled with wearying yet routinized structural violence. Both kinds of challenges—extraordinary and routinized—can occasion the assertion of human will against degradation that is key to an encounter of the sublime. In

³ Kapferer and Hobart offer further interpretation of the embodied nature of the sublime. They write: “The sublime is both prior to the schemes of reason (the sensuous ground upon which reason builds) and the furthest limit of reason where the categories of reason are ultimately exhausted. This apex of reason is also sensuous, thoroughly embodied, a corporeality of reason” (Kapferer and Hobart 2005:3)

what follows, I elaborate the quotidian spaces and experiences upon which ascriptions to dignity rest by describing living conditions in an APF-affiliated community. This helps me clarify the circumstances that fostered activist involvement among a particular category of APF comrades—those targeted as constituting its mass base. It therefore furthers the examination of the politics of APF’s constellation—the relationships among its constituent elements including considerations of inclusivity and marginalization within activist space.

The People’s Inspection

One particular attempt at mobilization through what was termed “the people’s inspection” reveals the significance of dignity and activists’ experience of the sublime. From the 17th to the 19th of November 2009, the Alexandra Concerned Residents (ACR), an affiliate of the APF, decided to convene a people’s inspection to expose the pathetic living conditions of their community and to garner support in their struggles to hold the government accountable. They invited representatives from the media, from non-governmental organizations, and other interested parties to inspect neighborhoods and speak with residents. Their particular initiative came in the wake of the Alexandra Renewal Project (ARP), a government-funded enterprise with a budget of R1.3 billion to build houses, provide jobs, and improve the lives of the people living in the township. The project was to be undertaken in the seven-year period between 2001 and 2008, and was to involve the participation of local residents. Rather than the envisioned social, economic, and environmental uplift, a significant base of the community found their living conditions in fact

worsened in the wake of the ARP. The Alexandra Concerned Residents felt it their responsibility to show the extent of displacement and impoverishment exacerbated by the renewal project, and the people's inspection was a tool towards this exposure.

Their effort is particularly significant when one considers, as the anthropologist Paul Farmer noted, that:

the suffering of the world's poor intrudes only rarely into the consciousness of the affluent, even when our affluence may be shown to have direct relation to their suffering. This is true even when spectacular human rights violations are at issue, and it is even more true when the topic at hand is the everyday violation of social and economic rights. (Farmer 2003:31)

Concerned with understanding how the experience of poverty is defeatingly rendered invisible to those distanced from it, Farmer offered three possible explanations. The first regards the "exoticization" of suffering, a dynamic in which one feels empathetic and able to comprehend the lives and challenges of individuals when they recall our own. When this is not the case—when we distanced either by geography or experience—such suffering is rendered foreign and unaffecting. While this dynamic of exoticization does not always hold true—people often rally to one another's aid even across vast geographical and cultural divides (the basis of solidarity)—it is worth considering the impact of experiential proximity on the accessibility of human suffering.

Communities such as those that make up the Alexandra Concerned Residents may share geographical proximity with the more affluent creating striking juxtapositions of opulence and starkness, yet their suffering is made remote from their neighbors. Farmer's insights can be better considered in connection with

Ranciere's discussion regarding a partition of the sensible that renders some experiences and populations intelligible and others unintelligible even in close proximity (Ranciere 2004). Politics—as deployed here through community mobilization efforts—concerns the disruption of such partitions of the sensible as occurs when marginalized communities attempt to expose their plight to the awareness of those who barely take notice. In Farmer's terms, this would occur when impoverished communities intrude into the consciousness of the affluent. I argue that while the APF brought together individuals and communities across a variety of class positions, there remained various partitions of the sensible that perpetuated the invisibility of certain forms of suffering. Hence the people's inspection was a significant tool with potential not just for raising awareness beyond the APF but also—and just as critically—for furthering ethical collectivity within the movement.

Farmer's second proposition about the invisibility of poverty concerns the difficulty of rendering "the sheer weight" of impoverishment that cannot be accounted for in "objective" facts and figures (Farmer 2003: 40-41). As scholars, how do we transmit another's pain, especially what stems from routinized denials of human dignity? The third consideration regards the challenge of fully presenting the historical, geographical and social depth of impoverishment. While Farmer navigates this by presenting the "'texture' of dire affliction" through "gritty details of biography" (Farmer 2003: 31), I turn to physical description stemming from my experience of the people's inspection.

As part of the Alexandra Renewal Project, about 7,000 residents were relocated within Alexandra and beyond (see Sinwell 2005). The residents of Silver Town Transit Camp were relocated from their houses into single-roomed metal containers along the Juskei riverbank in order to create space for a shopping complex. These containers, constructed out of silver corrugated iron, were rudimentarily fenced in. They were constructed so close together that the passageways were too narrow to comfortably pass. Seven of the 94 containers were used as storage because the single rooms were too small to contain the residents with all their belongings. The remaining 87 single-roomed containers housed an estimated 300 people who shared six communal taps, and twelve portable chemical toilets. Families constructed makeshift plastic tents to wash themselves or otherwise found space to do so inside their designated single room using basins for their daily ablutions. Just as there were no designated washing areas, there were no designated cooking areas. While the residents of Silver Town had electricity, the supply was unreliable as electricity cables were often stolen. Sitting on the bed of the Juskei river, these containers easily flooded in rain as the polluted river reclaimed its banks. Although residents had been told that their relocation was only temporary, they had been battling since 2006 for more permanent and humane resettlement to no avail.

Their living conditions were similar to that of refugee camps housing displaced populations. Of relevance is Dwight Conquergood's description of the liminality of these camps: "refugee camps are liminal zones where people displaced by trauma and crisis—usually war or famine—must try to regroup and salvage what

is left of their lives. Their world has been shattered. They are in passage” (Conquergood 1988:180). The residents at Silver Town and other transit camps created in the wake of the ARP became economic refugees, not of war but of development and “renewal.” Their past was bulldozed down—shopping malls now stood in place of their former housing; they faced an uncertain future. During the inspection, one female resident asked: “how must I live like this? Until when? I don’t know.” Another woman commented in exasperation: “we were supposed to be the first people to move out into houses, but we are still here, when they took us from the places where we used to live, they said to us you are going to get the houses after six months, six months now is five years.” Their present hung in a precarious balance. Already exposed and vulnerable to ailments stemming from the persistent dampness of their homes as well as other elements, any further disruption would be fatal. Yet disruptions came. For example in May 2010, all twelve mobile toilets were removed from Silver Town without explanation. The toilets were eventually replaced and the residents discovered that they had been removed because the supplier’s contract with ARP had expired. As untenable as the conditions already were, the toilet removal was a reminder that these conditions could worsen. “We have children, old people and sick people who will not be able to handle such a situation,” a community member reported (Lobelo 2010).

Silver Town was not representative of the range of experiences among Alexandra residents whose homes we visited, although there were persistent living concerns about overcrowded and ill-constructed spaces, water, electricity, and sanitation. The containers at Marlboro Transit Camp, for example, were constructed

of wood, which over time disintegrated, particularly with the aid of ants that ate into the structures. Residents lived without electricity and shared six communal toilets and taps. At the Alexandra Transit Camp, the concrete housing had cracked over time. Rather than the one-roomed containers of Silver Town, the tiny houses at Alexandra Transit Camp were further divided into two rooms—a kitchen and bedroom. Residents complained of dampness in the buildings that moistened their belongings to the extent of rotting. While they had access to running water and prepaid electricity (they only had power when they could purchase it beforehand), there was originally one communal toilet and washing facility for every 16 houses. During the people's inspection in 2009, the toilets were already leaking and some were completely blocked and therefore unusable. The camp was enclosed in a barbed wire fence with a security post at which individuals had to sign in and out, an inhibition of residents' freedom through exposure to surveillance. The residents were relocated with the assurance that they would be back in their original homes within three months once the homes had been renovated through the ARP. As in Silver Town and Marlboro Transit Camp, these temporary relocations became rather prolonged, contributing to residents' indignant frustration.

While the Transit Camps were intended as government stopgaps in the drive towards renewal, other precarious living conditions in Alexandra arose due to severe housing shortage. From the mid-1990s, as many businesses fled Alexandra, individuals and associations including the South African National Civic Organization (SANCO) invaded the abandoned factories, warehouses and office buildings. The grassroots civic association constructed shacks inside these buildings, charging the

occupants rent. Some of these one-room structures were only big enough for two people to sleep on the floor. With a lack of space, children would at times sleep in unsafe corridors; this was the case in the area known as Council House where a 16-year-old girl was raped a week prior to the people's inspection. At the Marlboro warehouses—distinct from the Marlboro Transit Camps—shacks had been precariously constructed on top of shacks using wood, plastic and other found objects. At the Wynberg warehouses, which were located directly behind a mortuary, occupants lived and raised children literally in a space of death (Taussig 1984), as the water from the washing of corpses ran into the compound. Furthermore, the warehouses were close to a chemical storage facility and bags of chemicals were piled illegally in front of the compound. Residents obtained electricity only through illegal connections. The damp walls of their homes were full of mold. As I was in the hallway turning to leave, one male occupant stopped me saying: “it’s bad bad bad bad bad. Look at me, I am not supposed to stay like this.” He sought my recognition of his humanity and its attendant identification with his indignation.

From Silver Town to Wynberg, blatant structural and sanitation inadequacies resulted in a variety of health concerns. As residents cooked with paraffin stoves in enclosed spaces, the smoke they inhaled over time became a slow poison. The dampness in the floors, ceilings, windows and walls also seeped into bodies. As she explained how she has laid newspaper beneath a thin vinyl carpet to absorb the moisture, Mum Alice, a 54-year-old APF activist who resided in Silver Town, mentioned her constant bouts with cold infections. This link between impoverished

living conditions and bodily ailments resonates with Bertolt Brecht's poem, "A Worker's Speech to a Doctor":

When we come to you/ Our rags are torn off us/ And you listen all over our
naked body./ As to the cause of our illness / One glance at our rags would/
Tell you more./ It is the same cause that wears out/ Our bodies and our
clothes.

The pain in our shoulder comes/ You say from the damp: and this is also the
reason/ For the stain on the wall of our flat./ So tell us:/ Where does the
damp come from? (Brecht 1987: 292)

The living conditions of those like Mum Alice were the direct and indirect consequence of human decisions—in the form of administrative efforts towards urban renewal or civic initiatives to address the need for housing. As Farmer cautions any analysis of poverty must reveal the historical depth and geographical linkages of present suffering (Farmer 2003:42). Such analysis must not neglect how the body becomes the materialization of social, geographical and historical distress. Medical anthropologists have elaborated the social body as an integration of self and social relations in which susceptibility to illness is related to the body's vulnerability and external dependence (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987:16-23; see also Henry 2006; McCallum 1996). Describing such connection, Ellen Foley's work in Senegal demonstrates how the intersections of neoliberalism and ecological decline fostered socio-economic crisis that became "written on the bodies of young men" (Foley 2008:258).⁴ I am similarly concerned here with the embodiment of environmental dismallness, and not just with the body as a site for social contestation—in which

⁴ In spite of the usefulness of Foley's interventions, I find this to be an unfortunate phrasing as it reflects an objectification of the body (rendering the body a text upon which power is inscribed) that has been critiqued among scholars of embodiment (see for example Csordas 1999:182; Howe 2003:29-30; Stoller 1997:xiv-xv).

bodily illnesses become “useful tools” for the expression of trauma and conversely control over disempowered lives (Henry 2006:380; Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987:23-28). The connections these residents made elaborates a “body politic” (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987:23-28) in which residents sought to overcome the biomedical tendency towards viewing illness as an individual pathology by demonstrating its connections to the physical conditions of their lives. For Mum Alice, this was the connection between the damp she attempted to absorb with newspapers and the damp that seeped into her lungs. In other communities, activists cited environmental pollution as exacerbating asthma and tuberculosis.

The people’s inspection elaborated the housing crisis around which many APF-affiliated community organizations mobilized. While Alexandra presented a particular set of cases, other APF community affiliates experienced the housing crisis through brutal eviction from their homes. They struggled for access to water, to electricity, both of which were often regulated with prepaid meters. With steep retrenchments and high rates of unemployment, many families came to subsist on a grandparent’s pension or child’s social grant. In encounters with researchers, the occasional journalist or foreign camera crew, impoverished individuals were often driven to dramatic lengths to communicate their plight. In Itereleng for example, one woman laid down in front of a small construction of wooden poles holding up a blue plastic sheet, looking up to check the camera gaze of the Australian media crew that was filming. As I observed the enactment, perhaps with apparent skepticism, a male activist and close friend commented, “I know it seems that they are making a drama for the camera, but the conditions that they are living under is real.” What

does it take to communicate the reality of poverty as “a chronic state of emergency” (Taussig 1989:4)? Detailing the extent of abjection that constitutes people’s daily life risks reducing the experience of structural violence as if suffering were the defining condition of impoverished communities. Yet not interrogating the inhumaneness of these living spaces perpetuates the invisibility that shields them from the consciousness of the more affluent.

Such selective invisibility of poverty were upheld even within the APF. A former APF facilitator commented upon visiting a member’s home for the very first time that she had had no idea of the inadequacies with which the member had been living because whenever she saw the member in the office, she was always good-natured and cheerful. The facilitator offered this as a testament to the member’s dignified strength of spirit but the insight was also revelatory of erasures taking place within the APF. In Remmoho, the APF women’s forum that I describe more fully in chapter four, a member discussed how whenever she came to the APF, she felt she had to come dressed as a comrade in a uniform that is primarily jeans and a struggle t-shirt. While APF’s red t-shirt became an index of its public visibility and oftentimes notoriety, the uniform was also symbolic of a disconnect many members expressed. It stripped away individual practical concerns—your children’s gnawing hunger and other problems at home—in the promotion of a uniform(ed) mass.

These erasures were rather subtle to capture because it was readily acknowledged among even affluent members that the bulk of APF’s constituents lived with desperation. However APF’s political interventions were not pitched to ameliorate day-to-day survival concerns and so it was organizationally hindered in

addressing these. One member described the dynamic thus: “We have to struggle, we don’t have housing, we don’t have water, sanitation, whatever, APF is doing something to help us to go and do those struggles but what about this poverty?”⁵ APF allocated poverty alleviation efforts to be conducted by interested affiliates rather than the organizational whole. Only a few select affiliates made such efforts. For example, the Orange Farm Water Crisis Committee extended its scope beyond agitating for the delivery of basic services to include member-driven initiatives such as a community garden, a daycare center that served children two daily meals, and a recycling center that offered payment for containers brought in. As a coordinating forum, APF made allowances for the financial limitations of its members—reimbursing travel to the office and sometimes offering lunch during all-day meetings. That monetary acknowledgment however prevented the collective engagement needed to share political stakes and disrupted rather than facilitated internal solidarity. Many activists spoke longingly of the collective bond and affirmation of capability generated by doing things for themselves before expectations that their activities would be subsidized arose with APF’s coming into financial resources. The people’s inspection then presented experiential evidence in order to appeal to mutual recognition of shared humanity rather than a charity that would regard them as any less than capable. It was premised on a logic of intersubjective connection: if external observers could only experience the residents’ challenges, these observers would understand on an existential level that

⁵ Interview with Ellen Chauke, conducted by Dale McKinley, August 20, 2010, Johannesburg.

their circumstances fell short of their worth and that would secure commitments to act (Turner 1982:48).⁶

The Activist Sublime and Sensus Communis Aestheticus

Given that the experience of structural violence is not guaranteed to call forth campaigns for change or outreach efforts, perhaps a key aspect of the activist drive is a level of indignation. Such indignation is fully expressed when activists comment on the personal resonance of their favorite struggle songs. Some songs in particular express a refusal to yield to the circumstances or authorities that confront these activists; this refusal is an expression of the sublime. Regarding the significance of one song, “Angeke sizwe ngabo,” a 38-year-old male activist from the Thembelihle Crisis Committee translated the lyric as “we cannot hear anything from them,” that is, never will we be defined through them:

There is nothing that they can tell us as long as we have ourselves, we will tell us what we want, you see. I’d rather be directed by someone from the same crew [as] I... not you, you are my enemy so how can you come and tell me something, there is nothing that you can tell me.⁷

This refusal towards the police enabled the activist to claim himself and the legitimacy of his and his community’s experience against an external authority.

Similarly, the favorite song of Mpho, a 20-year-old young male activist from Khutsong, exemplifies an internal resolve. Its lyrics include the lines: “abasazi basizwa ngendaba,” which can be translated as “they don’t know us, they hear about

⁶ My language is drawing on Turner’s description of *communitas* as intersubjective connection, although I am not referring here to a short-lived or momentary group solidarity generated through ritual. I elaborate this dimension of *communitas* in the next chapter.

⁷ Interview with the author, conducted October 16, 2010, Johannesburg.

us through newspapers,” that is they are unable to penetrate the surface of who we are. He noted that the song shapes his sense of himself by revealing that there is more to him than meets the eye of newspaper readers or the imagination of storytellers. “They don’t know what’s inside us, the strength of our spirit, they only know us through the news, but they don’t know where our true spirit lies,” he said. Through this interiority of engagement, the song yielded an expanded sense of self and of personal capability that I argue constitutes an encounter of the sublime. These were not just perfunctory lyrics but expressions of profound sentiment. In the refusal to yield to the abject conditions or brutal authority that they face, these activists make claims of their human dignity. Drawing from the earlier discussion of Kant’s connection of dignity with the sublime, the humanity in their persons remained unhumiliated. The resolve and assertion of human will that fuels claims for just treatment is what I mean by the activist sublime, by which I acknowledge that moments of critique or problematization (Dave 2012) do not automatically instigate or sustain action; beyond this must be activating elements—and I cast the activist sublime as one such—that overturns the balance towards action.

The assertion of human will in claims for justice calls for communion with others, requiring sociality to address quandaries and affirm one’s sense of what *ought to be*. Activist mobilization can be understood in terms of such communion. The encounter of the sublime—and its accompanying cultivation of self-preservation and dignity—gestures towards universality, the experience can be communicable beyond one’s particular subjectivity and sensibility (Kant 1931:168). We come to appeal to an idealized humanity with the possibility of inaugurating

Kant's *sensus communis*, "a community that arises in the aesthetic judgment that we are before a sublime or beautiful object or person" (Cornell 2002:82). Cornell elaborates this alignment of the individual with the potential collective. She argues that attendant with aesthetic encounters with beauty or the sublime is an appeal to an idealized humanity. The judgment of the sublime, often experienced in isolation and thus an affirmation of individuality, suggests a potential public. This public is not one that currently exists with its own contingent (and not universalized) judgment but one that can come to be: "the *sensus communis aestheticus*⁸ always implies a public that awaits us, not one that is actually given to us, nor one that can be given to us, once and for all, in any predetermined public forum. The judgment creates the community, not vice versa" (Cornell 2002:85). This anticipation of collective adapts Kant's original formulation of *sensus communis*, by which he referred primarily to the sensory foundations of already established communities. By such an adaptation, the potential of the imagination that arises in judgments of the sublime means that the community of shared feeling that such judgments presuppose is not predetermined or achievable once and for all.

The *sensus communis aestheticus* to which Kant refers always points toward an *ought to be* of a shared community: the enlarged mentality in which we might articulate to one another the subjective basis of our reflective judgment of the beautiful and the sublime, and find it illuminated through the viewpoint of the other and echoed in the other's attempt to communicate his or her feeling. The futurity of this community of the *ought to be* remains open as a possibility in the *sensus communis aestheticus*. (Cornell 2002:83)

The strength of our feeling as we confront our precarious existence, which can be isolating, becomes communicable "because we can *imagine* that others would join

⁸ Cornell offers this fuller term as a reminder that this shared community is premised on aesthetic formations.

in [with us] if we all adopted an enlarged mentality” (Cornell 2002:83). Understood as attempts towards the inauguration of a “community of the *ought to be*,” activist mobilization can be appreciated in its sublimity.

Cornell acknowledges such connections among dignity, resistance and the sublime in her discussion of grassroots collective efforts more globally:

It is not just the brave soldier who is sublime. Students who run into the line of fire to protest torture have represented themselves in all their courage. Nor does action need to be so dramatic. A group of workers who stand up for themselves in a strike and refuse to back down evince their sublimity in the way they represent themselves... All of these struggles take place within their own terms and within their own conceptions of what is at stake. (Cornell 2002:92).

For Cornell, what is at stake in recognizing the sublimity of peoples’ struggles across the world is the premise of solidarity. Without a recognition of the dignity of activists to whom Westerners and other outsiders offer solidarity—that is a recognition of their immeasurable human freedom that considers their struggles on their own terms and priorities—solidarity efforts might be misplaced. Similar considerations hold true in the case of the APF as a coalition of differently positioned individuals and communities who came together in shared struggle.

Writing on activist formations in India, Naisargi Dave asked how activists became activists, inquiring into the reasons activists act:

These activists act because, collectively, they came to nurture ethical ideals about what the world *ought* to look like. They act out of conflicted beliefs in the possibility of justice. They act in part because they desire the practice of new freedoms that they can only yet imagine but still strive to enable. (Dave 2011: 5).

Activism then is about ethical collectivity—the inauguration of an affirming sociality that can only yet be imagined, along Cornell’s idea of the *sensus communis*

aestheticus. Yet what does it take to inaugurate this potential collectivity? Coalitions like the APF, which brought together communities and individuals from various class positions, can constitute such spaces of ethical engagement. Yet this potential was often unmet partly due to problematic internal dynamics that manifested a decline in the organization's external oppositional visibility. As an activist noted during a discussion of personal complaints in a meeting: "We could spend the next seven months talking amongst ourselves while struggle happens elsewhere. We need to get back to struggle. This country is on fire right now and where is APF? Nowhere." While there is a tendency to dismiss such exchanges as having detracted from the organization's success—and they certainly demonstrate ruptures in the organization's internal solidarity—I ask what it means to consider these tensions as competing claims on dignity?

"I felt that this was a war": Ruptures in Activist Space

I identify two categories of ruptures in the internal dynamics of the APF that disconnected its members from one another and from their activism. The first is related to stratification of APF-membership along two general levels based on privilege according to a number of factors including class, race, geographical location, and extent of political competency. The second source of rupture related to a prevalent mode of mistrust generated by practices that I call "playing politics." The two are interconnected in the jostle for power, although the first is more reflective of hierarchy while the second is a more horizontally-charged wrangling. Beginning with the impact of stratification, I elaborate both below.

Stratification: “Briefcase Comrades” and “Street Comrades”

A celebrated feature of the APF—the heterogeneity of its participants and its concern with democratic participation as recognized through different categories of membership—nonetheless reflected and fostered power imbalances. Different categories of members participated with entirely uneven stakes, and fractured into different forms of participation and different activist identities. In a comment on these divisions, one activist I worked with described two types of APF comrades: the “briefcase comrades,” and the “street comrades.” Briefcase comrades, who could also be glossed as the organization’s middle-class activist-intellectuals, represented the APF at conferences, international forums, and other such spaces. Their role as “idea workers” (Garner 1996:24) reflected a division of labor in which “street comrades,” constituted by much of the movement’s social base, engaged the work of protest in the streets, a relatively more marginal occupancy.

Class-privilege often intersected with racial privilege, geographical location, ease of access to higher education, and the cultivation of certain forms of political competency (ranging from facility with political ideologies to practicalities involving accounting, communication, and document processing).⁹ In addition to a middle-class positioning, the so-called briefcase comrades were more likely to be urban or suburban-based rather than township-based. Such privilege thereby indicated an

⁹ As an example of this, I was often asked to type (and sometimes compose) APF-documents because of the relative ease with which I could accomplish these tasks. I usually negotiated this, sometimes to the point of refusal despite wanting to contribute my skills because I believed that taking on such a role might foster unnecessary dependence and compromise activists’ self-reliance.

experiential remove that is best captured in one activist's reflection on his political inspirations during apartheid:

I never imagined myself as the subject that was, as a subject to be liberated as such. I mean I grew up in the middle class household as such, so the kind of political inspiration for the stuff that I got involved in you know stemmed not from a sense of wanting to free myself from oppression but from creating some sort of idea of a just society, which never was personalized to I think the degree where I saw myself as a victim of apartheid.¹⁰

Such motivation towards collective activism that was rooted not in the address of one's survival crisis but in a broad political vision echoed the distinctions that separated community-affiliated activists in the APF from individual activists and those coming from political groupings:

So you know the only thing that makes our credentials different is that people come in there from communities who are generally there because they are directly affected by something and not always by the way but very often that would be the thing. I have been cut off, so your day-to-day living is on the line in your struggle whereas for someone like me and other members of Keep Left we were there because we have a vision of change in society more broadly.¹¹

APF thereby connected those driven more by ideological commitment with a mass-based constituency.¹² The bifurcation between these two types of comrades reflected a fundamental shift in APF's composition. APF's initial formation as a loosely-structured activist forum was premised on facilitating and coordinating struggles among students, union workers, community activists, individuals expelled from ANC-allied structures, and others directly affected by neoliberal initiatives.

¹⁰ Interview with Ahmed Veriava, conducted by Dale McKinley, February 19, 2010, Johannesburg.

¹¹ Interview with Claire Ceruti, conducted by Dale McKinley, February 23, 2010, Johannesburg.

¹² Lucien van der Walt, a former APF activist described this connection: "it linked up a whole layer, rather let me say the independent Left with a constituency. That was great, I mean I don't think that sort of access had been there since the early '80s, and with the rise of the ANC in the '80s, a lot of that space was just gone." Interview with Lucien van der Walt, conducted by Dale McKinley, March 23, 2010, Johannesburg.

With the evolution of the activist forum towards an organization that would center on community struggles, relationships shifted from the commonality of subjective commitments towards solidarity and linkages between two prevalent layers of membership.

In these shifts, the imbalance among APF members became more prominent, particularly in the perceived dominance of individuals who were in several ways better resourced:

The uncomfortable thing about that is obviously that thing of people who are coming with much more experience, much more resources in terms of like your background; that you're more confident to speak and so on. And so yes there was always the danger of these few individual voices dominating at the same time.¹³

To the credit of the organization, it attempted to buffer individual dominance through structural changes that privileged community-affiliates in representative numbers and decision-making. I have discussed these changes in chapter one but it bears further elaboration here. Dale McKinley discusses the rationale behind APF's structural choices:

There was a core group of individuals, which brought with them serious organizational, political, theoretical as well as literary and media skills and those activists and others had to contribute. But the way in which they needed to contribute was not to dominate the organization politically necessarily, but that the community organizations which had the numbers, which had the political legitimacy which were the ones who were actually engaged in the battles, which were the ones who were feeling the effects of the policies needed to have their own voice. I think the organizational form tried to reflect that.¹⁴

¹³ Interview with Claire Ceruti, conducted by Dale McKinley, February 23, 2010. All of the quotes attributed to Claire are from this interview.

¹⁴ Interview with Dale McKinley, conducted by Ahmed Veriava, March 1, 2010, Johannesburg. All of the quotes attributed to Dale are from this interview.

These changes structuring the relationship between APF's two bifurcated membership layers were somewhat inadequate, as I argued in chapter one, due to the legitimization of some forms of participation over others. This is not an indictment, however, as it would be challenging to demonstrate how such tensions could be avoidable in a broad based coalition.

The stratification among APF members generated divergent claims to dignity that were useful in understanding some of the tensions that arose between members. Regarding the perception of individual dominance, one particular case exemplifies a pattern of concerns. Much resentment cohered around one prominent figure, a founding member who had served as the organization's longstanding treasurer. Although scrupulous, his manner was often rash, leading a number of people to feel belittled. Furthermore, some felt that he represented a pattern of middle-class engagement that neither shared the stakes in the struggle of APF's social base nor reciprocated their solidarity efforts.

A complaint submitted in writing against the aforementioned treasurer was discussed at an APF meeting in October 2009. The treasurer, who was white, had insulted a black office bearer calling him a "mother fucker" out of frustration over that office bearer's tardiness and abiding disregard for organizational procedure. The insulted office bearer lodged written grievances stating his "long standing hostility with the APF treasurer who seems to have issues with every black person who can stand on his own without asking guidance from a white man." In the October meeting, the treasurer responded that he was glad the complaint had been put in writing because it could be easily picked apart. This was the same response

he received from APF members in the past whenever he exposed their negligence. Accusing him of racism was an attempt to deflect the issue away from their own negligence, he countered. As treasurer, he did the number crunching that no else wanted to do. He cited his struggle record in anti-apartheid movements and as a founding member of APF. He had taken nothing from the organization, he'd donated all his time, even his money, and his push had been for greater transparency. He said that he was not perfect, he probably should not have uttered the word he did, and he was willing to apologize for it. However, the meeting became an occasion to air out deep grievances as a female member speaking in Zulu and English asked for people to raise their issues now that the treasurer was present.

A former APF staff member spoke on "things that have been eating us inside regarding [the treasurer]." She alleged that he had been abusive in his demeanor, swearing at meetings without being reprimanded. "Personally I have received abuse from [the treasurer] for the 8-9 years I've been an activist, I've felt humiliated, and I felt that this was a war." Addressing the treasurer's record of service and contribution of resources, she argued that the stakes of her participation were more significant. She stated that he "may have contributed in terms of time and money, and some of us may not have the money to give, but we've given our lives, I grew up in this organization, I came to APF at nineteen, a naïve teenager. At 19 I was arrested, [the treasurer] may have contributed to it, but it's our struggle." With those words, she claimed the struggle as distinct from his contributions stating how she represented her courage (evinced her sublimity) in encounters from which he was spared. He kept getting elected, she alleged, because there was no one else to

put in his place. When she was an APF staff member, she had been treated with constant suspicion by the treasurer—“these are the things that break a person.”

The claims to dignity in activist space are rather complex given South Africa’s apartheid history of racial domination and the worsening impoverishment of APF’s core constituency post-apartheid. The treasurer’s legitimate concerns about financial mismanagement, unprincipled behavior, and lack of transparency reflected an appeal to dignity that insisted on the application of ethical standards including accountability, honesty, integrity and other aspects of principled commitment. Similarly-located individuals placed comparable emphases on the enactment of personal integrity and disciplined commitment. A former treasurer commented that “by the time I left the APF I don’t think it mattered whether I was white or who I was, you know but I think it was the fact that my actions spoke for who I was and then people recognized that and that they were appreciative of that.”¹⁵ Another voiced a similar sentiment:

on a personal level one of the things that has driven me to sustain this activism, to be able to do so and its very important to me, is a sense of personal integrity and honesty. And I humbly submit that is something that I do believe is necessary in any struggle, in any movement. And I do think without trying to elevate that to some kind of serious status at all, but I do think that without that and the reproduction of that within a movement like the APF that it doesn’t matter how hard we struggle or how hard we try if the honesty and personal integrity is not there we are always going to fail in the end.¹⁶

Such perspectives drove expectations regarding the significance of personal transparency and accountability. APF-members shared these concerns regardless of their social position but emphasis on these elements diverged. In that October

¹⁵ Interview with Florencia Belvedere, conducted by Dale McKinley. February 17, 2010. Johannesburg

¹⁶ Interview with Dale McKinley, conducted by Ahmed Veriava, March 1, 2010, Johannesburg.

meeting, many contended that the treasurer had missed a greater point about the importance of their humanity being recognized at a level that affected their sense of self-worth. Having faced routine indignities in their daily struggles, to encounter disrespect and humiliation in a movement representing their aims was too much to bear.

Furthermore, there were no institutionalized instruments to capture the extent of these abuses as compared with what was documented in organizational records. As the former staff member noted referring to the treasurer: “comrade is talking about opportunism, it’s just that some of us, we don’t keep minutes, we speak in corridors.” These words echo similar tropes of marginalized discontent, particularly when it came to the silencing of women’s voices. When a female activist urged APF to consider its problematic gender dynamics in an article that appeared in 2004, she said “we should look at gender, not have women in a corner talking about women” (in Paley 2004:n.d.). While many female activists on the basis of their discontent founded Remmoho as an APF women’s forum to further a critique of gender in activist space, institutionally addressing these more class and racially based contentions proved more amorphous. In the October meeting, it devolved into discussing one person’s affect, with a male activist wondering if there was a way organizationally to deal with the treasurer’s temper, perhaps classes on anger management. “Speaking in corridors” as one manifestation of gossip, then, was a symptomatic response of submerging their complaints because those activists did not feel empowered to address it more openly in the central forum.

These exchanges underscore the difficulty of coordinating diverse contributions to a broader struggle given unequal relationships. As a heterogeneous organization, APF's challenges raised questions that are important for considering activism in its plurality: how can differently positioned individuals share a struggle? What organizational form can best accommodate divergent contributions without devaluing or marginalizing constituents, whether these be so-called middle-class intellectual activists or impoverished township-based community activists? The idea that middle-class intellectuals co-opted the movement as was suggested by Buhlungu (2006:82) is rather too simplistic a framing of APF dynamics. Some of these so-called intellectuals also felt alienated, their participation in APF questioned through claims to experience that could not be countered. Furthermore, these racialized contentions, examples of which surfaced in the October meeting, rang as opportunistic attempts to manipulate tensions inherent to APF's heterogeneous engagement through caricatures of racial domination (McKinley 2012:48). Such manipulations can be better understood in the context of the second sense of rupture in APF's internal dynamics.

Playing Politics and Pushing Pocket Struggles

In chapter one, I discussed how the voicing of perspectives became complicated within APF's representative structure, in which most members participated as representatives of their organizations or political groups with a few individuals participating with no kind of affiliation. Assessing this complication, Claire Ceruti, who participated in APF through the political group, Keep Left, raised

the possibility of how opinions and practices got submerged: “I think maybe there was a thing that people maybe then felt unsure about standing up and saying I am arguing my point here as one person, and that maybe drove a lot of things underground, so that was an issue.”¹⁷ Claire made a keen observation regarding the sense of participants not being forthright that pervaded APF proceedings. She suspected that submergence of concerns and opinions was related to activist diffidence in representing themselves. This was certainly an aspect of the dynamic as the previous discussion on “speaking in corridors” revealed. Elaborating this concern, an activist discussed how she tried to encourage women’s participation in the broader forum:

the women in APF, they are afraid to come forward because they said always the men in the APF even in the meeting or CC if you are a woman talking, it seems like you don’t know what you are saying. So I used to tell them just stand up and say what you want to say, those who are listening, they will listen to what you are saying and don’t tell yourself that people are undermining me.¹⁸

Being mistrustful of one’s contributions was not unique to women however, and another activist explained it thus: “you find that our comrades do not have the trust in themselves to say they can do that [stand up in a meeting and speak their issues] so it takes one to do it, maybe I had been exposed to a lot of events where I’m able to stand up in front and speak so I think we are trying to capacitate them.”¹⁹

Another aspect of the shiftiness that pervaded APF proceedings concerned maneuverings to secure political ends. Claire elaborated this, pointing out that

¹⁷ Interview with Claire Ceruti, conducted by Dale McKinley, February 23, 2010, Johannesburg. All quotes attributed to Claire are from this interview.

¹⁸ Interview with Mammy Tladi, conducted by Dale McKinley, March 30, 2010, Johannesburg.

¹⁹ Interview with Meshack Tladi, conducted by Dale McKinley, April 6, 2010, Johannesburg.

“some of the political arguments amongst us [were] being fought out by organizational means rather than directly politically. There was a lot of stuff that went on that wasn’t entirely open somehow and kind of backbiting like questioning people’s credentials.” Rather than offering a straightforward disagreement to be engaged openly, some activists seemed to advance their aims by delegitimizing those with opposing views. This was one reason that Claire suspected that “individual activists [were] being afraid to stand up as themselves and say this is what I think, but here was one person, I am not representing anyone except myself.” It becomes apparent therefore that various clusters of participants did not experience APF’s forum as an open space.

For adroit participants, APF’s structure provided a system around which one could maneuver and sometimes directly exploit to one’s benefit. APF valued debate in meetings inasmuch as it sought to guarantee that divergent views were not suppressed but meetings often degenerated into unfocused squabbles. During a coordinating committee meeting I attended in September 2010, I was approached as a “neutral party” to chair a breakaway session involving members of the Tshwane region, who could not find agreement among themselves. During the meeting, a participant charged that I was suppressing him because as chair, I would not allow him to debate what I judged to be an insignificant point. Against such an accusation, I had to allow him to make his point, and the session continued in the unfocused vein I had tried to avoid. At the end, the participant approached me with a hug saying that I had made a good presentation. “Even though in the meeting you said that I was repressing you?” I asked. His response offers the best perspective on the

maneuverings I describe. “This is politics,” he said. “And politics is like a game. There will be fighting, sometimes someone will die but they will be quickly replaced.” Such a viewpoint of approaching participation as a game to be won at all costs with little regard for fellow participants, even the willingness to sacrifice them, is what I mean by “playing politics.” A 46-year-old female activist critiqued this motivation of winning at all costs: “it was all about making your point and not giving up as long as you can... I think that it was also sometimes quite destructive, the nature of those discussions and I think quite unhelpful often.”²⁰ Her words provide perspective into the combativeness of APF space, particularly as it manifested in the number of confrontational exchanges I observed. “Playing politics” was therefore rooted in a destructive individualism.

Further describing these dynamics, APF members emphasized them as “dirty politics” or “personal politics” and many complained of the challenges such practices raised. One spoke on tendencies to sabotage the contributions of others in jostling for positions:

Some comrades are actually becoming, they start to put their personal issues on the struggle whereby if a particular person is having a particular position instead of supporting that particular person they will try to crash that particular person even if that person is doing good things for the organization.²¹

Another described such a challenge as “power mongering,” in which “it’s not about the struggles anymore it’s about who is holding which position, which has got a negative impact on the struggles of the APF.”²²

²⁰ Interview with Nina Benjamin, conducted by Dale McKinley, March 9, 2010, Johannesburg.

²¹ Interview with Meshack Tladi, conducted by Dale McKinley, April 6, 2010, Johannesburg.

²² Interview with Mashao Chauke, conducted by Dale McKinley, August 19, 2010, Johannesburg.

In addition to jostling for positions, the external struggles of the APF became internalized through squabbles over resources. While APF's relationship to funding was rather complex in ways that I cannot fully elaborate at this juncture, the organization's access to funding was often experienced in contradiction. Arundhati Roy's stance against the "NGO-ization" of politics—that "real resistance has real consequences. And no salary" (Roy 2004:n.p.)—is an apt critique of APF dynamics but a bit too stark. External funding secured in its first two years helped address a problematic dynamic in which a few well-resourced individuals bore the brunt of APF's financial needs. As a result, the organization could be more accountable for the broader participation of individuals and accessible to communities who did not have financial or geographical advantages. External funding resolved APF's problematic dependency on the volunteered financial resources of a few individual members. However, APF subsidies became a "creative way" that desperate individuals could access money, fostering a different kind of dependency that one activist described saying: "now people are seeing the APF as an ATM, if they do not have money then they go to the APF, they will be given money and they will be left with R10 to buy bread, those kinds of things."²³ In other words, APF's transportation subsidy could be stretched to cover other expenses if one took a cheaper form of transport. The activist joined others who called for "a program that could assist the unemployed comrades in order to make a living for themselves so that they shouldn't be depending on APF."²⁴ Such appeals were aimed at helping members preserve their self-reliance and uphold their dignity. As I mentioned, the APF in its

²³ Interview with Mashao Chauke, conducted by Dale McKinley, August 19, 2010. Johannesburg.

²⁴ Ibid.

organizational practices did not address such dependency directly. Squabbles over resources were therefore not just an issue of the availability of external funding. They also reflected APF's identification as a social movement organization rather than a poverty-alleviating agency that would help impoverished individuals cope instead of radically combating a problematic system. Against such ideological stances, people did cope through access to the APF; some did so to the extent of blatant opportunism and corruption. During a meeting I attended in September 2010, an APF activist from the Vaal aptly phrased such practices as "pushing the pocket struggle." Financial resources, which could be accessed through leadership positions and assuming responsibility for various tasks, were valuable in such maneuverings.

Furthermore, leveling charges of corruption against other members, whether or not these were founded, proved useful in discrediting those members and making room for oneself. This provided context for much scrambling among activists and cultivated an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. Thulani, the activist from Kanana Community Development Forum who I introduced in chapter one, found himself caught in accusation. He had attained leadership positions with the APF—at one time serving as the regional coordinator for the Vaal region. Responding to previous minutes that, for example, raised "concern about [Thulani's] conduct on finances as he usually [claims] money for things which are not there," Thulani often invoked his good name. He was cleared of wrongdoing in one meeting but similar charges were repeated at later junctures. He confessed to me that he was thinking about quitting the APF because the persisting accusations were sully his name.

As a preacher and someone devoted to serving the community, he was really concerned about that. He argued that despite apologies when charges were proved unfounded, such accusations were still entered into the minutes of the organization and were irreparably associated with him. The politics of participation became too much to bear.

It is in light of such considerations that APF's racial contentions can be understood. While accusations of racism raised significant concern regarding problematic dominance among a membership stratum, the organization's internal politics rendered plausible the impression that these accusations were opportunistic manipulations of tensions inherent to APF's stratification for personal gain. Dale McKinley offered the following reflection on this tension:

there is always going to be that tension in trying to forge a movement that tries to include both [urban-based activist-intellectuals and township-based community activists] and which tries to do so in a way that is democratic, in which one does not dominate just because one has skills and resources and access to them. I think it's a healthy tension at a certain level but what that turned into in the APF was an opportunistic means of trying to delegitimise the contributions and the intentions of individual intellectuals and activists and trying to caricature them as being inherently oppressive or inherently controlling or inherently outside of the certain experiences and thus you cannot relate. And that took certain racial overtones at certain times though not always overtly but certainly underneath and that I think are quite destructive. I do not think, I still do not think and I have never believed and will never believe that in the history of the APF that this was the majoritarian view of the rank-and-file members. I think it was the preserve of a smaller group of individuals, some coming from the communities who saw in these intellectuals and activists a barrier to their own fairly centralised and undemocratic control of the movement.²⁵

The alienation of individual activists created avenues for a few to attain power and maintain it in undemocratic ways. After the APF treasurer stepped down by refusing

²⁵ Interview with Dale McKinley, conducted by Ahmed Veriava, March 1, 2010, Johannesburg.

to run for office in the next AGM, his elected replacement began making decisions without following a democratic process. Other office bearers complained that he called meetings without informing them, and that he wanted to control everything without transparent communication. The newly-elected treasurer was eventually suspended from his post but not before his actions severely destabilized the organization.

Marking Distress

In APF's declining years, the ideal of collective action—as ethical collectivity premised on mutual recognition—was unmet due to these ruptures in the organization's internal dynamics that affected most activists regardless of their positioning. Individual activists confronted vilification, while those embedded in communities experienced similar estrangement as a result of the combativeness of APF political practice. It is against such combativeness that activists (including Paballo, my friend who passed away) lamented the loss of love to rampant jealousy and bickering over money. Sadly, Paballo herself was affected by such suspicion. While I was in South Africa, as she took ill and before her diagnosis, she was convinced that her illness was due to poisoning by a friend, another APF member, over her position. An external facilitator who worked with APF suspected that her support base within the organization declined because fellow activists did not want to be entangled in the “gossip.” While gossip has been raised as a particular challenge for the organization, in this case, it was a marker of distress indexing my friend's perceived threat to her wellbeing. As she visibly worsened, she made

various appeals for me to help her secure a place where she could have peace of mind; my attempts were woefully inadequate. Her case was not unique—members' illness raised further suspicions in an atmosphere of distrust. While some would fortify themselves through consultations with diviners and herbalists, Paballo clung closer to her Christian religion, at one point informing me that she and her pastor fasted and prayed over four consecutive days. Her eventual passing was a profound loss that grated against the decline of APF as a movement.

Reconsidering Dignity and the Activist Sublime

Within social movement scholarship, dignity is often uncritically referenced without itself constituting a point of significant analytical engagement. Among the first studies of post-apartheid community struggles, Ashwin Desai's *We are the Poors* (2002) compellingly invokes these activists' demands as premised on dignity. Similarly, Nigel Gibson's edited collection described the rapid growth of new social movements as expressing a "quest for a new humanism" in their demands for recognition of basic human needs (2006:40). Such studies focus on appeals of dignity that were made to the external targets of the movements—including the increasingly inconsiderate ANC government and its municipal representatives, as well as multinational corporations that sought to exploit labor conditions to maximize profit.

These external appeals constitute only one aspect of the significance of dignity for activist formations. By showing how complicated claims of dignity were within social movements themselves, this chapter enriches the consideration of

dignity as a critical focal point in activist practice. APF's stratification, as a multi-ethnic, multi-racial and cross-class movement, fostered divergent claims to dignity. Its members emphasized different appreciations of the import of dignity in activist space that were unfortunately manifested as racial tensions. Other tensions, including squabbles over resources and leadership positions, created an atmosphere of distrust. These ruptures in APF's collective bond revealed just how far the organization was from ideals of ethical collectivity, which, as I have shown, are rooted in extensions of the sublime.

Ruptures in APF's organizational solidarity caused anxiety among members over the decline of organization's public visibility, a decline that Buyisiwe remarked to be a failure in performance. Whereas for Buyisiwe, performance is the perfect execution of ideals, with everyone enacting their parts in synchrony, I propose that performance constitutes that gap between activists' ethical ideals and faltering practice. Indeed performance is practice itself, quotidian and uneven. Since collectivities are not fixed achievements, we see how through routine engagements with one another, APF began to degenerate and lose the sense of interlinked struggles that was foundational to its emergence.

Alienation from one another affected APF activists in ways that I continue to trace in the chapters that follow, particularly in the last two chapters. In chapter four, I show how Remmoho members sought to restore their social bonds through different methods of mobilization. In chapter five, I discuss demobilization among youth activists due to such conflict. Both of these chapters and the one that immediately follows elaborate the significance of performance (as artistic

expression) in activist efforts. Even as I shift towards the artistic dimensions of performance, I continue tracing the constitution and dissolution of activist community. Collective singing often provided respite from arduous meetings even as it reflected nuances in member's receptivity to one another. The next chapter therefore examines the abundant personal and interpersonal significance of performance practices among activists.

*Part II***THE POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE*****Introduction: Repertoires of Contention***

In the last chapter, I noted the unease that many members voiced in meetings about APF's loss of relevance as communities were struggling elsewhere. One activist's comments during a meeting I attended in October 2009 exemplified these concerns: "we could spend the next seven months talking amongst ourselves while struggle happens elsewhere. We need to get back to struggle. This country is on fire right now and where is APF? Nowhere."

The activist was referring to a wave of what has been dubbed "service delivery protests" by South Africa's media. These protests tended to be community-based—taking place in low income rather than affluent settlements—and to function outside the purview of social movement organizations. Susan Booysen traces the emergence of service delivery protests to an outburst in 2004 in Intabazwe township in the Free State province. Although there were protests preceding this event, Intabazwe "marked the start of a rise in direct and antagonistic action to convey messages of discontent with matters local" (Booyesen 2007:24; see also Booysen 2009; Alexander 2010). Revealing a snowballing effect, other communities learnt through media coverage of community visits by councilors, municipal officials and even national ministers to protesting areas. Such coverage of the responsiveness of politicians encouraged the perception that disruptive protest

yielded outcomes including the attention of government officials. As media coverage shifted from extensive treatment during early phases of protest waves in 2004 and 2005 towards a decline in coverage that privileged major disruptive action (for example, the blockading of main transport routes), protest became more routinized. This dynamic encouraged the improvised amplification of disruptive repertoires to secure and maintain attention from the media as well as local and national government officials. These protests were marked by spontaneity (that is they occurred outside of long-term organizational planning); often “erupted” following trigger events, and were responsive to events occurring in adjacent areas. These protests took place within and beyond APF’s purview—APF-affiliated communities engaged in their own service delivery protests along with unaffiliated communities. But the scope of attention shifted towards immediate local, community-level insurgence rather than those coordinated across geographic areas under the aegis of broad-based social movement organizations.

For this same activist who expressed concern about APF’s presence, and many others, the limited attendance of the June 2010 World Cup march (described in the introduction to the dissertation) was further evidence of APF’s decline in public visibility. The APF spent much time analyzing the outcomes of the march seeking to understand how it could have been so diminished. Many viewed the march as a dismal failure and as evidence of APF’s disorganization in its latter years. What occurs to me as I write, however, is that something happened among those gathered that was on par with what occurred in countless other protest events across South Africa. As organizers coordinated with the police and renegotiated the

march's contours, activists constituted themselves in song and dance. I described how freedom songs blasted out from large speakers, to which activists sang and danced. To mark the beginning of the event, one organizer, Bongani, requested that someone lead a song. As the march proceeded from its point of origin to the main road from which marchers were blocked by a wall of uniformed police officers, song accompanied the activists dancing (rather than merely marching) forward. Such experiences were immediately meaningful for those in attendance. I focus on the salience of these practices in this section of the dissertation.

APF held many protests during my time with the organization, ranging from those organized by one affiliated community to those that brought communities together across regions to emphasize particular contentions. The World Cup march exemplified the latter end of this spectrum. For these protests, repertoires of contention included road barricades using burning tires as well as attacks or occupations of municipal offices and officials' homes. Some protests were sustained over days, weeks, and months with protesters confronting or cleverly dodging heavy-handed police response. Others were of shorter duration and proceeded according to routinized expectation (which led many to question their effectiveness). I describe the contours of routinization below.

South Africa's Regulation of Gatherings Act of 1993, which started being implemented in 1996, established protocols for the peaceful enactment of dissent.¹

¹ The act arose from recommendations made by the Goldstone Commission of Enquiry, which had been appointed by then president F.W. De Klerk to inquire into public violence and intimidation in anticipation of the transition from apartheid. Prior to 1991, there had been a blanket ban on public demonstrations and gatherings. Nonetheless protests were widespread and prominently featured in South African communities. Police responses to these events were often brutal with state violence resulting in further annually commemorated protests—for example of the "Sharpeville massacre"

Protesters who number more than 15 must give notice of their intent to protest to the responsible officer in their local municipal council. This notice must include such details as the convener of the protest, how many people are expected to gather, the type of protest, the protest route including where an intended march will start and where people will disperse upon the march's conclusion. Conveners must also detail who the marshals, or protest supervisors, are. While the act does not specify how many marshals must be appointed, having one marshal for every 10 protesters has been the recommended practice. This notification must be submitted at least 7 days before the intended gathering or 48 hours before this gathering if there is an explanation as to why this first deadline was not met. Upon receipt of such notification, the responsible officer has 24 hours to respond, either authorizing the protest to proceed as planned or convening what is called a section IV meeting to discuss changes to the protest plan. This meeting, sometimes dubbed the golden triangle meeting,² brings together the three involved factions—the protest conveners, the responsible officer from the municipal council, and an authorized member from the police—to a negotiating table. This process of negotiation challenges popular conceptions regarding the staging of protest and the dynamics among involved factions.

(21 March) and the “Soweto uprisings” (16 June). In the period of transition from 1990 to 1994, when South Africa held its first democratic elections, an escalation of public violence led to the formation of the Goldstone Commission, which was charged with making recommendations on the prevention of such acts. The commission convened a multinational panel to assess approaches in the USA, Canada, the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands and other countries that would be suggestive for South Africa. The recommendations of the commission were premised on the sharing of responsibility for the enactment of peaceful protest and constituted a break from more repressive government practices. The commission argued for the recognition of gatherings as a protected right of citizenship rather than as political threat (see Heymann 1992).

² The Goldstone Commission report refers to the triumvirate of protest organizers, local civil authorities and the police as the “safety triangle” (Heymann 1992:ix).

To the extent that the act establishes a protocol for the enactment of collective dissent, it does complicate the view of protests as spontaneous eruptions of mass exasperation. Furthermore, while the relationship between police officers and protesters might take antagonistic turns during protest events, in the days of planning leading to those events, both factions would have had to cooperate, if conveners complied with the gatherings act. The ensuing protest thereby becomes an outcome not just of the protesters' intent but also of police planning. Regarding this, Duncan (2010) aptly comments: "gatherings are not spaces entirely of protestors' own making; in fact, they could be described as negotiated spaces for the expression of dissent."

Further elements of the routinization of protest include the delivery of memorandums expressing protesters' grievances to a receiving party. These memorandums would be read aloud either by protesters themselves or a representative from the receiving party (often, these were municipal government officials). The memorandum might set a limited time frame for grievances to be addressed with the expectation that further protests would ensue should there be no redress within the time period specified. One final element cognate with protests was the prominence of creative expression—an expectation remained prevalent that song accompanied protests. Recall Bongani's words in the introduction that for one community in Itereleng to show that they are in the struggle, "they have to be seen chanting." Practiced activists were so familiar with these contours that many commented on protests becoming routine deployments without effecting change—their disruptive potential had become normalized. Buyisiwe, who decried APF's

decline as a failure of performance in chapter two, further queried the effectiveness of marches, saying that they yielded no results. “So today,” he said, “we can have a lot of noise. They [protesters] can like unveil their souls but nothing will happen. How many marches did we have singing sad songs, songs of happiness, songs of demise, songs of whatever...not even one memorandum is answered you know.”³ To be sure, not all protests complied with the gatherings act. Activists employed a variety of strategies to get the government to address their plight. Road barricades, the occupation of municipal offices and officials’ homes, along with some marches bypassed the gatherings act protocol altogether.

The ubiquity of songs and other performance practices in protests was such that when Johannesburg’s Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) sought to hold a silent protest against bill that would curtail public access to government information, the silence was inevitably upended by song. Reflecting on this outcome of the October 2010 march, I asked one of the organizers, an FXI staff member and APF activist, if he thought it was possible to hold a silent march in South Africa. “I don’t think so,” he chuckled.⁴ When I asked why, he responded that the songs “add something to that activity [protest], and the character has been that you know, you sing [during marches].” Furthermore, “if there [were] academics, journalists, you know maybe [the October march] was going to achieve its purpose of being a silent march but getting us from the township...but I know also that some academics also can’t ...they’ve been involved in those struggles so I’m just saying it’s not easy.” In his estimation, what could potentially separate academics and journalists from

³ Interview with the author, June 16, 2010, Johannesburg.

⁴ Interview with the author, November 9, 2010, Johannesburg.

those coming from the townships was the frequency with which they encountered this practice. They might be unfamiliar with township routines—“how you get used to doing things when you’re in that community.”

Within the APF—which brought together differently positioned activists including academics and those involved in township struggles—songs punctuated meetings and constituted a significant aspect of the organization’s protest. How and why were these performance strategies particularly resonant for APF members? What meaning did these practices hold for the activists involved? These are the questions that animate this next portion of the dissertation.

My analysis considers the significance of these performances through attention to embodiment—“the perceptual experience and...mode of presence and engagement in the world” (Csordas 1994:12; 1999:182). Embodiment offers insight into how performances are often deployed in South Africa and globally—not as isolated artistic forms but through the body as the integration of movements, sounds, objects, and emotions, among other elements. Protests arise from bodily needs over access to water, housing, electricity, sanitation, and even safety. Furthermore, sensory perceptions influence the kinds of mobilizations activists pursue. Regarding popular practices such as collective performance, John Burdick (1995:379-381) drew attention to the heterogeneity among movement actors. He argued against the facile assumption that movement practices mobilize whole constituencies—any popular practice will produce a range of interpretations that reflect a movement’s stratigraphy. I therefore begin with a discussion of the role of freedom songs within the APF more broadly. I then consider gendered and

generational distinction in activists' responses and performance practices. Even with attunement to gender and generational specificity, experiences and preferences along these lines were not monolithic. It is this attention to how performance practices varied and were differently valued that constitutes the politics of performance.

*chapter 3***FREEDOM SONGS**

I think part of the reason why we lost the country to a certain extent is that before we attacked the enemy, we'd sing and then they'd know where we are. You know, I don't know if you ever saw the movie *Zulu* and there are the Zulus all over these mountains you know, and like at dawn they sang so beautifully. There were a few British guys but they said before we hit them, let's let them finish this song, it's a nice song, you know what I mean?

—Hugh Masakela, *Amandla*

"The notion of the freedom songs has become unnecessary. You know, suppose if you had to have freedom songs now, they'd be about pajeros...but you can't have that. That would be sacrilege to the memory of the past, so yeah I suppose they're dying or they're dead because they are not necessary. They exist I suppose amongst workers, even among students but they've they don't have such a deep societal impact anymore or an identity anymore."

—S'busiso Nxumalo, activist, disc jockey, *Amandla*

Introduction: Free but not Free

Interviewed between 1999 and 2000,¹ S'busiso Nxumalo and others observed the dying out of freedom songs from the South African public sphere. These songs were so connected to the struggles for the nation that the acclaimed trumpeter Hugh Masekela partially attributed the loss of the decisive Zulu war of 1879 to Zulu warriors singing on the battlefield. These songs persisted through time and with the end of apartheid began to decline except among union workers and students—those who had yet to catch up in material gains or the pajeros of Nxumalo's conjecture. Special occasions including funerals provided dispersed comrades the opportunity to reconnect; there might be a flicker of song with a brave

¹ An edited clip of this interview appears in the deleted scenes of documentary *Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony*, see DVD version.

or sentimental soul leading the call and the chorus sometimes taken up by the audience but often the flicker would die out unaided. The songs that accompanied every transition of the South African struggle had lost their identity with the advent of “freedom.” Their broad impact at a national level was greatly diminished.

Since Nxumalo’s comments in the late 1990s, freedom songs have become mired in national controversy partly through politicians’ revival of polarizing songs. In 2005 for example, Jacob Zuma, then the country’s ousted vice-president, caught media and popular attention with the song “mshini wam” (see Gunner 2007).² “Bring me my machine gun,” its lyrics in isiZulu directed. Zuma supporters across South Africa embraced the song incurring the vociferous opposition of political rivals including Mosiuoa Lekota. Lekota was the national chairperson of the ANC in 2007 when he wrote that freedom songs were time-bound compositions. Their primary purpose was to raise popular awareness of changing policy directions in the country’s mass liberation movement. Songs invoking images from the armed phase of the struggle grated against the present epoch of governing a peaceful democracy.³ Such songs could incite racial violence, a particularly sensitive consideration given South Africa’s political history.⁴ More recently in September 2011, a South African judge found Julius Malema, the president of the ANC youth

² Footage of Zuma performing this song can be seen in a clip available via youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKAS6zQW-kM> [1:48-2:30]

³ In his words (Lekota 2007:n.p.): “Our freedom songs have always provided a link between our current struggles and the struggles of the past...But our freedom songs are primarily about the tasks at hand, and the mobilisation of the forces of change behind our policies and programmes in the current epoch. At this moment in our struggle, as we are focused on the critical challenge of democratic transformation and the creation of a better life for our people, we need to ask what is the purpose of singing songs whose message is to demand machine guns?”

⁴ In a newspaper article appearing in 2007, Lekota is quoted saying: “you could cause a situation in which people run around with machine guns and kill other people, when we are nursing a very sensitive national democratic revolution” (Mail and Guardian 2007:n.p.). Indeed observers noted in some cases “mshini wam” serving as an accessory to the 2008 xenophobic violence.

league, guilty of hate speech for singing “Dubul’ ibhunu” (“shoot the Boer”) and effectively banned the song from public and private gatherings. The attempts of these politicians and their civic interlocutors to negotiate the delicate role of freedom songs in post-transition nationalism highlight their continued though ambiguous prominence.

This chapter explores the resurgence of these songs through national debates and the persistence and adaptations of freedom songs among the country’s marginalized populations. While songs may have faded from the national stage in the aftermath of South Africa’s political transition, their persistence among these groups was facilitated by post-apartheid community mobilizations. The chapter is based on the premise that songs are not epiphenomenal to civic engagement but are intrinsic political expression. I examine the continuities and transformations of apartheid-era freedom songs, particularly in terms of their musical structure, lyrical content, reception and political impact. I argue that these songs remain relevant through individual intrapsychic processes that align at a collective level. By intrapsychic, I refer to processes interior to the individual, including embodied sensation, emotional responses, and rationalizations of experience. In showing how individual interiorities align at a collective level, I am advancing concerns to bridge the inner (individual) and outer (the social collective) dimensions of experience that has been developing within phenomenological and psychoanalytic anthropology (Jackson 2012; see also Chau 2008; Csordas 2012; Ewing 1991).⁵ The chapter is

⁵ Jackson (2012), for example, refers to the intrapsychic as the inner dimension of experience whereas intersubjectivity refers to outer dimensions (with varying awareness of an “Other”) while emphasizing their complementarity.

based on my ethnographic participation at a variety of collective demonstrations and activist events within the APF and beyond. Its arguments therefore hold relevant not just for understanding performance within the APF but offers insight into broader intersections among activists who met across protest events and cultivated shared practices.

In this chapter, my engagement with performance shifts towards artistic practices and how these creative displays shape collectivity. It is therefore a consideration together of performance and performativity that is concerned with what protesters (within the APF and beyond) accomplished or called into being through their artistry. These considerations are a particularly instructive aspect of APF's story. As they confronted an activist space rife with distrust and problematic stratification among members, my consideration of performance, and freedom songs more specifically, shows how APF members achieved group cohesion, however momentarily.

In APF's early years, direct action generated a collective bond when the diversity of its members' ideological commitments threatened to cause rifts in the nascent organization. As we saw in chapter one, performance was very much intrinsic to APF's direct actions. When these activists stormed the Urban Futures conference at Wits University, it was with song and dance. These integrated expressions remained prominent in APF activities throughout the years in meetings and internal practices as well as in protests and more public confrontations. The role of participatory performance in facilitating collective bonds in its latter years only furthered a dynamic already established during APF's emergence. A range of

performance practices were prominent within the APF—the use of freedom songs to enliven meetings and coordinate protests; the enactment of collective rituals in activist education; as well as the presentation of poetic and theatrical pieces by youth groups. The subsequent chapters elaborate the latter two elements. In this chapter, I focus exclusively on freedom songs because they constitute a particularly rich domain of embodied and emotive transmission. Through singing, the body becomes the nexus of movement, sound, objects, and emotions, among other elements.

Six aspects of sung protest persistently featured in my ethnographic participation as well as interviews conducted with protesters and bystanders. The six aspects involve song serving as: 1) the manifestation of expressive norms; 2) individual and collective armament; 3) self-construction; 4) affective mediation; 5) collective organizing force; and 6) communicative device. This list is by no means exhaustive. As these aspects of song do not mutually exclude one another, I discuss them in an integrated manner in order to build my argument regarding the processes that align the individual with the collective. I divide this chapter into three sections. I begin the first section by establishing singing practices in South Africa as these contribute to the articulation of political grievances. In this discussion, I demonstrate the musical structure of these songs as critical to their political potential. We understand individual expressiveness, intersubjective communication, and collective organizing functions of protest singing through musical qualities of antiphony, repetitive variation and embodied rhythm. Having established these formative musical qualities, I elaborate activists' deliberate attempts to adapt the

protest-singing legacy of anti-apartheid struggles to the changing political challenges of the post-apartheid neoliberal dispensation. In addition to these adaptations, activists also maintain the relevance of protest songs through emotive investments that align individuals with a broader collective. The second section discusses such emotional mediation through considerations of affective circulation during protest events. In the third section, I demonstrate protest singing as an act of self-construction such that individuals become identified with particular songs.

Protest Singing in South Africa: Song as Manifestation of Expressive Culture

...[Even if] you can't speak out the verses of the song, but then you feel it, that means it's in your heart, it's there, so there's some other energy which we feel going into our marches, going to our meetings, wherever, that's the culture we should never lose of song and dance.

—Ndumiso⁶

The liberation song can be characterized as a global genre that is not unique to South Africa but critically accompanies “battles for freedom” against domination across time and space (Gray 1996:9). South African freedom songs stand in good company with many precedents and influences ranging from those of the immediate national locale to international imports such as ragtime, jazz, spirituals and songs from the Civil Rights Movement (Jolaosho 2012).

South Africa's particular repertoire of freedom songs emerges out of a history of racial oppression and government domination. Freedom songs emerge as tactics of a liberation struggle against the ravages of war, against colonialism, and most notably, against apartheid. Their origins can be traced to historical forms, such as the Zulu *amahubo* or war song (prominent in precolonial and colonial warfare),

⁶ Feedback interview with the author, conducted January 22, 2010, Johannesburg. All quotes from Ndumiso are from this interview.

and to oral art in general that is embedded in daily life (Mthembu 1999:1). The theatre practitioner Duma Ndlovu describes how song permeated daily practices to the extent that “our parents would break into song at the slightest provocation. When your mother couldn’t figure out what to feed you for that night because she didn’t have any money, she came back from looking for a job, she would break into a dirge that would be expressing how she felt.”⁷ Occasions when people gather—including weddings, funerals, and naming ceremonies—provide opportunities for song with many freedom songs emerging from and contributing to these practices.

Freedom songs also had precedence in religious singing; many protest songs are adaptations of church hymns. As the playwright Fatimah Dike put it, “people had faith in God so much that they even took hymns and used them as songs of protest in testing the waters of apartheid.”⁸ While such adaptations could serve as direct evidence of faith, the implications were quite complex. Many songs adapted the moral grounding of Christian hymnody to query the apartheid system and seek divine intervention. Dike mentioned one question that consumed her activism: “If we are the children of God, why does God allow what just happened in South Africa to happen.” At the same time, such adaptations also showed growing disaffection with the church by integrating its theology with perspectives from the anti-apartheid struggle—for example, many adapters would replace ascriptions of salvation to Jesus with the leadership of struggle heroes. One song, which originally went “somlandela, somlandel’ uJesu” [we will follow Jesus], in adaptation was

⁷ Duma ka Ndlovu appears in the DVD version of *Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* (Hirsch 2002).

⁸ Interview with Fatimah Dike, conducted by the author, June 2007, Cape Town. All quotations from Fatimah Dike in this chapter are from this interview.

changed to “somlandel’ Luthuli” [we will follow Luthuli]. As a president of the African National Congress, Luthuli was a prominent figure, and the song adaptation popularized his leadership.

As “songs of the people,” freedom songs were not only adopted and sung by the masses, these masses also composed and adapted them. While certain individuals such as Vuyisile Mini⁹ and Reuban Tholakele Caluza¹⁰ are recognized as composers of particular songs, the identities of many composers and the origins of most songs are unknown. Regarding this phenomenon, pop culture journalist Peter Makarube notes: “African people always made music. Nobody ever said, ‘I wrote this song in three minutes,’ or ‘I wrote it in three months. This is my song.’ Because you start a song and someone backs you, and people just build up a song.”¹¹ Many liberation songs with call-and-response structures that allow for incessant repetition, constant ad-libbing and improvisation are songs that people built together in every act of performing them. Their composition, like their performance, is participatory and collective in nature. Protest events, as collective gatherings, provided intrinsic opportunities for songs to develop and circulate across communities. Freedom songs mix a variety of the different languages that its performers speak—including isiZulu, seSotho, isiXhosa, sesTwana, English and Afrikaans—reflecting the popular accessibility and adoption of this form. The use of

⁹ Vuyisile Mini (1920-1964) was a South African trade-unionist, often tagged as the father of freedom songs. He was arrested and hanged by the apartheid regime. Purportedly, he went to the gallows singing the song he is now well known for, “nants’ indod’ emnyama, Verwoerd,” translated as “here comes the black man, Verwoerd.”

¹⁰ Reuban Tholakele Caluza (1895-1966) was a South African composer who trained and taught at the Ohlange Institute, a private college outside Durban.

¹¹ Peter Makarube appears in the DVD version of *Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* (Hirsch 2002) in chapter 6, 23:04-23:17.

antiphony or call-and-response, repetitive variation and embodied rhythm aurally manifest social elements that are key to the political possibilities of this form.

Antiphony

Call-and-response is a critical organizational element of collective singing. An antiphonic pattern structures a musical exchange among those gathered—a leading line can raise a question, offer a comment or might be an incomplete starting phrase that the responding line finishes. Such an interaction organizes the proceeding: when somebody raises a song, it provides everyone gathered an opportunity to come into synchrony—recognizing the song at hand and their place in its musical framework. It thus eliminates the need for a conductor to coordinate the group.¹² Furthermore, it highlights the interdependency among individuals in the creation of community. The leading line can be sung by one individual but often song leadership is not a domain exclusive to one person—other individuals can join the leading line, and often do reinforce or harmonize with the original song leader’s voice especially if the song particularly resonates with them. This highlights the particularly democratic nature of song leadership. As noted by Khanyisa, a male activist in his 50s, in our interview, “anyone can sing and songs are democratic in the sense that no one is elected to start the tune. We don’t have our songster who always starts the song.”¹³

¹² Grateful to Ysaye Maria Barnwell for this insight.

¹³ Interview conducted by the author, November 14, 2010, Johannesburg. All quotes from Khanyisa in this chapter are from this interview.

Aside from its organizing functions, an antiphonic pattern is also evaluative. The strength of a collective's response demonstrates their evaluative assessment of the call. "If you don't like [the message], you say so... and we give each other permission to act in that way because that is the cycle of communication."¹⁴ A lukewarm or absent response communicates a lack of support; raising a song is thereby a proposal of sentiment that can be vocally affirmed or quietened. As S'bu Nxumalo noted, anyone can raise a call, "it is only the master orator however that can ignite an unarmed gathering into a response that strikes fear in the hearts of military men. The cry must read the signs of the time. Capture the mood of those gathered and resonate with a response that sets the intended tone of any protest gathering" (Nxumalo 2003:n.p.). While song leadership can be democratically claimed, it is a practice rendered powerful by skillfully assessing and responding to the needs of the gathered collective.

Repetition

Repetition underlies the antiphonic pattern of freedom songs (see Snead 1981:150). As Chernoff notes regarding shared aesthetic features in African-derived music, "in almost all African music there is a dominant point of repetition developed from a dominant conversation with a clearly defined alternation, a swinging back and forth from solo to chorus" (Chernoff 1979:55). The alternation between lines or "swinging back and forth" between leading call and group response is only one manifestation of repetition. Songs often repeat lines to the extent that some songs

¹⁴ Interview with Ysaye Maria Barnwell, conducted by the author, June 2010, Newark, NJ.

consist entirely of one constant refrain. “Senzenina” is one example. “Senzenina?” the leading call queries, “What have we done?” The response repeats the question, “Senzenina? Senzenina?” To which the call queries again, “Senzenina?” The song thereby consists of that one question repeated over and over again. South Africans ascribe a wealth of meaning to the unceasing repetition. Sibongile Khumalo for example interprets the incessantness as an unsettling incitement to action: “it’s like hammering somebody.” With such unease, “you have no other option but to stand up and go and fight.”¹⁵ Repetition can thereby serve to amplify feeling.

Repetition is also the bedrock of improvisation. With the assurance of a underlying refrain, a song leader can lyrically, melodically and rhythmically expand as long as it does not disrupt the shared framework. In this way,

a call-and-response sequence may go on for several hours, with apparently monotonous repetition of the same short phrase sung by a leader and answered by the chorus but in fact subtle variations are going on all the time, not only in the melodic lines themselves but also in their relation to the complex cross-rhythms in the accompanying drumming or hand clapping. (Small 1977:54-55)

Repetition with variation is generative of new commentaries, interpretations and sentiments. This element enhances the plasticity of song to changing socio-political circumstances.

In one example of both the generative and evaluative elements of song, one protester I interviewed commented on his attempt to introduce a new “slogan” that he felt was needed in the present:

It was off of *dibaka mona dibaka mona rebulay’inja*—stop this side, stop that side, we are killing these dogs. It’s not good of saying you’re killing dogs.

¹⁵ Interview with Sibongile Khumalo appears in *Amandla: A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* (Hirsch 2002), chapter 12, 40:38-41:21.

Basically I was coming up with a slogan that was “*dibaka mona dibakamona rebulay’icapitalism*”—stop this side, stop this side, we are overthrowing capitalism. I was coming up with a slogan like that but people didn’t consider it I know because of the sensation—I could hardly hear [the slogan taken up]. Some of the people considered it, but I cannot say that a majority of the people considered it.¹⁶

Many apartheid-era protesters referred to white opponents as dogs; that particular lyric of slaying dogs was a carry-over in the song. My interviewee, Khabane, found capitalism to be a more appropriate target of present ire. In the repeating refrain, he exchanged “inja” [the designation of dog in isiZulu] with “icapitalism” while still maintaining the overall melody. Furthermore, with repetition, the new “slogan” could demonstrably widen in adoption. But based on what he perceived aurally, he concluded that there was a dearth of support for his proposition. Nonetheless, his attempt is an example of the adaptability of song. In fact, many songs, particularly those relying on chants, do not have fixed lyrics; leaders improvise lyrics in the moment with the group providing a constant refrain.

One final aspect of musical repetition relates to its temporal implications. As Small noted above, “a call-and-response sequence may go on for several hours” (Small 1977:54). The prevalence of repetition prolongs the singing and can be experienced as a liminal suspension of time. Snead (1981) argues that culturally specific approaches towards repetition reveal particular treatments of time and history. He asserted that in African practices, “repetition means that the thing *circulates...there* in an equilibrium.” He contrasted this with an European teleological or goal-oriented approach in which “repetition must be seen to be not just circulation and flow but accumulation and growth” (Snead 1981: 149-150).

¹⁶ Author’s interview, conducted May 26, 2010, Johannesburg.

While I am not promoting essentialist distinctions between African and European musical practices, which is the risk in Snead's ascriptions, differences between the two approaches are useful for elaborating the importance of repetition as an aesthetic phenomenon. One key consideration lies in this contrast between a teleological approach to music production—in which a piece is expected to progress towards a defined end—and an approach that focuses not on a linear push to the ending but the prolonging of shared experience through repetition and “cuts” back to the beginning (see Rose 1994). Singing at protest events tends towards the latter approach whereby a craving for experience is sustained and nourished with scant emphasis on the passage of time. This is akin to Small's observation that such repetitions “have a function in time which is...to dissolve the past and the future into one eternal present, in which the passing of time is no longer noticed” (Small 1977:54-55). This phenomenon of the encouraged suspension of time is also evaluative. Just as the base of support for a song can be aurally assessed through the strength of sound, it can also be assessed by how long a song is sustained. As Khanyisa noted in our interview: “if you start a song badly, people sing one stanza and then someone comes in with another one.”

Evaluations of the passage of time in the construction of music are significant for understanding the interplay of history and memory. Particular songs can become encoded or associated with past feeling, thereby taking on a meaning that can be particularly individual or cement a collective bond. Perhaps Khanyisa's words better reveal this process: “sometimes there is one song which like everyone just goes mad about because it was started in a certain way, *it was the right register,*

you know, it's got the lyrics which hit the thing and it brings back memories, you know" (my emphasis). Khanyisa is describing a phenomenon of resonance in which a song can ignite profound responses by striking at a point (both vibrationally embodied and cognitive) of maximum amplitude. In such moments, song touches people, evoking their memories and associations in a shared immediate encounter that circulates affectively. Repeating songs across events can then become an act of re-constituting or seeking after previous emotional achievements and aesthetic sensations (Yang 2000; Juris 2008b; Samudra 2008). Jeffrey Juris presents a view of the empowering dimensions of protest as opportunities to live "moments of freedom, liberation, and joy" (Juris 2008b:66). The height of these feelings, encountered in protests, are ordinarily absent from routine interactions and can thus be experienced as personally transformative (Juris 2008b: 66; Routledge and Simons 1995). The transformative significance of these emotionally embodied dynamics helps explain attachments to them. In this case, repetition across events becomes one of revisiting affirming experiences. However such intensity is not always buoyant. There have been protesters who informed me that for them, freedom songs could never be anything but sad given their painful associations with South Africa's liberation struggle and its evolution into community struggles post-apartheid. Despite these painful associations, freedom songs did not constitute an experiential realm of aversion. Such considerations raise the possibility of repetition as alternatively working towards a different kind of catharsis by agitating unresolved frictions. The persistence of old songs, which repeat or reenact past experience, could represent a refusal of memory where "instead of a dialogue about

a history already past, one has a re-staging of the past” (Snead 1981:150). This is particularly significant when the past is unresolved as it is for many in South Africa. While such a refusal of memory could be a response to the changing politics of the present, it could also obstruct mobilization in response to more immediate challenges, hence the importance of transforming the song repertoire to address present struggles.

Rhythmic Embodiment

The final element that I wish to explore regards the rhythmic embodiment of song. Francis Bebey’s definition of African music as “a music that speaks in rhythms that dance” (Bebey 1975[1969]:92) epitomizes rhythm as one of music’s connection with the body. Singing, like much of human action (Farnell 1994; 1999), is an embodied production engaging the mouth, tongue, vocal cords, sinus and nasal passage, lungs and other aspects of an individual’s physical structure. The sound produced is very much dependent on the shape and placement of various elements within this structure (Feld et al 2004:333-336). Beyond this, song is further embodied through rhythm—that is, the organization of sound duration and emphasis. For many with whom I worked, rhythm is the way through which music *moves* them, the way in which music is danced. One person interpreted it thus: “when you listen to music there’s got to be rhythm, when you are dancing it’s got to go with the rhythm, when the rhythm goes this direction you can’t just go that direction.”¹⁷ In a separate interview, Khanyisa stated: “you sing with your mouth

¹⁷ Feedback interview with the author, conducted January 22, 2010, Johannesburg.

and your chest and your lungs but that is only one part of you so when you start moving then the whole of you is involved... Now the song has got you, the song moves you like literally. So even an old man, a granny with a stick you'll see them swaying."

Movement cannot be separated from song. The integration of the two serves as a means through which protesters unify. According to Gatsha, a male protester:

dancing when we sing creates a rhythm within the space, and people get along with the rhythm, it brings another incitement within the people, the space just becomes more positive with connective energy, having the same aim or objective. So you cannot separate dance from music.¹⁸

Considering that freedom songs, like many African music forms, involve polyrhythmic layering—"dense configurations of independent but closely related rhythms, harmonic and nonharmonic percussive sounds" (Rose 1994:66)—an individual's rhythmic perception and enactment can be idiosyncratic even when inflected by communal expectations. As Snead notes, "the typical polymetry of black music means that there are at least two, and usually more, rhythms going on alongside the listener's own beat" (1981:150). These rhythms are independent but also relational. Movement can serve as a collaborating force in song production through the individual use of the body to emphasize perceived rhythms and produce new ones (e.g. stomps, clapping, guttural punctuation). The results of individual rhythmic perception and interpretation can be chaos. Embodying a shared rhythm through movement—clapping, stomping, and swaying together; producing the same vocal punctuations or gestures—becomes a resource for entrainment (Black 2011:10). Such synchrony encourages the build up of feeling—particularly factoring

¹⁸Feedback interview with the author, conducted January 22, 2010, Johannesburg.

in the prolonged sharing of experience generated through repetition—akin to what Victor Turner has termed *communitas* (Turner 1982: 44-48).

Singing Politics and Adapting Freedom Songs Post-Apartheid

Elaborating on the musical qualities of call-and-response, repetitive variation and embodied rhythm, we can begin to appreciate political possibilities inherent within protest singing. Such possibilities include promoting relationship even within the freedom of individual expressiveness; providing a gauge of collective evaluation through amplitude and duration; possessing an inherent adaptability to changing circumstances and finally providing a space of democratic participation and experience of relational leadership. Song is such an intrinsically political and embodied expression among South African protesters that Khanyisa attested:

if I go to a march and the songs are not good I will tell you there is something not good with the movement because it means they are not together, it means they don't march a lot. Yes, they might all know the song but it doesn't move them, it's not spirited ... So it tells you, you know. Creativity needs a febrile mind. So this is a mind in ferment, a mind which is moving, kind of in motion, which has got hope. It might not have hope in the starry eyed way but it might be hope based on the discomfort of feeling the badness, the sadness.

Such febrile creativity was crucial to a conscious attempt by activists to adapt apartheid-era freedom songs to post-apartheid struggles.

Recognizing the historical legacy of these songs as culturally sanctioned practices that interrogate the existing state of affairs, articulate common grievances, and mobilize toward shared visions,¹⁹ many community activists sought to highlight

¹⁹ The words of Ayize, an activist with the black lesbian organization FEW (Forum for the Empowerment of Women), provides a pertinent example of this perceived legacy of songs. She stated

post-apartheid inadequacies through song. As many struggles emerged from an oppositional stance to the policies of the democratically elected ANC government, it was a prolonged challenge to popularize these oppositional sentiments. As songs lingered often unchanged from the anti-apartheid era in marginalized communities in the more immediate post-transition period (1994- early 2000s), some activists recognized a need to distinguish the emerging class struggle from the foregoing racial one and used song to clarify the changing stance of the ANC. Vuyiswa, a female APF member who had been actively involved described the shifting moment:

moving people from that position of seeing the ANC, as the saviour was a long process. So while you're conscientizing them theoretically the songs also played its role. For instance you'll be in a protest or in a workshop and then you talk about, let's say GEAR and you have many people and some are still members of the ANC and let's say you start a song and people will be like, "We can't sing this song, we are full members of the ANC!" But then gradually people understood and were like, "Ok, we are members of the ANC but we don't have electricity, we don't have water while these guys live in Sandton [an affluent suburb of Johannesburg] and other areas and what is there to gain if we don't sing this song?" So it was a process that ran parallel with theory and song. And eventually you have now a solid group that now knows that the ANC is actually failing the poor and that can be seen in all aspects of life.²⁰

The transition to post-apartheid freedom singing came about through spontaneous and organized formations. In their organized practice sessions, struggle-aligned performance groups—including Sounds of Edutainment, Bophelong Youth Choir and Sedibeng Concerned Artists—adapted songs and created new expressive forms (including new songs, poems and plays) to update repertoires. More spontaneous

that her forebears' songs created a platform that was adaptable in the current moment: "it's our great-grandmothers who made that song and made that platform to use it in the future. Because can you imagine we are using it now." Interview with the author, May 27, 2010, Johannesburg.

²⁰ Interview with the author, conducted November 15, 2010, Johannesburg. All quotes attributed to Vuyiswa are from this interview.

adaptations during protest events were particularly aided by the plasticity of song form (enabled by its antiphonic, repetitive and embodied rhythmic structure). As

Vuyiswa recalled:

I would come to a protest and then just in my mind work the lyrics [to preexisting tunes] and then try them out and then people join in, you know... sometimes you are protesting and then something happens and then you just get carried away and quickly you look for a tune to fit the words and then it fits and then people get to join you. And then the next protest they say, "Let's sing that one" Sometimes you forget the lyrics they'll be the ones reminding you. You'll be the one who will be forgetting and then they remind you, that's how the songs grow.

Although freedom songs are made relevant through lyrical transformations, this is not necessary. A translation of sentiment—in which preexisting lyrics encode current grievances—can also help activists and their audiences relate in the current moment to an apartheid-era song. By the time the APF released its album of freedom songs, *Songs of the Working Class Volume 1*, in 2007, South Africa's collective oppositional singing culture had not only survived the apartheid transition but was a fertile resource for protesters who creatively deployed these practices.

Victor Turner's discussion of *communitas* (1969; 1982:44-48) has been particularly insightful for understanding collective singing. *Communitas*, a liminal modality of social relationship, involves the suspension of hierarchy and an experience of even communion. Considering the ruptures in APF's organizational solidarity that I discussed in chapter two, such communion can momentarily suspend rifts and contribute towards the affirming sociality that is *sensus communis aestheticus*. Among protesters, particularly those in the APF, collective protest singing generated moments of *communitas*, providing momentary respite from

tensions within the group, and turning attention towards external opposition. The practices can thereby be seen as an emergent form in which the effect of a mass gathering is much more than can be attributed to the sum of its individual constituents. I contend however, that to engage with protest singing as an emergent form risks losing analytical distinction and leaving valuable individual distinction un-encoded. What are the processes through which “intersubjective illumination” (Turner 1982:48) is achieved? I examine two manners in which song elaborates individual intrapsychic processes that then align with the collective in the rest of this chapter. My conclusion considers the limitations of sung communion particularly when considering the maintenance of ethical collectivity beyond moments of intersubjective illumination.

“You Can’t Go to War Without Song”: Song as Individual and Collective

Armament

It’s like fighting a battle. You can’t go to war without song because that’s the only thing that will keep you going.

—Ndumiso²¹

In an interview in 2010, Ndumiso, a male activist in his mid-20s, recounted feeling anxious right before attending protest marches that paralyzed his will to attend: “You’ll be scared at the last minute...I’ll be like here we are going to this march, but now there are many elements. Are the police going to shoot rubber bullets? What if we get shot? You don’t know what they have planned, you’re wondering what is going to happen.” These concerns were however superseded by

²¹ Interview with Ndumiso.

“this envy [where] you have this feeling that no, I have to be there.” Ndumiso revealed an exemplary process in which the dangers protesters faced at the hands of police and other opposition are mediated by an affective pull, “this envy,” towards the event. For Ndumiso, experience is heightened upon arrival through his hyperawareness of the environment due to concern for his security: “your blood boils, you sweat a lot, there’s this heart beating even your heart doesn’t beat at the same normal rate because you don’t know what’s coming, you can’t foresee what’s coming if only you could foresee [what the police have planned]” For Ndumiso, his bodily reactions also indicated the presence of anomalous spiritual elements: “when you invade such spaces, you should be alert at all costs, that here there are other elements playing their role.” Such sensitivity and hyperawareness lend to Ndumiso’s analysis of protest as a battle that is waged in and ameliorated by song. His sensitivity to song as spiritual warfare could be explained by his earlier experiences growing up in the Zion Christian Mission. As he said:

When you sing truthfully from the bottom of your heart, there are spirits within you which nobody else can relate to in a way but then you can feel yourself that no, something is inside me, you know. That’s why you find when you go to churches like the one I used to attend when I grew up, the church I grew up in, you find people when the song, the rhythm is going and the song is going on for long, people faint...and stuff like that, because they’ve just fought a battle.

For Ndumiso, protest singing presented a parallel phenomenon in which song shores up individual and communal strength, reinforces the motivation to continue, and thereby provides crucial armament. Individually, this manifests intrapsychically including through what Ndumiso describes as a perceived untransferable intangibility (“spirits within you”) that “nobody else can relate to.”

Collectively, individuals' intra-psychic processes align through affective circulation and entrainment. Sara Ahmed proposes a semiotic account of emotions that challenges the solely psychic constructions of the phenomenon. Rather than focusing on emotion as a psychic characteristic of an individual subject (Ahmed 2004: 119-120)—a construction akin to Ndumiso's isolation above—she argues that “emotions involve subjects and objects, but without residing positively within them” (119). For Ahmed, emotions involve semiotic circulation moving sideways through associations among signs and objects and backwards through the “absent presence” (120) of past associations. Through such movement, affective value accumulates and intensifies. Passion is therefore “that which is accumulated over time”:

Affect does not reside in an object or sign, but is an affect of the circulation between objects and signs (= the accumulation of affective value over time). Some signs, that is, increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more they circulate, the more affective they become, and the more they appear to “contain” affect... Feelings appear in objects, or indeed as objects with a life of their own, only by the concealment of how they are shaped by histories, including histories of production (labor and labor time), as well as circulation or exchange. (Ahmed 2004: 120-121)

For Ahmed, it is important to acknowledge this semiotic labor because the concealment of this process of accumulated emotive value produces a history that “may operate by concealing its own traces” (119), thereby stabilizing its very effects. The individual subject is but one node in this circulation and not the origin or destination. This model presents a relationality between subjects and objects highlighting the co-constitution of the social, material, and psychic. As she notes, “the accumulation of affective value shapes the surfaces [and experiences] of bodies

and worlds” (121). The individual’s psychic subjectivity is not a stable boundary but is co-constituted by and can be a resource for communal alignment.²²

Ahmed’s model enables a consideration of affective circulation during protest events. One protester, an elder woman, commented on her sadness that “now we’re fighting against the black government that we voted for” and singing becomes embodied emotional expression:

When I sing these songs, I feel pain from inside [*tapping her chest*] I take out the pain by singing these songs, and even if that person on the street passes by, they would see and feel the same pain through the songs that this person is hurt. And it’s going to be easy for them to understand why am I singing those songs.

Her response signals “bodytalk” (Weiss 2002) or “body-based image schemas” (Csordas 1994:20, footnote 2), that is the descriptions, metaphors and metonyms of the body that mediates between physicality and sociality. She exemplifies the usefulness of Ahmed’s model of affective mediation in protests through her association of pain residing internally within a particular part of her body, and her description of “taking out the pain” by singing such that a bystander can understand her sorrow. Song, then, in its affective circulation becomes an element of transcendence, generative of intersubjective connections.

Such circulation can establish the boundaries of collectivity at the exclusion of external opposition and observers. Song can constitute an embodied, aural and emotive shield marking a distinction between the interior collective and an external

²² Ahmed writes “the individual subject comes into being through its very alignment with the collective. It is the very failure of affect to be located in a subject or object that allows it to generate the surfaces of collective bodies” (2004: 128). In the theorization of affect toward the alignment of the individual, the collective, and external environment, Ahmed is joined by others including Teresa Brennan. Brennan argues that individuals are “not self-contained in terms of our energies” (2004:6). Her model for the transmission of affect involves entrainment discussed as the alignment of nervous and hormonal systems with others’.

other. In a 2003 reflection, Gillian Slovo, an anti-apartheid activist, highlighted the disparity between experiencing protest from within as a joyful collectivity in contrast to its external intimidating force. She was referring in particular to the *toyi-toyi*, a protest form emphasizing jumps from foot to foot while simultaneously pumping one's fist in the air. The *toyi-toyi* combines movement and chant with a leader improvising commentary that the crowd endorses with repeated assents. Unarmed protesters using this form would often intimidate armed soldiers and riot police of the apartheid government.²³ Of her experience, Slovo reflected:

From its centre, [the *toyi-toyi*] is a joyous, collective demonstration of togetherness. What had not occurred to me, however, was what it must have felt like from the outside. The white nation's nightmare - a huge black crowd, armed only with imitation AKs, voices and thumping feet, and yet surging forward as if it were they who held the power. (Slovo 2003:n.p.)

Such anecdotes of anti-apartheid protest highlight contrasting emotional significance embedded in one social action—the impenetrable joy of togetherness among protesters in contrast to terror experienced beyond the boundaries of the group. The circulation of sound accumulates in affective intensity thus delimiting boundaries around participants.

Similar dynamics persisted post-apartheid; contemporary protesters use sonic solidarity to mitigate the harshness of many contentious encounters with the police and other opponents. In such encounters, song can serve as a defensive shield as well as an offensive device. Consider the words of South African writer, D.P. Kunene who sees the singing of liberation songs as “an act of self-emancipation to be

²³ In the documentary *Amandla!*, a group of white apartheid-era riot police officers discussed how terrifying the *toyi-toyi* was particularly for young recruits who needed further exhortation to stand their ground in the confrontation with the surging crowd.

able to confront your oppressor face to face and tell him in uncensored language what you think of him...the accusatory 'you' is hurled like a barbed spear at the white oppressor" (Kunene 1986:46 quoted in Gray 1996:11). Through the "hurling" of accusation in liberation songs one can see song serving a function similar to that of the stones protesters would at times throw at riot police during mass protests. Post-apartheid protesters hurl insults to their primary antagonizers—the police—with a body of songs addressing the police specifically. One male protester in his early thirties, Lebo, discussed his love for one such song, "asinandaba namaphoyisa, thina sisebusotsheni," (we don't care about the police, we are in the regiment [fighting for our rights]). This attachment to the song stemmed from Lebo's recognition that the police "are the ones who give us problems, most of the problems when we are taking out our grievances or aims... because they are there to protect the very same system that we are fighting." Through the song, he can express his disgruntlement with "those people."

Songs insulting the police and other opponents often employ such uncensored vulgarity that many protesters attributed an "age restriction" to them as they consider such songs culturally inappropriate. Perhaps because they are so steeped in taboo, these songs are a relished and potent repertoire. The blatant vulgarity in such songs express a freedom from norms of etiquette and decency that is often tempered musically—the harshest sentiments are conveyed through the sweetest sounds. The song, "rona reakena," provides an example of this phenomenon. I heard this song during a stand-off with the police at the first game of the 2010 World Cup. The police had created a human wall to keep marching

protesters confined from a major roadway leading to the stadium where they could gain a greater audience. After having lambasted them with song lines that urged the police to “voetsek” or fuck off, and after having decried the police action in speeches, somebody raised this song: “rona reakena/ rekena kamasepa/ dumelang mmesono yalona.” Unfamiliar with seSotho, the sweetness of the melody became my primary association with the song, which I naively embraced, until a friend’s translation corrected me. Translated literally, which few interviewees were willing to do, the song could go, “we are entering, we are entering through shit, greetings you assholes.” Unable to find the English equivalent for mmesono yalona, a friend suggested that I could substitute asshole. “Asshole is a vulgar word, but it’s much nicer [than the intended concept],” he said.

This incongruence between message and melody featured in many protest songs particularly during apartheid, when the opponents were white officers unfamiliar with black vernacular. Repressed masses could get away with subversive statements in song. Song then allowed for certain freedom of expression, for what Vail and White call “licensed criticism” (Vail and White 1991:41)—“frank and free” expression that is unhindered by norms and socially permitted. With a shift beyond the referential functions of language towards the poetic (Jakobson 1960; Bauman 1975), protest singing involves innovation and a suspension of interpretive conventions creating subversive possibilities. By framing their insults in song, protesters are able to get away with much more than is conventionally sanctioned.

Beyond this subversive potential, the incongruence between message and form was perhaps an intended musical articulation. In introducing one of his well-

known songs at a concert in 2010, the Zimbabwean musician Oliver Mtukudzi discussed using the sweetness of melody to diffuse lyrical tension. Perhaps such an impulse is present in the incongruence in which melodic features did not betray the vulgarity of a song's lyrics: euphony can provide comfort against the friction of vulgar or violent lyrics expressing profound contempt, anger, frustration and pain.

Song is an emotive armament then as seen through discussions of intrapsychic motivation and sustainment, the affective delineation of impenetrable collectivity, the offensive though sanctioned charge of sung insults, and the musical refuge afforded through juxtaposition of sweet sounds with harsh sentiments. As I elaborate in the next section, song is also a critical resource in the cultivation of identity.

“Not Letting Her Song Die”: Singing and Self-Construction

I'm emotional but you know when I talk about music, about struggle, I get really emotional. It's when I can really be what I am.

—Khanyisa

During my interview with Khanyisa in November 2010, we started discussing the song, “That's why I'm a socialist.” With lyrics that went: “my mother was a kitchen girl/my father was a garden boy/ that's why I'm a socialist/I'm a socialist/I'm a socialist,” Khanyisa asserted that the most important feature of this song that made it popular was that it was identity-affirming. “Now that song I think the reason it's popular,” he started, “it's got a nice theme with it, a nice call and response but it's an identity-forming song or an identity-affirming song. It says, ‘We are the Socialists.’ Yes, that's what we are but we are not the poor, you know, ‘We

are...” Apart from its musical structure and its lyrical themes, the song affirmed an identity beyond classifications of poverty even as it referenced historical circumstances to which many could relate. Many activists themselves, including Khanyisa, had parents who had been “garden boys” and “kitchen girls.” As he was offering his interpretation of this song, his eyes watered, his voice thickened with such emotion until he could no longer continue. Following a first impulse to respect the moment, I offered to stop the interview but Khanyisa wanted to continue, for which I was grateful. In arguing for an embodied epistemology, tears are useful sites of analysis (personal communication with Carol Greenhouse, February 2011). Continuing the interview, I asked why he was feeling emotional. “It’s because we’re missing that,” he responded. “It’s gone you know, or it’s going. But it will come back,” he offered as if to reassure himself. The potency of identification that Khanyisa perceived in renditions of this song—particularly significant because song served as barometers of the struggle—was currently missing. As a long-term activist involved in community movements since apartheid-era mobilizations and as someone who thereby developed his sense of self with the struggle, such an absence of song resonance was deeply upsetting as it signaled the decline of collective mobilization. “The struggle is not a straight forward thing you know,” he continued:

so it’s got its ups and downs so sometimes when it goes down, it will go down as far as your own strength. So when you’re weak it goes really down ...and also now it’s even more obvious that the social movements are declining because everyone else is fighting, you know like protests, strikes but we, we’re just quiet so that means we’re out of it.

His reflections made sense in consideration of APF’s internal battles that I discussed in chapter two. The decline in the external visibility of the movement affected its

members profoundly. The strength of the struggle was identified with the strength of its constituents, a further elaboration of the identification between self and struggle that occurs in activism. As Khanyisa revealed, such processes of identification are critically elaborated through song such that an absence of feeling in renditions of particular strongly encoded songs can cause profound sadness and disquiet.

In collective protest singing, individuals experience and construct a keenly-felt sense of self. Singing is a form of self-expression in which each individual voice is patterned by a unique frequency; this uniqueness is further styled through tonal and embodied rhythmic articulations. Singing further connects with self through inner reflections. As Vuyiswa detailed:

you know when you are oppressed and you feel like there is a lot happening in your life, you feel so powerless, but as soon as you can raise your voice, there is that connection with your own self that you know, I can be oppressed but there is still that thing in me that can come out regardless of what happens.

Collective singing is an act of connection with activists expressing their fervent concerns in an amplified manner in which the person becomes more than the contours of their individuality. Describing this heightened embodied experience, some say they feel *unlike* themselves in that they act in ways they would not otherwise; others discuss feeling *more* like themselves. Despite these different interpretations, the experience often becomes a signature one that is immediately identifiable and sought-after. Those individuals who had been inactive from marches for months, maybe years, would comment on “getting that feeling again, that feeling of being me” from their first however brief re-immersion into collective

protest singing. A friend, who was no longer able to attend protests due to his work at a social movement NGO, commented on missing this experience in offhand communication with me. He asked “what are they [his employers] doing to us? Keeping us in this desk?” Through this rhetorical question, he contrasted his work routine as one that denied this desired experience of self.

Cultivating identity through protest-expression is however a learned process. In describing her first protest, Kanelo mentioned feeling so shy and inhibited: “I started like at the back, standing at the back and watching others.” It is an inhibition with which I could empathize as I tried to navigate my first protests. I had envisioned my participation as a form of bodily apprenticeship in which I learned by imitating protesters’ gestures and movements (Downey 2002:497-500); I found however that such comportment stemmed from and was generative of subject positionings I could not assume as my experiences significantly differed from the protesters’. It was far easier to participate by video-recording; handling the camera resolved the awkwardness I felt. Although she felt shy, Kanelo longed to join protesters at the front of the march. One older woman was particularly demonstrative:

She started singing the song and she started lying down and I said to myself, if an old woman can do this, why can’t I do it? ...The minute that I came to the front from the back, [she] said, you and you lie down...we lay down and after that she started singing the song. And then I didn’t even know what they were doing so I couldn’t close my eyes so I was watching them what they were doing so that I can do what they were doing, see. ...the minute I stood up, I felt like I wanted to sit down, like we were doing our legs like up and down, the minute I stood up, the cameras shot me... And that’s why I love the song because that was the first time I was on the newspapers, being part of

the protestors singing on energy. And actually I felt like, okay I'm an activist now.²⁴

Individuals encode songs with past moments that have been key for their identity formations. These associations affectively accumulate (Ahmed 2004); in this way a song can become particularly significant for an individual as it stores the codes of their identity. For Kanelo, that song, "Sizolala," which translated as "we will sleep here [until you address our concerns]," became encoded with her identity as an activist as it captured, along with the newspaper image, the moment she learned to bypass her inhibition, and express dissent through spontaneous apprenticeship.

Songs become identified with certain individuals who claim particular songs as their favorites.²⁵ These individuals were concerned that their claimed songs were "sung properly"—infused with a strength of feeling that conveyed the significance of the song. When this infusion occurs, as Vuyiswa attested, "it is so powerful ...you'll think there are 50 people only to find out there are 3 or 4 people." For Vuyiswa, her identification with a particular song, "Thula Mama" was so strong that "I always tell my comrades that, on the day I die, when my coffin goes down, they must sing that song. They all know that. They all know that song should take me down."

Such identifications endure in life and in death such that song becomes compelling commemoration. Ayize, an activist with the black lesbian women's organization FEW (Forum for the Empowerment of Women), discussed the murder of her friend, who was also an activist. Since her passing, Ayize made sure to raise

²⁴ Interview with Kanelo, conducted by the author, October 4, 2010, Tshwane.

²⁵ This attachment is similar to the personal hymns claimed by Apostolic church members in Botswana (Klaits 2010:171-179) and in women's gatherings in the Church of the Nazarites in South Africa (Muller 1999:251-256). Klaits found the personal hymn to be a "praise name" that orients the congregant to God and the church community, infusing members with strength in church and in their daily efforts.

her friend's favorite song at every protest she attends. Ayize attested that "Nantsi Mellow Yellow" was a song that she could not let die. Were her friend still alive, she would still be singing the song, so Ayize's continuation furthered her friend's spirit and work. Ayize's efforts recall an insight shared with Frederick Klaitz during his fieldwork with an Apostolic congregation in Botswana: "a person's song...remains with us as the word dwells in the flesh; when a person is absent or has passed away, his or her song is a memorial (*segopotso*, literally, something that causes "remembering")" (Klaitz 2010:69).

The Significance of Song

In this chapter, I have shown the importance of processes internal to the individual in collective protest singing. These intrapsychic processes of memory, inner reflection (thought), emotion and identification align musically and affectively at a collective level. This chapter holds that the integration of lyrical content, musical structure, social context and "metapragmatic commentary"—interpretations and ideas about the performance from participants themselves (Ahearn 1998:65)—are critical to engaging the significance of song. Through a variety of examples, song is rendered as possessing "liveness" (Schechner 2002:2)—it interacts between those who sing it, those who hear it, those who transcribe and analyze it; it evokes meanings, reactions and emotions, it encodes information such as daily news events and in doing so it remembers,²⁶ it intensifies as it circulates, otherwise it dies or fades into irrelevance. In South Africa, we have seen how

²⁶ I am recalling here four lines in Anne Sexton's poem, "Music Swims Back To Me": "music pours over the sense/and in a funny way/music sees more than I/I mean it remembers better."

activists maintained the relevance of protest songs by adapting the genre to current political challenges and also through fervent affective attachments that align individuals with collective immediacy.

We have also seen how song served as a barometer of struggle through Khanyisa's perception that the decline of song matched the downturn of APF's struggle and the collapse of ethical collectivity among its members. A consideration of *communitas* provided insight into how song enabled cohesion and provided respite from the divisiveness I described in chapter two. However, there are two limitations to such view. Firstly, song and other creative practices present a mode of engagement or "frame" that was more intensified and considered separate from routine interactions. As a result the cohesion achieved through singing was of a transitory nature. Despite this, such momentary experiences of togetherness were indeed impactful. By singing together over time, activists created a shared framework that grounded collective action and improvisation among one another and during confrontations with opponents. This shared framework provided orientation such that each protest or organizational performance could be created anew based on familiar distributions of the sensible. This was a sense of community that participants built through repetitions over time, demonstrating the performativity of collective singing. The constitution of community through singing practices is particularly evident when protesters from different areas come together and familiarity cannot be taken for granted as each group would have unique performance approaches that must be negotiated towards a larger collective.

As a result, the second limitation of arguments espousing song as a source of cohesion is that one must factor in the heterogeneity among participants (Burdick 1995:379-381). This heterogeneity meant that creative practices generated diverse responses among those present. Protesters did not share the same associations or espouse the same preferences; any popular practice will produce a range of interpretations that reflect social stratigraphies. In the chapters that follow, I explore such distinction in the APF along gender and generational lines as there were particularly salient variations in performance practices. My consideration of creative practice in the remaining two chapters expands beyond singing to include the adaptation of ritual, movement exercises and theatrical stagings. With this integration, I am concerned with how activists used these creative expressions to structure new forms of collectivity that would be distinct from wider APF practices, and thereby avoid the shortcomings of the overall organization.

*chapter 4***GENDERED COUNTER-MOBILIZATION****Introduction**

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support.

—Audre Lorde (1984: 112)

At the beginning of 2007, some women activists in Johannesburg's Anti-Privatisation Forum decided to form a women's organization that would be independent of the main forum. These activists sought through such an independent group to counter the contradictory marginalization of women in a social movement organization in which women constituted a majority of the members. Announcing their initiative, which they called the Remmoho Women's Forum,¹ they were adamant that the group not be seen as a subcommittee within the APF as such an arrangement would "[ghettoize] women's issues in a women's subcommittee." They also did not care for a group composed of men and women as that threatened to "[replicate] the way issues are discussed in the movements where it is impossible to construct a women's agenda." They wrote that such a mixed group addressing gender often "focus[ed] on women's gender roles not to critically analyse these roles but to entrench them e.g. we end up thinking about issues like childcare, projects for

¹ "Remmoho" means "we are together" in Sesotho. While I have chosen to identify the group I worked with, I use pseudonyms for its members as a measure of protecting their confidentiality, with exceptions being identifications in already published accounts and Nancy Castro, one of the facilitators of Remmoho's earlier processes.

women and not the power dynamics in the organization.”² Addressing such power dynamics involved creating an alternative space of reflection on their experiences as activists that challenged the parallel binaries between public and private, social and embodied (see Gouws 2005:5). This chapter chronicles the formation of Remmoho, examining the interventions group members attempted to make in movement space. If, as Audre Lorde warned and as Remmoho’s practitioners implicitly heeded, the master’s tools cannot “bring about genuine change,” what alternative tools are there to construct a world beyond the master’s house? For Lorde, mutuality of support and interdependency among women is key to challenging patriarchy and bringing about social change. Through Remmoho, I detail attempts to put such ideas in action. I focus in particular on Remmoho’s approach to creating an alternative space for women—their methodologies for building women’s activism, which drew on creative expressions including ritual, movement, and art.

As Remmoho’s founding members were attempting to effect change within the APF, theirs was a mobilization countering problematic dynamics in the social movement. Their efforts demonstrate how despite APF’s broad appeal, it was not an undifferentiated mass movement (see Burdick 1995:379-381; Edelman 2001:310-311; Ortner 1995:177). Gender has been a significant vector in movement experience as Remmoho members founded the group to mediate their experiences of marginalization within the APF. A few of them had participated in a gender reference group that brought together about 20 women across community organizations in Gauteng and nearby provinces from 2005 to 2007. The facilitator of

² These quotes are from Remmoho’s files including organizational minutes.

that group, Nancy Castro, echoing Lorde, advocated for the transformation of male-dominant approaches to collective mobilization and the creation of new methodologies in gender activism. As Remmoho drew on Castro's work in their own interventions, I examine approaches within both the gender reference group and Remmoho, drawing on interviews with Remmoho members and facilitators including Castro herself.

In their attempts to create a space for women within social movements, Remmoho (and the reference group that preceded it) call into question the nature and platform of political engagement, the environment of struggle, the interpersonal relationships activists cultivate among one another, and the ingrained attitudes coloring collective action. In so doing, they draw out mobilization as an intimately embodied and performed social phenomenon. This is an important contribution to scholarly approaches to mobilization. Remmoho's work highlights embodied processes that occur among individuals facilitating not just their participation in movement activity, but also their investments in being there. Tracing their work, I further my examination of the "inner life of participation" (Martin 1998:9), that is the embodied micro-processes that aggregate into collective action. Seemingly minute considerations including bodily carriage, dress, manners of addressing, and spatial formations factor significantly in the production of community. Choices along these lines are generative, rendering some practices legible as socially appropriate while deviating practices are inconceivable or nonsensical (Rancière 2004; see also

Bourdieu 1977:93-94).³ Understanding a social movement such as the APF as constituted through generative micro-processes is critical to engaging with the women's attempts to transform it. I begin by contextualizing recent gender interventions in South Africa's social movements.

Gender and Post-Apartheid Collective Activism: Disparities in the New Movements

In its early years, APF galvanized communities adversely affected by neoliberal policies. Impoverished black women constituted a significant portion of the base of APF and other such movements as they were arguably the most vulnerable to the ANC government's neoliberal shifts. The effects of the privatization of basic services included increased domestic burdens on women as homemakers (due to the sexual division of labor) to compensate for the government's reneging on services it used to provide such as water and sanitation (Naidoo and Veriava 2005; Xali et al 2005:25; see also Eriksson 2007:71).

In the new movements, women activists constituted a majority, contributing numbers and vibrancy to protest demonstrations, but their numbers were not well represented in leadership structures, which were male-dominated (Xali et al 2005; Pointer 2004; Eriksson 2007:49). Furthermore, there was a "hierarchy in the struggle" (Eriksson 2007:38; see also Meer 2007:99; Geisler 2004:71; Hassim 2006:32) resulting from the subordination of struggles for gender equality to a

³ Bourdieu writes: "bodily *hexis* is political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking* (1977: 93-94).

universalized class struggle.⁴ Gender scholars including Meer (2007) questioned the commitment to address female oppression through cultural systems or ideologies in these new movements. Addressing this would entail internal focus on values and dynamics within movements and not just external opposition of the state, something which activists had been hesitant to do.⁵ The new movements, with women as a target constituency, had not been avenues of female empowerment. Instead some described them as sites in which “daily forms of oppression are being normalized in the name of the struggle” (Paley 2004). Xali et al asserted that

The fact that women are the backbone of the social movements does not imply that...the social movements have become, in and of themselves, vehicles for female identity. If anything they appear to be movements **of** women rather than **women’s movements**, women **in** themselves rather than women **for** themselves. (2005:25; emphasis in original)

Within the APF, apart from the issue of female leadership, activists noted the silence of women’s voices in meetings and workshops. In one activist’s account of a meeting in 2004, men dominated the floor, while the few women participating were “women with lighter skin, for whom English is their primary language” (Paley 2004). Black women were marginalized within a movement that avowed to represent their aims; in one activist’s words, they were relegated to “a corner [in] talking about women” (Tebogo Mashota in Paley 2004:n.p.). Another activist alleged that women were

⁴ For parallels within anti-apartheid movements see Kompe (1985), and Reynolds and Richards (2003). For a nuanced discussion on subordination of women’s specific interests to universalized goals, see Molyneux (1985).

⁵ For example, Rebecca Pointer discussed a reluctance to engage internal dynamics in the Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign. She wrote: “Mandela Park activists claim to be ‘revolutionary’ in their thinking, and to want to overturn the systems that create oppression. But this is predominantly viewed as attacking the State, capitalism, privatization, and so on; not as an attack on their own oppressive ‘cultural’ systems or their own oppressive thoughts and actions” (2004:277). It must be noted that APF activists considered insensitivity to gender dynamics a shortcoming of their mobilization in retrospect during interviews conducted in 2010.

caught up in men's ambition and were "being used by men who are looking for power within the social movements" (Dudu Mphenyeke in Paley 2004:n.p.).

There has since been a confluence of activity surrounding gender work in social movements. In the APF this included a commitment to female leadership and the formation of Remmoho, the women's group that is the subject of this chapter. Some of this gender work was done in coordination with Khanya College, the NGO dedicated to supporting community activism through education and strategic planning. Khanya College's building, the House of Movements, hosted APF offices. Khanya College recognized a need to assess its efforts from a gender perspective due to women's increasing vulnerability to the ANC government's neoliberal policies. In 2005, the college hired a gender coordinator to identify and implement strategies that would address gender issues in its programs. The coordinator, Nancy Castro, conducted trainings that included APF administrators. Along with others, she facilitated a gender reference group that was composed of about 20 women in community movements including APF affiliates. This reference group, as a precursor to Remmoho, established critical analytic practices among a core group of women. There was significant backlash to the reference group among Khanya members and community activists; not all were in agreement about the political productivity of Castro's methods. In light of this backlash, gender activism within broad-based struggles raises not just Maxine Molyneux's question of when women's interests would be addressed (1985:229) but more pertinently how best to do so.

Radical Methodologies for Women's Activism

In explaining the work of the gender reference group, Nancy Castro, a key influence on Remmoho's interventions, discussed the need for alternative approaches that would not perpetuate the very male-normative organizational forms and patriarchal rules that occluded women's democratic participation (cf. Lorde 1984: 110-114). Male dominance was normalized and thus rendered invisible through the disembodiment and de-personalization of activist space in the separation of personal lives and bodied experiences from the presumed political endeavor. Women in particular experienced this disconnect of activist space from their day-to-day lives. One woman noted:

You go to a march, you go to a campaign...and... you fight for the rights of everyone... And then come back to your problems...the fact that you are not working, and you have kids... And you have family that is looking after you. And then those things are still...there. Looking at you...when you were out there, fighting. So...there is that world and your world. (In Eriksson 2007:114; original italics)

Castro, noting such disconnect among the women she facilitated, asked: "when my reality is that my husband is kicking me and I am unemployed and I need to put bread and butter on my table for four children and here they say capitalism...how do I link that with my reality?"⁶ She expressed a need to connect overarching themes directly with women's realities. In my fieldwork, I noted three examples of meeting practices that were alienating for women. The first was that meetings ran late into the day, thus privileging those participants who could travel freely. Because traveling late entailed security risks especially for women, many left early even though important discussions continued in their absence. Secondly, since the APF

⁶ Author's interview with Nancy Castro, December 15, 2010, Johannesburg.

did not provide childcare, women (many of whom were responsible for children within their families) were at a disadvantage. Finally, discussions and procedures could be difficult to follow and in this way privileged those comrades (usually male) who could draw on experience with the organization to legitimize their opinions. Such unquestioned assumptions and practices benefited male participants and further normalized the combative engagement in APF meetings (discussed in chapter two) that women had to master in order to successfully participate. The words of one male APF member in 2004 still rang true in 2009: “It’s all about who has the biggest cock. And if [a woman activist] is going to succeed, it’s because she’s got a big cock also” (in Paley 2004:n.p.). Women activists voiced similar interpretations in meetings I attended.

Understandably, Castro argued for the need to transform male-dominant practices in order not to misidentify female inclusion in such practices as empowerment. In her work with the women of the gender reference group, who met actively between 2005 and 2007, Castro aimed to engage “holistically [with] the full female human being and not only [her] activism, [drawing together] all the different identities of the woman” (personal interview 2010; also see Eriksson 2007:83-84). For Castro, transformation had to first engage the embodied individual through breathed, felt, and lived experiences.⁷ Addressing gender disparities require methodologies that personalize interactions and draw on spiritual,

⁷ Castro argued: “*To change culture is impossible under the normal tool of the patriarchy. [It] needs to be something like you breathe and you feel and you live. If we start with conceptual [discussions] I am sure nobody [is] going to discuss to disagree because conceptually it is very easy to agree with the gender position. [It is] different when you start to touch the individual*” (Nancy Castro in Eriksson 2007: 98; original italics).

emotional and embodied knowledge.

Castro sought to disrupt patterned alienation and lead the women to discover new forms of connection to self and others. Where other facilitators were predominantly concerned with whether or not workshop participants understood the concepts, Castro inquired into how the women were feeling (cf. Walters and Manicom 1996:12-13). She sought to create an environment in which women could freely discuss immediate concerns involving their “real” lives including their familial relationships, sexuality, and living conditions. Sexuality was an important theme in discussion because, Castro argued, it directly impacted women’s mobility in the world—“if I am in charge of my body, I can see freedom...that doesn’t mean that patriarchy won’t hit me, obviously but I have tools to deal with it. In the opposite way, [if I am not in charge of my body] I can have all the theory here but I won’t have the mobility to use it.”⁸ One of the participants of the reference group (and a founding member of Remmoho) noted the transformation that came with discussing sexuality: “The biggest concept that gave us [Remmoho members] a breakthrough was being the owners of our own bodies because we realized that as women we don’t own our bodies, we’re owned by the communities, we’re owned by children, we’re owned by mothers and sometimes by our in-laws because even when a woman is not ready to have children, the in-laws can tell you that we want a child now. They dictate how you should have sex and how many times you actually have it and so...I think sexuality is key when you’re doing gender work because until someone knows how all these gender roles are actually constructed and what it

⁸ Interview with Nancy Castro.

means to me as an individual and as a woman in society you can't really get a breakthrough."⁹

Furthermore, in order to transcend patriarchal devaluation of women, and silencing of their voices, the women had to cultivate a new sensibility and discover what they had to say.¹⁰ This process, which Castro ritualized as "putting on female glasses," privileged the women's own experiences over any others:

not what the male or what the movement, or what the social movement think and say, it is how we see and read with our own eyes, and how that is connected with our real lives, our private, our public, our involvement with the community but from our eyes. The process was beautiful beautiful beautiful. (Personal interview 2010)

The women had to let go of ideologies of female submission to patriarchal authority and incompetence in political spaces to cultivate their own independent perspectives. Recalling Rancière's insights on the aesthetic dimensions of politics, it is understandable that Castro's and the women's interventions took place on sensory grounds. Demonstrating the "crucial correlation between aesthetics [as modes of sensory experience] and politics" (Wolfe 2006:n.p.), the women strove towards a new sensibility that privileged their experiences and disrupted the dominant sensory order. For the gender reference group, Castro drew upon techniques from her work with women in her native Colombia. These techniques involving ritual, food sculpture, dance, and other embodied practices placed reference group women out of the realm of the "traditionally normal." Considering

⁹ Interview with the author, November 19, 2010, Johannesburg.

¹⁰ In the course of my own, more recent, fieldwork, one meeting participant discussed how she experienced a "double or triple mindedness" arising out of fear, doubt, confusion, and lack of confidence that interrupted her decisions: "there was something that made you not believe in yourself and when you grow, it stays with you," she said.

the associations of the aesthetic with beauty, it is very informative that Castro, and indeed other women I interviewed, described the work as beautiful. Other instances in which beauty come up include the reclamation of self-image in which women address themselves and each other as beautiful in order to encourage their participation in activist space. This speaks to a political reconfiguration of sensory categories that elaborate Castro's techniques.

Rituals, involving water for example, created material manifestations of the women's cognitive and emotional processes. In one such ritual during a three-day workshop, the women introduced themselves at the beginning, discussing how they were feeling. As they did so, they drank water, contributing their energy to it; they then poured this water in a bowl. Others did the same. "To have that bowl, that is all our energy, it's not water from the municipality, it's ours," Castro elaborated.¹¹ During the course of the workshop, whenever the women had new ideas, or a change in their understanding, they contributed water to the bowl. Every morning, they arrived with the bowl repeating the process over the course of the day. At the end of the workshop, the women carried the bowl outside singing. They poured out the water carrying "all our energy and all our new understanding...maybe it's touching another woman, and maybe it's permitting flowers to grow. It's the individual and at the same time it's the collective," Castro explained.¹²

A different ritual involved fire. Eriksson, a researcher with the group at the time, described an intervention in which participants wrote down their most painful memory:

¹¹ Author's interview with Nancy Castro.

¹² Author's interview with Nancy Castro.

Tears are starting to roll down the cheeks of some of us. When every one is done, we go out on the yard, lighting candles. Sitting there together, arms crossed over our chests or comforting each other, freezing in the cold June weather, we use the candles to burn the pieces we have written, in silence and with sincerity...Slowly, some of the women started to speak. Memories of poverty, sexual violence, lack of respect from parents and other struggles are shared. When no one else wishes to speak, we end with a song to clear the pain. The atmosphere for the day is low, but carries a sense of respect and vulnerability. (Eriksson 2007: 117-118; original italics)

Such methodologies were a radical departure from leftist modes of organizing in South Africa and were criticized by a few male activists as being more psychologically rather than politically driven.¹³ Castro however asserted that such work was not just a means to engage politics but was intrinsically political because it challenged the devaluation of women, and humanized the activist experience. The gender reference group met actively between 2005 and 2007. By November 2006, as the reference group was completing its process, a few of its members had started a women's forum within the APF. The intentions, challenges and accomplishments of Remmoho, the APF women's group, allow us to consider the implications of such radical methodologies in broad-based activism.

Remmoho Women's Forum

Four APF gender reference group participants sought to apply some of the interventions of the gender reference group within the APF. They began discussing the creation of Remmoho as an independent group for women activists with other APF female members. As can be surmised based on feminist critiques of the new movements noted earlier, Remmoho was not a project typical of South African social

¹³ One male activist's critique of the group was that it engaged people "as if you are counseling them" (Eriksson 2007:85).

movement organizations when it was established in 2007. In fact, among members' listed aims included the objective to "change the nature of the space of the movements and create a women friendly environment." Furthermore, they sought "to take up the issues that movements are not taking up from women's point of view."¹⁴ They argued, as noted earlier, that the very structural violence that social movements mobilize against—economic deprivation, lack of service delivery—affects women most adversely as most women bear responsibility for their families' livelihood. Furthermore, social and physical violence—examples include restrictions on women's mobility, physical and sexual abuse within households—exacerbate women's conditions.

Within movements themselves, women have had to battle patriarchal attitudes and a sense of alienation that dampen their involvement. In reports, Remmoho members highlighted that women constituted up to 90% of most mass meetings and marches, demonstrating the extent to which women made up the bulk of the APF's target constituency. Yet this dominance of women in membership was hardly reflected in the main organization's leadership. Furthermore, the meetings themselves were not welcoming spaces in many women's views. In my interviews, a few women reported feeling physically intimidated in APF meetings. Some were afraid to speak because they thought male members would hit them. One woman recalled an incident in which a male member threatened to throw a pregnant woman out of the window "because she was a woman and she was vocal and assertive." Another woman was adamant in her refusal to attend another APF

¹⁴ These objectives were listed in a 2008 proposal for organizational funding.

meeting. She described the one meeting she attended with another Remmoho member:

We were just sitting like this, we were sick and we were stressed because we've got something to say but we can't, so for me APF, no. Those men they are bullies and they do whatever they think is right for them and as a woman, you don't have a say in those meetings.¹⁵

Others who felt comfortable in speaking reported not being taken seriously.¹⁶

Through their efforts, APF became more sensitive to women's involvement and strove to achieve gender balance in leadership. Despite this however, Remmoho reported that women lost their investment in leadership and sustained involvement due to "male behaviors for power." One woman complained asking, "Why should I waste my time watching men fight with each other when I have more important work to do in the community?" Along with this, women discussed male attitudes that undermined their concerns as inconsequential to "real politics."¹⁷ One woman reported: "after I shared some of the problems facing women, the response from one of the male comrades was that I should take these problems to Oprah, because in the meeting only real politics was being discussed."¹⁸

Part of Remmoho's aim and ongoing challenge was to identify and depart from ingrained power dynamics and male-dominated movement culture. In their attempts to create and articulate a new "space for women," they invited women to attend activities as women, not as representatives of community organizations, a significant departure from APF's primary membership structure. Remmoho's

¹⁵ Author's interview, December 7, 2010, Johannesburg.

¹⁶ One woman stated, "You can speak in APF and say whatever you wanted to say but they will never take you seriously, it's like you are playing." Author's interview, March 18, 2010, Johannesburg.

¹⁷ See Kaplan (1997) on the political authority of women's community activism.

¹⁸ The quotes in this paragraph are from Remmoho's internal organizational reports.

membership thereby consisted of women activists from APF as well as women who were not involved in APF or any other form of collective activism. Women activists from community groups and organizations not affiliated with APF also made up the membership. Remmoho drew its members from four primary areas—the Vaal triangle, Khutsong, Soweto, and East Rand. About 40 to 60 women attended each Remmoho general meeting I participated in from 2009 to 2010. In 2008, its members ranged in age from 14 to 65, with mothers often bringing their daughters to participate in Remmoho activities. Those who were not students were primarily unemployed—only a sprinkling had formal employment with community based organizations; some were pensioners or received social grants; some conducted informal trading (e.g. running tuck shops, selling Tupperware), while others participated in income generating communal projects; others with no sources of income relied on household members and piece jobs to sustain themselves and their families. As a result, Remmoho subsidized the costs of attending meetings in Johannesburg. Before Remmoho received organizational funding from Oxfam Canada, its members would cover one another's expenses. With funding, Remmoho was in a position to reimburse a portion (if not all) of meeting transportation costs, provide lunch and childcare options, a particularly important initiative. During the latter portion of 2010, Remmoho sought to shift its subsidies to encourage further member responsibility. Remmoho leaders encouraged members to bring their lunch from home, and childcare would only be available to those women for whom meeting attendance would be prohibitive without that support. To address spotty attendance, Remmoho worked to create a core group of 25 women who would be

consistent members, receive gender training, coordinate campaigns, and pass on this experience to other women in their communities. Through such a model, Remmoho aimed to reach an additional 500 women.

Reflecting its approach to membership, many Remmoho members were recruited by individual women, although some were sent to the group by their community organizations. The reasons Remmoho members gave for their initial interest and participation in the group included a desire to learn about the abuse of women and take steps to address their own situations. For example, one interviewee commented: "In my first meeting, they were talking about the abuse of women, those women who are having problems with their husbands and even the children, the abused children. So I found that place being the right place for me because that's where I found other women who are having problems as I was having problems."¹⁹ Other reasons for involvement included curiosity about women's lives and a desire for an organization that would further their growth (a few women glossed this as an organization that would "build me up"). One woman explained, "you see talking to women, interacting with people, getting their ideas, getting to know where they are, you see that really builds me, that really does something to me, you see because...it unlocks another door in my life."²⁰ Finally, Remmoho members wanted an organization that would protect their voices and support their lives. One woman stated: "I think that's why Remmoho is there—to give each other support, to have a family outside the house."²¹ These reasons are critical to

¹⁹ Author's interview, December 7, 2010, Johannesburg.

²⁰ Author's interview, September 8, 2010, Johannesburg.

²¹ Author's interview, March 18, 2010, Johannesburg.

understanding the nature of the organization that the women were building in terms of the interests they sought to address.

In starting out, Remmoho met about three times a month. Members rotated leadership and administrative roles from meeting to meeting in order to build a non-hierarchical structure in which organizational responsibility was shared. This eventually became a formalized leadership structure particularly due to the need for consistent accountability to external funders. Remmoho agreed on a coordinating committee consisting of a chairperson, deputy chairperson, treasurer, secretary, deputy secretary and two additional members to observe and assist as needed.

Remmoho's early meetings and workshops utilized Castro's methodologies.²² It was a period of excitement and energy that subsided in later years. When I noted the absence of rituals and other techniques attributed to Castro in the Remmoho meetings I attended, one founding member reflected on this as a gradual erosion symptomatic of organizational growth rather than a conscious shift away from those practices. As Remmoho cultivated partnerships with other entities aligned with their aims, their organizational repertoires expanded. In late 2008, Castro and other practitioners connected Remmoho members with Gender at Work, a non-profit organization that supports institutions and community-based organizations in promoting gender equality. Gender at Work facilitators bring together peer-organizations over a series of workshops to learn from each other through a gender action learning process. Four Remmoho members participated in an 18-month

²² In fact, Remmoho invited Castro to facilitate some sessions; one member credited Castro as "very instrumental in making Remmoho and us to what we are today." Author's interview, November 19, 2010, Johannesburg.

learning process that culminated in February 2010; the process included overnight peer learning workshops as well as individual visits from an assigned Gender at Work facilitator. This partnership introduced new methodological approaches to Remmoho members that complemented Castro's techniques.

To explicate the complementary approaches, I reconstruct three ethnographic moments that exemplify Remmoho's activities during my research tenure. The first two were weekend workshops with members; the third event was the group visit to a sick member. In their attempts to create a cohesive women's group, which I describe below, Remmoho members made three key interventions into movement practice. They asserted firstly the personal as the most pertinent foundation for political engagement. Secondly, they demonstrated the intrinsically embodied nature of social ties. Finally, they highlighted group cohesion as an ongoing process involving love, respect, and care. Frederick Klaitz (2010) and Julie Livingston (2008) have shown how the cultivation of sentiments including love and care has been critical to sustaining social relationships despite economic inequities and health crises in Botswana. Remmoho's efforts can be appreciated in light of such insights.

Called By Possibility

After a march in 2008 protesting violence against women using public transport, Remmoho's campaign activities dwindled. In order to regain the momentum of previous years, the Remmoho executive organized a workshop on women and public transportation (January 30th 2010) that would identify the

challenges women faced regarding public transportation and plan a campaign to address these issues. This was a workshop I also attended. As I entered I noticed that the room was different. APF's meeting room was usually arranged like a boardroom with tables forming a huge rectangular block in the middle and chairs arranged around the table. On that day, women who arrived early had moved the tables aside, and set chairs in an oval shape with free space in the middle. The effect was immediate as I could fully see women across the room, which was significant for the meeting as I later observed. The workshop leader, who I call Amina, was also Gender at Work facilitator. She began the meeting by writing welcome on the board, at the top of the oval, with a smiley face.

We stood up and Amina led us through a series of physical exercises. We loosely swung our arms from side to side. Then we rocked our feet—placing the left foot in front of the right, and then rocking back and forth between the two feet. Then placing the right foot in front of the left and doing the same. We pulled from the earth—which involved placing one foot in front of the other (left then right) bending over the front foot and with a pulling gesture coming up. We pushed (bad energy) out, pulling good energy in. We surrounded ourselves in a shower of light—raising our hands over our heads and showering down. We flew over our lives—placing one foot in front of the other, and swinging our arms forward and coming back in a circle as in a forward flying motion. We faced a partner to mirror their positive and beautiful aspects. Then we bowed to each other's uniqueness. For each exercise, the first set of instructions focused on our own individual lives, and then the next set focused on the community. Because these exercises were not common to APF

practice, they introduced a different mode of interaction among those who participated based on reflective consideration for one another.

These exercises were based on capacitar's adaptation of tai chi.²³ Capacitar involves practices including tai chi, acupressure, visualization, breathwork, hand and head massage, as well as other wellness modalities. Capacitar, as part of Amina's facilitation repertoire, was useful in promoting relaxation among participants. Amina explained to me that "when people are more relaxed, they can look deeper inside themselves" in order to honestly identify the sources of the challenges they face and propose sustainable solutions. In addition to relaxation, Amina's exercises also encouraged self-care. With a co-facilitator, Amina had led a three-day healing workshop with a core group of Remmoho members incorporating some of these exercises, so some women in the room were already familiar with them.

Going around the room, each person introduced herself, and discussed how she was feeling. Thami mentioned feeling a bit depressed. Emily discussed how disturbed she felt at the passing away of her sister's daughter; she came to be healed, she said. When Ma Patrycia mentioned feeling "101 percent," we all laughed. After everyone, about twenty people, had gone around, Amina expressed concern for the number of people who said they were feeling depressed. She joked that she should have come stocked with Prozac. She hoped that the workshop will help to alleviate some of the women's concerns "so that we can all get to Ma Patrycia's 101%."

²³ Dr. Pat Cane developed capacitar through popular education workshops in Nicaragua in the 1980s; it has since grown to a global presence.

As the workshop proceeded with Amina's wry commentary and more importantly with physical and theatrical exercises, I felt a level of commitment and investment that I hadn't felt before in such gatherings. Particularly with the agreement that everyone in the room would fully participate, without distinction between researcher and member, I felt fully invited into the space. I also felt excited and nervous about the possibilities that became available simply by the nature of the space that the women created. I was not the only one who felt called by these possibilities. In a later interview, Willeen discussed the joy of her first Remmoho meeting. "Let me tell you the truth," she confided:

I went to the toilet at lunch, if you remember we did break for 5 minutes, I went to the toilet and I closed my eyes and I said, "Thank you Lord, thank you, you know exactly what I need. And this is it" And there were just small tears in my eyes and I said, "thank you Jesus, this is what I need in my life." And when I got back I was so...I felt very important, after a very long time, I felt alive and I said, "Oh my God, this is it."²⁴

What seemed distinct and valuable to Willeen and others about this collective was its emphasis on sensory experiences and energizing sociality. It introduced positively regarded techniques and practices that were ordinarily absent from the women's daily lives, heightening recognition of the collective as a potentially transformative one. For Emily who came to be healed and others who knew what to expect, there was anticipation towards the space, while those new to the encounter were immediately attuned to its significance.

²⁴ Author's interview, September 8, 2010, Johannesburg.

What is this Space For?

When I arrived at another workshop with the same group of people two weeks later (Feb 13, 14), people were checking in. Mum Alice mentioned her lingering illness but raised the hope that by being here, she could get some good energy. The woman next to Mum Alice also did not feel well. Ma Patrycia, as she said at the last workshop, felt 101%. She however discussed a hospital visit that she and three others had made to see one of their members, Rose, who had taken gravely ill. After the hospital visit, the four women went to Rose's house and the neighbors reported that Rose would lock herself in her house, unable to move, and no one would know what was happening to her. When she was hospitalized, the self-imposed isolation had to end. Rose's neighbors started looking after her children (one of whom was epileptic) and maintaining her household. Nomvula as she checked in raised the need to develop a system of support for group members. Nomvula mentioned that Rose was the second member to be hit by a stroke, adding to the increase in Remmoho members falling seriously ill.

"I wonder how many illnesses are our contribution really as an organization?" Amina, the facilitator asked. She agreed with the need to develop a support system, which could help the group be more aware of what was happening with their members. "Are these illnesses coming from stress, from HIV/AIDS?... What support systems are in place in members' lives?" she wondered.

"I'm always thinking about comrade Rose..." Talent said when it was her turn to check in, "that picture is stuck in my head." She bent her head, her body shaking and we heard her crying. Nomvula, getting up, did not approach Talent to comfort

her, rather she started moving chairs away from the middle of the room. "When you start working together, you become more than friends, you become like family," Amina offered. "Why couldn't Rose tell somebody that she was really ill? ...Why is it that Rose couldn't trust anyone?" She asked. Talent responded that "she told me but I didn't take it serious." "Did she tell you that she was ill?" Amina asked. "She told me that she had problems at home," Talent responded. "Is this a safe space where people feel safe and that they can share?" Nomvula asked, continuing, "[because] more than once the space has been broken." She gave an example of a woman who no longer attended meetings because another member had reported the marital problems she had raised in meetings back to her husband. "If we can't bring our personal issues to this space, then what is this space for?" Amina queried. "Is it for campaigns? When you stifle something that is bothering you it manifests in terrible issues. That is why when I hear that a woman is sick, I ask what is going on in her life. "

The women then discussed Amina's question regarding the purpose of the space. The responses included intentions to use the space to build one another as women; cultivate trust with one another; love one another and praise one another's attributes. On this last point, Nomvula elaborated how on a daily basis, women hid their real conditions giving a standard response that they were okay. "Why are we continuing to play the game to appear as if we are okay if we are not?" Amina asked. "What is wrong if people see that we are going through a rough patch? ...We want our kids to be truthful but all our lives, we have been told to lie, to cover up...we only react when things fall apart."

When Willeen started crying in response to Amina's words, Amina asked the two women who knew Willeen to offer her affirmations. Ma Patrycia spoke saying that Willeen was strong and whatever issues she faced, she [Ma Patrycia] would be there to help her. Nomvula talked about how beautiful Willeen was.

"For me, this space is for us to affirm that we are beautiful" Nomvula continued saying that she would tell pregnant women that they were beautiful which was not often done. "Sometimes I let people cry," Nomvula later explained, "because that's the only way that will heal you. It's not a space for you to wear make up..." A participant then raised the importance of "redefin[ing] this space away from the APF, because you're not a comrade if you cry."

Rethabile discussed how when she first came to the APF, she did not focus much on her appearance, she would dress down "[trying] to be like a man." She wore any pair of jeans and a comrade t-shirt, "so that men would accommodate me." She had come to the group pregnant, and when Nomvula told her that she was beautiful, she dismissed it at first. But when Nomvula repeated her affirmation at the next meeting; this affected her considerably. "Through that [Nomvula saying you are beautiful], then I was revived to start taking care of myself. [Things like that,] it revived us, and made us who we are." Such seemingly minute actions proved consequential not just as a personal intervention but also in collective politics. Affirming beauty promoted self-esteem among Remmoho members and enhanced their sense of capability. In a later interview, a founding member recalled how in its early attempts to get women in APF leadership positions, Remmoho members would meet right before APF meetings to encourage each other:

We used to meet before the meeting starts, we used to tell women that they are beautiful, that they are leaders, that they can be anything that they want to be and they must just believe in themselves. And we used to encourage them to volunteer instead of nominating people for certain positions. So we started by making them comfortable, practicing it on a small scale, so that they don't feel pressurized and then we heard it everyday that today this woman volunteered to do this and it went on from there.²⁵

Rose's song

Members decided to take a van and visit Rose in the hospital the following Tuesday as part of their resolve to support one another. I invited myself along for the hospital visit. When we arrived at Rose's room, which she shared with three other patients, Nomvula went to her bedside and immediately started addressing her and caressing her face. Rose was connected to an IV and seemed swallowed by her hospital bed. Both hands were bandaged into a fist to prevent Rose from hurting herself, a nurse explained. She had lost a lot of weight, which showed in the deep set of her high cheekbones. Paballo asked us to join hands for a few moments. Charmaine started singing a church hymn, in sesotho and isizulu. At the conclusion of the hymn, the women started praying aloud.

Nomvula stood at Rose's side throughout. Without the strength to sit up, the nurse had to be called in to feed Rose water through a plastic syringe at her request. Nomsa, standing next to me, said that Rose like this looked so much like her mother did. She began to cry and I put my hand on her back to comfort her. Charmaine mentioned a poem that Rose had written based on the song "Mshini wam," and tried to recall the words. She and others fondly brought up memories of songs including "We'ndoda awuyazi' funayo" that Rose used to sing with such spirit.

²⁵ Author's interview, November 19, 2010, Johannesburg.

Before we left, someone raised a song and Nomvula prayed. In the van, I asked Mum Alice about the song, and she translated it for me as: “when you ask me who is my savior, I will tell you it’s Jesus Christ. He is the one who saw me when I was crying, when I was suffering, he told me come to me. Even if I walk through the darkness, he was with me and what I found there, I felt happiness and peace.” Mum Alice insisted that Rose was singing that last song with us. “It started out humming and you could see that her mouth was moving,” she stated. Because of its spiritual nature, Mum Alice offered, “it’s like a shock going through your body... If you understand the songs, you feel it in your body. I think that was the main thing that Rose was feeling that’s why she had to sing.”

Personal circumstances often frame our experiences in the field. My grandmother passed away about six weeks after visiting Rose in the hospital. Bereaved, I was away from Johannesburg for about 10 days. When I returned, Charmaine informed me that comrade Rose had passed away, and that the women held a memorial service for her. I felt sad not to have been there. Her passing set loss in a deeper groove.

“You Cannot Do Tai Chi with Your Baggage”: The Burdened Body and Critical Outlets

These three moments are useful for explicating Remmoho’s methodological approaches as informed by their work with Amina, their Gender at Work facilitator. In her question—“what is this space for? Is it for campaigns?”—Amina suggested

that simply coordinating campaigns would be an insufficient use of the women's communion. She presented a view of illness that many women echoed in their interviews with me: "when you stifle something that is bothering you it manifests in terrible [bodily] issues. That is why when I hear that a woman is sick, I ask, what is going on in her life," Amina stated.

The need for restoration was evidenced by the number of women who mentioned being depressed or feeling down at both workshops, along with the examples of women like Mum Alice who, although not feeling well, came to the meeting space hoping to receive good energy. This need for restoration was also evidenced by the profound gratitude Willeen shared for her discovery of the group. Reflecting on the large number of women who expressed feelings of depression, or tiredness, Amina suspected that the stresses Remmoho members experienced in their lives built up in the body as these stresses went unresolved:

Imagine if you're not allowed to put down your suitcase if you're at an airport, you have a 5-hour wait and you have to carry this all the time, you are going to be tired. And that's exactly what happens to them, they carry this huge amount, they haven't had the chance to offload those and you go to bed with it, you get up with it and you clutch it everywhere you go.²⁶

Judith Butler's descriptions of the body as "the legacy of sedimented acts" (1988:523) resonate with Amina's insights. Everyday stresses and tensions manifest in bodily conditions, whether it be of tiredness, depression or more serious illness—Nomvula highlighted that Rose was the second member to be hit by a stroke, and the third to be seriously ill.

²⁶ Author's interview, October 26, 2010, Pietermaritzburg.

The body becomes overburdened in ways that hinder receptivity and effective participation in collective activism. As Amina explained:

In many ways what you're clutching becomes your defense so you are not open to anything, you are not open to understanding who you are, you are not open to finding who you are as a woman because you just have your baggage that you are clutching all the time. You go to meetings [at the APF] and you can't really get your voice heard because you have your baggage with you. And that baggage impacts on your self-esteem, it impacts on your relationships, it impacts on how you are functioning at work, it impacts on how you operate in the family, in the community, in all given situations. So when you come in a given environment, you still a bit tired and your body starts only seeing that tiredness.²⁷

Their challenges within the main organization echo the experiences of American women liberation activists from the 1960s who asserted the personal as political (Hanisch 2006 [1969]). Establishing the domestic, private, and personal as a realm of critical analysis with socio-political implications has been crucial to feminist praxis. That the personal is political contextualizes intractable individual challenges within wider social dynamics such that one woman's experiences can resonate with those of other women and encourage collective action towards wider social change. Extending this insight, Remmoho women also attest that the social is embodied.

Different models have sought to describe the relationship between the body and the social world in which it is embedded. Among these, Mary Douglas (1970) describes the physical body as a microcosm of society, reflecting social pressures on individual comportment. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock (1987) extend Douglas' idea by conceiving of "three bodies": 1) an individually experienced body-self; 2) a social body that is the nexus of relationships among society, nature, and culture; 3) a body-politic, in which the body serves as a relic of social and political

²⁷ Author's interview, October 26, 2010, Pietermaritzburg.

regulation. Exemplifying this “body-politic,” Michel Foucault conceives of the body as the means through which power reaches and disciplines the individual. For Foucault, the body therefore is a legacy of disciplinary conditioning (see Foucault 1972; 1977; 1978). While these insights might be useful for appreciating how as bodied subjects, Remmoho members might physically become affected by their social roles as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, and activists, the models do not fully capture the women’s experiences of reclamation.

For Remmoho members, cultivating positive sociality among themselves alleviated their physical burdens. Discussing so-called personal problems became a critical outlet, and the space to do so was necessary for bodily health. According to Ma Patrycia, by talking out issues, she was healing herself:

Because if you keep something Tayo inside, you don’t want to take it out, it hurts. And that thing it kills you because it’s...it’s a secret killer because it takes a bit, a bit inside of you. Then at the end of the day when you go to the Doctor they say you’ve got depression or you are stressed. Most of those people who are secretive who doesn’t want to cough things out they usually get those sickness and they don’t last [survive].²⁸

The group then had the potential to enhance wellbeing by providing a platform for the airing out of issues and challenges in a supportive environment. The feminist philosopher Denise Riley describes the impact of language as a shared rather than individual phenomenon. Seeking to address “How words Do Things with Us” (an inversion of J.L. Austin’s famous title), Riley conveys “language’s affect as that outward unconscious that hovers between people, rather than swimming upward from the privacy of each heart” (2005:3-4). In the recognition of the intersubjective force of language, we can appreciate “how words do things with persons” (Klaits

²⁸ Author’s interview, May 25, 2010, Johannesburg.

2010:165) not only in constituting interpersonal relationships but also, as Remmoho members attest, in reconstituting the body's health.

Collective struggle and campaigning is not enough if such struggle stifles individuals' voices and yields poisonous interpersonal relationships. As a facilitator, Amina was inspired by the importance Paulo Freire placed on dialogue in promoting inclusivity within political communities (Freire 1972). She encouraged talking as a process of collaboration through which Remmoho members recognized the issues that were important in their lives and created the space for their voices to be heard. As these voices emerged and gained strength, they could then identify possibilities for transformation. In order to meet their needs for restoration and collaborative transformation, some practices had to be encouraged (like the freedom to cry), deliberately cultivated (visiting Rose as a group), and openly disavowed (gossiping, backbiting, and the organizational culture of the APF).

A number of practices distinguished this space from the routine activists' meeting—including the formation of chairs and Amina's physical exercises. Through visualizations of the body's energy, of the wholeness and beauty of our co-participants, of our lives and communities, Amina encouraged a different kind of presence. As I mentioned earlier, one of the aims of the exercises was to encourage relaxation. By so doing, women experienced a taste of laying their burdens down, even if temporarily. As Amina stated, "you can not do tai chi with your baggage." The relief can be so profound that at a workshop some women started crying after the physical exercises. Ma Patrycia described her experience of the exercises as one of losing weight saying: "when I'm doing these exercises I feel something [taken] out of

my weight.”²⁹ Relatedly, Willeen described release: “those exercises it’s like in a way they liberated something, they opened something in me, they released some certain energies and when I saw it, my spirit remembered, you see, my soul.”³⁰ In the loss of certain accumulated energies, Willeen experienced self-reconnection. These two distinct elements—the affect of language in reinforcing positive sociality, and the palpable experience of relaxation cultivated through physical exercises—charged Remmoho’s space.

While many women sought to heal themselves by promoting collective ties, the desired characteristics of care and support were not innate to women. Despite its aims of providing a safe space for women, Remmoho itself has been such a conflict-ridden environment that its members did not feel safe in discussing their challenges. When Ma Patrycia raised Rose’s hospitalization in the second meeting, Amina asked: “I wonder how many illnesses are our contribution really as an organization?” She was referring to some of the problematic dynamics involving gossiping and backbiting that disrupted the safety of the space. Amina suggested that Rose’s illness became cause for anxiety among Remmoho members who perhaps wondered: “what has happened to a woman who is so fit and a part of us and she carried the same tiredness that we carried and am I going to get there too?” By questioning the group’s contribution to the health of its members, she hoped that the women could dig beyond the surface to identify the reasons they perpetuated the very dynamics they sought to transform. Remmoho members struggled to articulate the meanings of the space, to identify those moments that changed their

²⁹ Author’s interview, May 25, 2010, Johannesburg.

³⁰ Author’s interview, September 8, 2010, Johannesburg.

outlook (like Nomvula telling pregnant women that they are beautiful), the transformations they sought and the possible ways of getting there. Their undertaking met with external opposition, which I discuss in the following section in order to assess the impact of Remmoho and the reference group that preceded it.

Losing North? Some Methodological Assessments

Nancy Castro and the gender reference group that preceded Remmoho received significant backlash against their methodological approaches from activists connected to APF and Khanya College. She characterized such backlash as involving activists accusing: “you are losing the North, comrade, what are you doing? ...You are discussing individualism, and the social movement is collective. And you are thinking what happened with you, you are not thinking in a collective.” Similarly, Remmoho members recalled APF members accusing them of dividing the organization by trying to form their own group. They were also accused of undermining the broader APF collective by “making women [members] disrespectful of the structures that are there.” The women responded to this as a response of patriarchy “when it’s being challenged.” They argued that change was inevitable, even though it might come with casualties; they encouraged one another to press on. These accusations of individualism question the political productivity of Remmoho’s approach particularly considering the neoliberal moment in which the group was formed.

Harvey (2005), Rose (1996) and others (see McElhinny 2010: 315-319; Muehlebach 2007) discuss how proponents of neoliberalism idealize self-

sufficiency, individual autonomy and an entrepreneurial spirit that would shift social responsibility from the state to individual initiative and civil society organizations. Methodologies that emphasize self-care and affective social ties that both the gender reference group and Remmoho utilized could then be interpreted as furthering these aims of neoliberalism rather than subverting them. Indeed highlighting gender inequality within social movements and contesting patriarchal orders in these spaces, were interpreted as diverting attention from the “real” politics of anti-neoliberal struggle (see Eriksson 2007:80-87). Such interpretations are complicated by Remmoho members’ experiences. The systems of support they sought to create and the burdens they hoped to alleviate through shared testimonies challenge neoliberal ideas of individual autonomy and self-sufficiency.

Charges of promoting individualism and thereby neglecting (or undermining) the collective were also critiques of the scope and sites of Castro’s and Remmoho’s methodological emphasis. As one male activist queried in a 2006 meeting: “what is the point of these person’s [sic] individual experiences if we cannot hear how these people collectively experience water privatisation?” (Eriksson 2007:83). For many, the reference group that preceded Remmoho did not do enough to draw attention to wider political-economic issues. In response, Castro insisted on strengthening and integrating a person’s multiple identities as the most sensible pathway towards collective activism.

These critiques were not solely male-driven. The group’s methodologies did not appeal to all female APF members—there were differences among the women that Remmoho mobilized based on racial and classed sensibilities. Many of

Remmoho's members were impoverished black women who felt viscerally alienated in APF meetings (recall one woman's description of getting sick at APF meetings due to the silencing of her voice). A number of them lived with quite traumatic experiences (of rape or physical violence, for example, which could be solitary or prolonged violations). The selves they sought to reclaim involved cultivating empowerment over these facets of their lives and relationship. Remmoho's methodologies facilitated such an endeavor, providing space for women to process together and garner collective insight. There were those for whom such work held no appeal, including Claire Ceruti who felt disconnected in the one Remmoho session she was able to attend:

I don't know if it was just that session, but it was going through issues of sexual abuse and that was useful, you know trying to encourage people to speak out about it, but I also found that, what I found myself thinking was 'oh I have never actually been abused by a man, so what do I have to say?' There is no place for me here, that kind of thing, you know so there was like issues like that I wasn't quite sure how to, you know how do you get around that because it was important to do the thing to say this is not something to be ashamed of, you know if someone screwed you around it is not your fault and we need to speak up and that was important, but it also felt a bit like there was nothing else.³¹

Claire, who identified as "a forty year old white woman who has been standing up for myself for twenty years now," found little room to connect over these experiences, and this raised doubt about her belonging. Although she was concerned with combating sexism, she did not experience voicelessness in the same ways expressed in the meeting. Because Remmoho's scope seemed to privilege the work of transformation at this more intimate, embodied and emotional level, there was little common ground for her participation as a female APF member. For Claire, the

³¹ Interview with Claire Ceruti, conducted by Dale McKinley, February 23, 2010, Johannesburg.

limitation had to do with Remmoho's lack of analysis of wider systemic issues behind the abuses many of its members encountered. Her reflections suggested that by addressing wider cultural and political-economic systems, Remmoho would have been more inclusive of a wider range of experiences.

In addition to critiques of their scope, both the gender reference group and Remmoho encountered differing views on the sites that consumed their focus. In a March 2010 workshop with Remmoho members on organizational finance, the facilitator critiqued the tendency for organizations to be destructively "inward looking": "sometimes when an organization has problems, we become inward looking, we don't look at the outside environment, we turn on each other," he said. In contrast, for Amina, external change is impossible without internal transformation on an individual and organizational level: "you can't have change externally if you haven't changed something within you for that whole transformation process to be sustainable," she explained. Wider systemic change began with individual transformation.

Remmoho's experiences demonstrate that setting an intention for change—creating a social movement environment conducive to the participation of women—was only the beginning. For the change they sought to materialize, internal transformations and attitudinal shifts needed to occur. Such transformations involved healing processes through which they could see their conditions more clearly and from this vantage point, more effectively engage.³² The efforts I described in this chapter present only one set of attempts to counter problematic

³² One interviewee stated it thus: "By healing your mind and your spirit everything becomes clear to you." Author's interview, December 9, 2010, Johannesburg.

marginalization within the APF and South African social movements more broadly. Remmoho was a unique endeavor, particular to the women who were drawn to its interventions rather than being representative of all female activists within the APF. I accounted for these divergences—among women for whom Remmoho held appeal and those who felt excluded from its aims—in the sensory experiences, emphasis on healing, and possibilities of support that welcomed women like Willeen and myself, but did not always register as personally desirable, as was the case with Claire. Remmoho floundered with the decline of the APF, much as the women's group tried to distinguish itself from the wider organization. The group did not fully realize its potential, although its experiences remain instructive for the constitution of activist community. In the next, and final chapter, I consider generational dynamics within the APF by examining the mobilization of youth, who were responsible for many performance initiatives in the overall organization.

*chapter 5***YOUTH, PERFORMANCE, AND COLLECTIVE ACTIVISM****Introduction**

In the concluding lines of Chris Abani's captivating novel, *Graceland* (2004), the protagonist claims a new name. He arrives at the airport for travel away from precarious circumstances in Lagos, Nigeria, after successfully securing a fake passport. The name on that passport offers hope and the significance of shedding his past—Redemption. In reference to this novel and in acknowledgment of search and discovery as persistent tropes in youth narratives, Redemption is the pseudonym I chose for one of the young people who had been key to these activities. Various people urged me to seek him out and by chance I did find him. In this narrative of youth activism, my search involved locating young people such as Redemption, who had spearheaded APF's performance troupes, as these activities had been in decline by the time I began my research. Redemption however is more than just a name. In its multiple meanings, it is an apt quality that resonates in the experiences of the young people I describe, who were recovering long discarded senses of self within activist communities from which they had been estranged; and claiming fulfillment in honoring ancestral legacies of struggle. The evolution of performance practices in post-apartheid South Africa provides wider context for appreciating the significance of their efforts. This chapter therefore details how youth activists became mobilized to participate in the community struggles that were part of the APF. The

generational dimensions of activist engagement takes a related but secondary focus. I describe how youth activists used performance as a deliberate tool for mobilization, and how their efforts were differently valued as entertainment by older activists in the wider organization.

Defining Youth: Post-Apartheid Considerations

To examine youth cultural practices within the APF, and the political significance of these practices in post-apartheid South Africa, it is necessary to consider definitions and applications: to whom or what does the category of youth refer? Such a definition has been an elusive challenge in research studies as youth is not a consistent universal category. Different societies demarcate youth differently. The designation can mark individuals across quite a wide age range. Writing that “in a given culture, preadolescent individuals may count as youth, while those in their 30s or 40s may also be included in this category,” Mary Bucholtz (2002:526) illustrates youth categorization in South Africa. According to the National Youth Act of 1996, youth are defined as those whose ages fall between 14 and 35 years. While this legal categorization reflects some social realities, it does not fully capture how this category is socially enacted and based more on life circumstances or social status rather than strict chronological age. Furthermore, Bucholtz notes that youth or adolescence is not a highly significant life stage in all cultures as some societies do not have well-defined categories for young people. Given these considerations, the term is not one to be taken for granted; these considerations explain the challenge of definition by highlighting how amorphous boundaries of youth can be.

Given these challenges, why engage the category at all? Youth is a categorization that mediates social interpretations of biological chronology, foregrounding age “not as a trajectory but as identity...[where identity is] agentic, flexible, and ever-changing” (Bucholtz 2002: 532). In contrast to youth, scholars have argued that adolescence is a biological and social universal that contrasts with adulthood. Such a developmental framework promotes an adult-centered perspective at the expense of engaging with young people as cultural agents in their own right. Bucholtz therefore urges a shift in scholarship from adolescence towards youth and recognizes the conceptual potential of this category. She writes that “where the study of adolescence generally concentrates on how bodies and minds are shaped for adult futures, the study of youth emphasizes instead the here-and-now of young people’s experience, the social and cultural practices through which they shape their worlds” (2002:532).

In addition to an emphasis on young people’s perspectives and agentic strategies, an examination of youth involves a related consideration of generation. The concept of generation is also a dynamic one linking “the more static structural idea of age-grades with history and processes that go beyond mechanical life-courses and social reproduction” (Durham 2000:113). Generational analysis considers the relationship among or across age-conscious cohorts as these dynamics correspond to historical and global processes—in other words, how is social change and continuity mediated through intergenerational relationship? Such generational analyses highlight youth as a relational concept, produced not through static homogenous groupings but reflective of shifting “reciprocal but asymmetrical”

claims people make on each other (Durham 2000:114). Furthermore, generational considerations cast the categorization of youth as an outcome of power, for example through differing claims to knowledge by elders, lending to the subordination of the young by the old (Durham 2000:115; Meillassoux 1981).

Durham offers a rough set of guidelines that demarcate youth as most often:

(1) those (either by their own claims, or by the impositions of others) who straddle kin-based, domestic space and wider public spheres; (2) those who have gained some level of recognized autonomy and take up public roles, but are still also dependents and not yet able to command the labor of others as superiors themselves; (3) those who can be expected to act upon their social world and not just be the recipients of action, but whose actions are often conceptualized as straddling(or linking) the social and a-social (biological, natural exotic domains)... (Durham 2000:116)

Although these guidelines highlight the challenge of definition as the experience and practice of youth is not consistent over localities, they are nonetheless useful for considering the spaces and potential of youth political participation. These guidelines establish youth as individuals who can act within wider public spheres, take on public roles, and have established certain levels of autonomy but are still dependents. They are not in the position to fully claim authority over others or their own life choices. Such circumstances render youth as a liminal and ambiguous experience particularly when considering political involvement. "Youth, partially disarticulated from their own domestic realms, partially in them, not yet vested in new ones, are in a highly ambiguous position in relation to these various spheres" (Durham 2000:118). These opportunities and limitations affect youth political participation as we shall see in the case of post-apartheid youth activism in the APF.

Rather than attempt to delineate specific age-groupings in a universal category of youth, Durham (2000) circumvents the challenges of definition by

applying the linguistic concept of a shifter to the conceptualization of youth (Jakobson [1957] 1971; Silverstein 1976). A shifter is a word that is directly linked to the context of its utterance and takes much of its meaning from situated use, e.g. “here” or “us”. Similarly, the categorization and application of youth is context specific. Further, in the same way that a shifter can go beyond this referential function and draw attention to metalinguistic features underlying the conversation, the categorization of youth can draw attention to social structures at play:

As people bring the concept of youth into bear on situations, they situate themselves in a social landscape of power, rights, expectations, and relationships—indexing both themselves and the topology of that social landscape. They do so not necessarily... in a static manner, but in a dynamic, contestive, and imaginative way. (Durham 2000:117)

If as Durham urges, the categorization of youth illuminates political landscapes, what is its significance in contemporary South Africa, and within the APF in particular? How does youth come to bear in South Africa’s post-apartheid social movements? The processes in which the social categorization of youth takes place can be quotidian but nonetheless revealing.

In November 2009, at Soweto Heroes Day, an event commemorating activists who had passed away, a community leader encouraged young people to join in the singing of freedom songs stating that the youth “must know these songs.” Through such a statement, she highlighted the political stake of young people’s participation. At an event that explicitly acknowledged the impermanence of human life—commemorating those activists who had passed away not from bullets but from structural violence—she revealed the transfer of struggle to be at stake. If young people forgot, if they did not take up these songs that were aural manifestations of

political struggle, the efforts of activists preceding them would be lost. These struggles could not continue if young people did not participate in the cultural performances and claim it as their legacy. Such sentiments were echoed in then ANC secretary-general Kgalema Motlanthe's assertion that "if we lose the active support of young people, then our struggle would have been in vain. We have to engage the youth on issues that interest them. They are going to inherit this country. A revolution that does not produce future cadres and leaders from among the young is doomed" (quoted in Jubasi 2000).

Within South Africa's history of political mobilization, youth have often been the radicalizing faction in broad based movements. Nelson Mandela, in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994), described his involvement in the formation of the ANC youth league, which was formed to serve as an agitating force within an organization that young ANC members perceived to be in slumber. In 1949, the ANCYL advocated a mass program of action including boycotts, strikes, stay-at-homes, and demonstrations, which was a radical departure from the ANC's previous law-abiding stance. Youth leaders, including Nelson Mandela, spearheaded the militarization of the organization through the formation of a military wing of the ANC, umkhonto we sizwe. In community civics, youth activists often adopted strategies that were perceived as extreme by their more adult counterparts including school boycotts and consumer boycotts. In Diepkloof, Soweto, for example, during a consumer boycott of white-owned shops in 1985, youth enforced the campaign by seizing grocery packages and strewing some on the ground, much to the helpless ire of onlookers. As much as adults condemned these tactics, youth

were often called upon to address community dilemmas, especially those involving crime (Marks 2001: 54-55). Through such consultations, youth were expected to work for their communities' greater good. Songs such as "sobashiya 'bazal' ekhaya," which speak to the experience of young recruits leaving for foreign military training camps attest to the sacrifice these efforts required of youth. Its lyrics state that "we will leave our parents at home, entering other countries in the quest for freedom." Apart from exile, youth also sacrificed their lives in apartheid-era struggles. Such sacrifice is prominent in the brutal killing of protesting school children, including Hector Peterson, in Soweto on June 16th 1976, an event that is annually commemorated in the post-apartheid nation as Youth Day.

Many young people experience ambivalence towards the legacy of South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle given their current political-economic challenges. Catherine Besteman describes such ambivalence among young men with whom she worked in Cape Town, who "respectfully acknowledge that people gave their lives in the struggle against apartheid but argue that defining their contemporary situation through the lens of the struggle would hinder their opportunities" (Besteman 2008:238). As one explained: "if I'm trying to understand what happened then, and not being attentive to what is going on right now, how am I going to survive? How am I going to look for work?" (quoted in Besteman 2008:238). Another clarified his perspective:

For me, the struggle would be a great memory if we had fought and won the freedom. And then everyone would be free. But nobody's free... It's like, we won the freedom, but certain people are enjoying the freedom, and it makes me so mad about the struggle. People fought and did their absolute best, and I'm so proud of them. But now, the freedom that was captured doesn't even

serve the people who fought for freedom. That's why I'm saying the struggle was good, but it doesn't inspire me. (quoted in Besteman 2008:238)

The political continuities that a number of anti-apartheid activists would like to see in evidence among the nation's youth has not been readily apparent in the contemporary moment.

Some scholars assert that in this post-apartheid dispensation, the political intentions of popular practices have changed, particularly among youth, from mass mobilization to a politics of justified enjoyment (Coplan 2005; Allen 2004; Nuttall 2004). During apartheid, those youth cultural workers who devoted their creative energies towards political struggle did so usually without financial reward. Their commercial prospects were further limited by the international boycott against South African products including performance. With the end of apartheid, the question of what youth would devote their available energies towards has been addressed by practices that seemed to break with the past. Young artists now expressed their cultural self-confidence through demands for enjoyment: "in those first [post-struggle] heady days the first freedom the youth demanded was to freely enjoy themselves" (Coplan 2005:15-16). Apartheid-era leisure opportunities served a restorative purpose,¹ in contrast youth demand for enjoyment post-apartheid was tinged by more rampant materialism. These tendencies were most highlighted in a new musical genre, *kwaito*, which provided platform for a domain of style that

¹ As Johnny Clegg said at the height of the struggle in the 1980s: "The weekends are for reconstitution . . . "Good time" music is reconstitutive because it says, climb inside and I'll make you whole, get up off your chair, don't feel so bad, let's move together, a bit more strongly with each repeated cycle of the song . . . It is defiant. It expresses the determination that every one of us will be free one day. It cannot be explicitly political . . . it expresses in its tone, in the sound of the voice and the sound of the instruments, the soul of the black South African" (quoted in Taylor 1997:82, 80).

celebrated township innovations. Exponents of kwaito brought together “the self-aggrandising consumerism of the children of the middle class with the gritty, unapologetic bravado of the youth of the township streets.” In so doing, they cast aside the burdensome mentality of their elders’ pre-liberation “social morality,” as they actively expressed and composed street culture. These innovations of style included “verbal, body attitude and movement, and fashion codes: *loxion kulcha* (location [town-ship] culture), as the name of one instantly successful black clothing design house labelled it” (Coplan 2005:18).

These activities, innovative as they are, have contributed towards portrayals of post-apartheid youth culture as apolitical. Coplan for example writes that while the genre does lament the failure of the democratic government to address social problems, “direct involvement in South Africa’s current political processes is not a favoured activity of either black youth or their popular musical heroes” (Coplan 2005: 21). Similarly, Gavin Steingo writes of kwaito as embodying the reconfiguration of politics. By embracing material and social aspirations while overlooking actual political-economic conditions, kwaito is de-politicized. Yet, this rejection of traditional politics ushers in a new political and aesthetic configuration, a repartitioning of the sensible. Kwaito is “the embodiment of a radically new politics, even if it is not political in the traditional sense. By rejecting politics, kwaito becomes political. By being apolitical, kwaito becomes extremely political” (Steingo 2005:343; see also Steingo 2007). Despite Steingo’s sharp analytic of power (especially in Steingo 2007), his attempt to politicize kwaito’s anti-politics of enjoyment furthers a narrative of disinterest in political opposition among youth.

These portrayals overlook other participatory domains including the involvement of youth in community work (see, for example, Besteman 2008). Furthermore, a number of young South Africans do establish continuities with predecessors' past mobilization efforts through explicitly political collective activism. Given the possibilities of aspiration, cultural innovation and self-making that is evident in kwaito's post-apartheid emergence, in what contexts, and with what considerations do young people devote their efforts to community activism? Towards an understanding of young people's motivations, and given the flexibility of the category, it is necessary to clarify whom and what I mean by youth as the label figures within activist practices of the APF.

Youth Participation in the APF

As described above, I delineate youth as a "social shifter" rather than by strict chronological age. Although most of the people I consider in this chapter were in their twenties and thirties when I interviewed them, within the APF, people become youth more by contrastive association than numerical age. Unlike the case with Remmoho, whose members formed an association based on a shared gender identity, there was no APF-wide grouping of youth. Generational considerations were however prevalent. Concerns of household maintenance including housing, electricity, and water dominated APF community struggles. Since these were responsibilities that many young people had not yet assumed, APF youth found themselves outnumbered by activists of older generations particularly grandparents, whose pensions often sustained their families. APF affiliates often

cited their membership of consisting of young people and the elderly, reflecting a generational bifurcation prevalent in the movement. In addition to individual participation in community-based affiliates, youth participation within the APF was bolstered by about four affiliates formed solely on the initiative of young people. Of these, two affiliates further distinguished themselves through their performance initiatives. Before I examine their significant contributions regarding political performances within the APF, I detail the parameters of youth involvement more generally through the narratives of young APF members.

When she joined the APF-affiliated Working Class Crisis Committee (WCCC) in 2004, Charmaine found the affiliate to be composed mostly of “grandfathers.” At her first meeting, “there were so many, many grandfathers and I didn’t even understand what I am going to say or do so I just stand there and listened.”² When I asked how she felt participating in the organization as a younger person and as a woman, she responded that her experience was good: “you feel so special, they always tell you, ‘My child, you are doing great work! Keep it up and you will see how well you will develop’, they make you feel so special, they make you feel like I what I’m doing is right, I’m doing a right thing.” The grandfathers’ encouragement, which indexed their generational authority positioned Charmaine in a moral landscape that affirmed her choices to participate.

Buyisiwe, an activist in his mid-thirties, also noted a generational gap. He had left his affiliate organization in 2002. Upon his return in 2008, he was “seeing a lot of pensioners only, one [other] youth member... striving hard to build the

² Author’s interview, March 18, 2010, Johannesburg. All of the quotes and comments from Charmaine in this chapter are from this interview.

organization.”³ Unlike Charmaine, he decried such a situation and lamented the absence of youth involvement, which was a change from the years of his earlier participation. He attributed this decline to youth dropping out following his departure and the death of a key organizer:

people do believe in other people...let's say you go to church, you believe in your Pastor, he's the good preacher then you can get healed by his voice you know. People are believing in people. Then after [the organizer passed away] I heard that community branches are starting to drag slow like branches are dying you know so the stem can't do nothing without the branches or the roots can't grow up without anyone who is watering the plant.

In his reflections, Buyisiwe highlighted the impact of single individuals on collective efforts as steeped in emotive investment, which manifests aesthetically, i.e. through sensorial evaluation. The example that he gave to elaborate such attachments described a good preacher—and by extension a comrade worthy of one's investment—as someone whose voice produces healing. In his ethnography of a church community in Botswana, Frederick Klaitz writes on the power of the voice to affect others, an affect that is particularly embodied. Buyisiwe's comments can be further clarified through Klaitz' observations that: “Apostolic Christians in Botswana cultivate methods of apprehending and reshaping their sense of who they are in relation to other people, since they are keenly aware of the power of their own and others' voices to affect each other's sentiments and bodily conditions” (Klaitz 2010: 168). Buyisiwe's comments describes such an intersubjective bond established through “the reciprocity between the addresser and addressee” (Jakobson 1990:96), a phatic connection that establishes community. APF members established who they

³ Author's interview, June 16, 2010, Johannesburg. All of the quotes and comments from Buyisiwe in this chapter are from this interview.

were in relation to other people, an intersubjectivity that is sustained through emotive investment—“people are believing in people.” That this investment erodes with the departure of key individuals highlights the vulnerability of the collective. When he left the organization in 2002, Buyisiwe heard that “lots of youth decided to quit...what that probably means is the community who decided that, ‘no as long as there is no so and so, and so and so we are not going to work.’” Similarly youth involvement further eroded with the passing away of an organizer, : “without anyone who is watering the plant,” community branches “drag slow” and “the stem can’t do nothing without the branches.” His insights clarify the decline of youth involvement not just within his particular affiliate, but in other affiliates that contributed significantly to APF’s performance initiatives. His insights also highlight factors that encourage youth participation including positive relationality among members, akin to the experiences that Remmoho members sought to cultivate among themselves. Charmaine’s participation, for example, was fostered through the encouragement that the grandfathers voiced.

When Buyisiwe returned in 2008, he was elected youth leader as he was the only young person who could “manage that position.” By then, the other active youth, Thokozani, was already serving as a media officer. Part of his role as a youth leader was to recruit youth to the organization, a task he found particularly challenging: “You know it’s difficult again to recruit the youth but at that time I was trying hard so I managed to get at least from different communities eighteen members of the youth who wanted to work with the [affiliate].” These numbers were however not sustained: “we worked hard then others got jobs, they don’t

pitch in because...they only pitched in when they are off at their jobs... so now we are like, only left with two.”

Buyisiwe’s experience speaks to a wider trend of losing activists to professional opportunities. Concerns about employment are particularly acute among youth. In 2011, the unemployment rate among 15-24 year olds was 51%, more than twice the national unemployment rate of 25%.⁴ As Buyisiwe discovered, the opportunity to work can often conflict with being involved in a social movement. He himself returned to active participation within his affiliate after exhausting his employment possibilities. He had left his previous job due to harsh treatment and was unsuccessful in subsequent job applications. “So I said, ‘okay, for now let me give myself two or three years here without a job, see if they’ll be ways to survive you know.’ 2008, I decided let me go back to SECC [Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee] and help the comrades with the struggle [because] the struggle is for everyone so no-one owns the struggle.” A decision to accept his unemployment prompted his return.

As has been noted in previous chapters, the bulk of APF’s membership were primarily unemployed. Among the youth I interviewed, issues of employment were often complicated by their educational trajectories. Many younger people had completed their high school final exams—known as matric exams—but either delayed or gave up the pursuit of further education due to financial considerations. Tshepang, for example, who was 24 when I interviewed him in 2010, had matriculated in 2005 but did not further his education “because my mom had like

⁴ This is according to Statistics South Africa’s quarterly Labour Force Survey as reported in *The Times* (2011).

these huge debts so I said, ‘no, what’s the point of being into school when my mom is suffering you know? Let me just, leave school a bit, I will help her with her debts.’”⁵ He found intermittent work, and was able to enhance his skills through sponsored training opportunities in museum management, research, and tour guiding. At the time I interviewed him, he was enthusiastically volunteering with a community center in Bophelong, where he lived. For him, it was an experience of doing what he liked “instead of going somewhere to work for money but in return you are not happy.” He was also preparing to enroll in college. His colleague and fellow activist, Disebo, 22, who had participated along with him in the sponsored training opportunities, had matriculated in 2006 and began college in 2009. She had to interrupt her studies, however, because she was unable to pay enrollment fees. Thokozani, who was 28, had also tried to pursue a university degree but could not afford it. He mitigated the severity of unemployment by pursuing training similar to what Tshepang and Disebo had done—he was completing a project management course through which he sought to enhance his employment and financial prospects.

While such training might offer future benefits, these short-term courses also served as a way of “keeping busy” for youth with limited finances. In terms of daily survival, the young activists with whom I worked largely depended on household members and sporadic income generating activities. For example, Buyisiwe earned money as a private long distance taxi-driver. Many lived with a female parent or grandparent, and the wages or pension of that solitary family member contributed towards routine maintenance. Tshepang, for example, lived with his grandmother

⁵ Author’s interview, August 23, 2010, Johannesburg. All of the quotes and comments from Tshepang in this chapter are from this interview.

and uncle, while his mother lived in Kensington to be close to the East Gate mall, where she worked as a cleaner. An only child, Disebo lived with her mother, and they both depended on her mother's pension, which Disebo was sometimes able to supplement as a tour guide.

Such intergenerational dependency motivated Thokozani to become politically active. When his mother passed away in 1999, his grandmother became the only person supporting the whole family. As he witnessed her struggle, he was driven by his love for her to identify the root of their stressful conditions. "I could see that it was strenuous for her... she was supposed to pay for services and also give us money, pocket money to go to school also and buy groceries and all those things were very strenuous for her."⁶ He started attending meetings in 2000 that gave rise to the formation of the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC). Through these meetings, he came to understand that his grandmother's struggle was part of a wider trend related to the privatization of basic services: "we talk about those things and start questioning you know, what can be done? Why people are so quiet about those issues?" Through such questioning, "I started to open my eyes in terms of politics."

For others, performance was the gateway to their political involvement. In 2003, when she was 15, Disebo and her friends decided to seek out a group that developed dramas in their Bophelong community. Her performance background in primary school further piqued her curiosity in the new group. When they arrived at the rehearsal site, Disebo realised that the site was also the source of drumming she

⁶ Author's interview, October 18, 2010, Johannesburg. All of the quotes and comments from Thokozani in this chapter are from this interview.

would hear in the afternoons when visiting with her mother's friend. She had always wondered what was happening, and she was quite taken with her discovery. "It took me by surprise because there were young people who were my peers and they were fun. Even though they did not know me I was like, I was family. Even though I was new but they welcomed me, they showed me the warmth."⁷ Such warmth and positive relationality recalls Buyisiwe's observation that "people do believe in other people." Disebo was so affected that she returned every day over the next week "up until I said, 'Okay people, I want to be part of you.' And they said, 'You are welcome you know.'" Only when she attended a march with her newfound friends, who were then dressed "in red t-shirts written APF on them" did she realize that "these people are also involved in community struggles." Her mother had mentioned the Anti-Privatisation Forum in passing and when she saw the t-shirts, Disebo began making the connections. The rehearsals Disebo attended had been conducted by members of the Bophelong Community Service Forum (BOCOSFO), an affiliate of the APF founded in 2001. Disebo however was not aware of this until that march: "I didn't know we were also BOCOSFO; I just went to the rehearsals. And then it took me by surprise, everything took me by surprise, it opened my eyes, my mind, you know, it challenged me!" Once she made the connection between BOCOSFO's performance initiatives and the community struggles with which they were involved, Disebo wanted to learn more.

Similarly, for Charmaine performance was the pathway to her political involvement. While still in school in 2000, Charmaine joined the Sedibeng

⁷ Author's interview, August 30, 2010, Johannesburg. All of the quotes and comments from Disebo in this chapter are from this interview.

Committed Artists (SCA) which along with BOCOSFO performed regularly at APF events. In her early days of involvement, she particularly enjoyed opportunities to compete with BOCOSFO. “And that’s what makes me like APF,” she exclaimed. When she moved from Small Farm to Sebokeng zone 20, to a shack that she and her family built, Charmaine had the personal context to understand APF’s efforts. She met an activist in the WCCC who invited her to their meetings. Although she no longer performed, she credited her political involvement to those days with SCA: “because of SCA, I have joined the struggle, I’ve become an activist. If I didn’t join SCA I wasn’t going to be informed you see, because of SCA I knew APF.” Both Charmaine and Disebo were part of the two APF affiliates that used performance (“cultural programmes” in APF parlance) to mobilize youth for community struggles. Their efforts, which I consider more fully below, furthered the role of performance in APF’s mobilization.

Reconstituting the Performing Arts in the APF

Finding Redemption

In APF’s earlier days, the performing arts had been particularly prominent. “Almost any meeting would have cultural activity” recalled one activist.⁸ In meetings and protest demonstrations, troupes such as BOCOSFO, SCA or Sounds of Edutainment (an arts collective that particularly featured poetry) would dance, sing, perform poetry and plays. As the same activist recalled:

these groups, they just exist, in all townships here there are these groups of dancers, singers and people using some forms of theatre and every activity,

⁸ Author’s interview, October 16, 2009, Johannesburg.

people would come... I think the reason why small groups were so important is that they had a more clear political role that they saw themselves so there was also a community group but they were trying to shape their work in a way that it had a message and basically they were very young people.⁹

These activities had dwindled during my research tenure. Yet because performance had been my particular concern, I was encouraged to seek out the individuals that had been primarily responsible. I succeeded in establishing contact with members of BOCOSFO, who in 2009 were still actively meeting; SCA however was inactive, although some of its members were involved in the Small Farm Crisis Committee. One of SCA's past leaders, Redemption, was a particularly elusive figure. No one could give me a number with which to reach him (he no longer had a phone), yet he was a constant reference among interviewees. One afternoon, as I was dropping off Thulani after a research excursion, he mentioned that Redemption lived nearby. Given the futility of earlier attempts to reach him by phone, I quickly agreed to stop by his house. As we were about to turn the corner onto his street, Thulani exclaimed that Redemption was right across the road at a produce stall. He hailed Redemption over. Once the lanky figure was seated in the backseat of my car with his long legs pressing against the front seat, he was surprised as I explained that I had been searching for him for months.

Beyond my immediate reward of accessing a key research figure, finding Redemption revitalized his political engagement as conversations with me led him to reconnect with Thulani and the APF. Thulani explained weeks later that he had been trying unsuccessfully to reengage Redemption in community struggles. Thulani had been really sad to see Redemption step away because he had seen the

⁹ Author's interview, October 16, 2009, Johannesburg.

extent of his talents. Redemption could fill a stadium with youth because he “spoke their language.” He could invite Redemption to perform at a meeting tomorrow and “he [Redemption] would write the play today, gather youth to rehearse and have it ready for tomorrow.”¹⁰ Since he stepped away from the struggle, Redemption had been engaged in some “politically messed up activities,” according to Thulani. He had volunteered to be a street patroller organized by the ANC, which greatly saddened Thulani given the APF’s oppositional stance towards the ruling party. He had been trying for sometime to get Redemption back and he finally succeeded when I came looking for him. When I teased that he had used me, Thulani responded rather soberly without disavowal “yes, I used you to get Redemption.” For Thulani, Redemption’s talent was needed in service of the struggle.

I witnessed the extent of this talent when within a week, Redemption and others at Small Farm put together a performance for May Day observances at Khanya College. He had really been disappointed when Small Farm delegates did not show up at an APF conference organized in March for which they had been paid a stipend to perform. He did not want comrades from the Vaal triangle to develop a reputation for being unreliable, so he did his best to make sure that the forthcoming performance went well. He wrote the script the Monday before, and the group rehearsed everyday leading up to the Saturday, May 1, performance. The performance itself was a play in seSotho that dealt with AIDS. It was organized around a meeting in which Redemption was a speaker and the audience members presented a range of responses. A choir formed at the conclusion of the “meeting”

¹⁰ Thulani, personal conversation with author, 2010. The following quotes and comments from Thulani are from this conversation.

accompanied to an impromptu performance by one of the poets from Sounds of Edutainment, whose verses further highlighted the play's themes. Not to be outdone, upon the poet's conclusion, one of the Small Farm group performed a poem as well. The transition from speaker to speaker was so smooth that, although the poetry was unplanned, an audience member would not have known otherwise. This ability to seamlessly integrate their performances without prior arrangement demonstrated a "shared repertory of theatrical (including poetic, literary, musical, gestural, and spatial) as well as everyday social conventions" (Seizer 1997:66). This performance harkened back to the flourishing of such activities in APF's earlier years. A group of young men who were visiting from Pretoria had established a performance troupe called the Immortal Art Group for youth in their apartment complex. Following this May Day performance, they connected with the activists from Small Farm and started discussing the formation of a performance squad with a branch in the Vaal and one in Pretoria. Reflecting on his reengagement with the APF, Redemption talked about rediscovering a part of himself he had not felt in a long time. Singing the songs, performing, and being in protest connected with something emotional in him that made him feel restored, and affirmed that "yes, I am back."¹¹ Thulani's attempts at redeeming his friend from politically misguided activities by reconnecting him with the APF activist community seemed to have succeeded, at least momentarily.

¹¹ Redemption, personal conversation with author, 2010.

BOCOSFO

Meeting with BOCOSFO, the Bophelong group that had also spearheaded cultural activities among APF youth, was relatively more straightforward. BOCOSFO was founded in 2000 to agitate for service delivery and education. One of the group's earliest successes was in abolishing school fees and securing free uniforms for learners in Bophelong. They formed a Concerned Learners Committee (which fought for learners' rights within the education system), as well as Tsibo, which focused on adult basic education and early instruction through crèches (day care centers). BOCOSFO dealt more pointedly with community struggles for basic services. The youth cultural programs served to link all three sections as members introduced their organizations to the public through drama, music, dance, and poetry. These cultural activities also linked the young people to older generations. Two members discussed the importance of "organizing through culture" and furthering a tradition established in black political movements and trade unions. Furthermore, it allowed them to connect with parents and grandparents who were illiterate: "we saw that most of our grandparents and parents had not been to school, so we educate them via culture because they cannot read or write. We make them understand the present compared to the past. We use culture not only for entertaining people but to mobilise and educate them as well" (Mosinki and Moiloa 2005:30).

BOCOSFO's performing arts practices was particularly innovative. In their affiliation with APF, BOCOSFO (and SCA) would perform at APF events often on themes commissioned by organizers. Initially the group had only used drama but in

2004 they incorporated gospel music into their repertoire and formed a choir. The choir enabled them to connect with youth beyond Bophelong, traveling to Khutsong to help with the formation of a community organization there. The group had decided to include gospel music in their approach because it expanded their reach. They wondered how to make other groups aware of their efforts in order to raise their profile among their peers. “Then we saw that we were doing only drama and poetry and other groups were not doing that, they were singing gospel,” Disebo recalled. “You only find only a few selected groups that are doing cultural performances so that is how we changed our approach.” As a gospel choir, they were able to connect with other young choirs through competitions. But they adapted the gospel genre to deliver their political message. They were proud to present these innovative adaptations. Disebo recalled hosting a choir from Khutsong in Bophelong. When it was BOCOSFO’s turn to sing:

we wanted to show them so we went on stage, we sang the gospel song but later we changed, we went through the cultural songs that we have created and they were like, “Okay, that’s the new thing for us you know.” The songs had a message, the songs were direct, they had everything that we wanted people to hear.

The event demonstrated the creative charge and dynamism of that moment as the group blended gospel music with “cultural songs” that delivered their message, and framed this presentation as a competition with their peers. Charmaine, then with the Sedibeng Concerned Artists, referred to these kinds of experiences in her interview when she recalled the excitement of going to compete with BOCOSFO.

Regarding this period of artistic flourishing among APF youth, a former Khanya staff member, who had worked with BOCOSFO, raised questions about how

their performance activities were valued within the organization. Although commissioning such performances was an established practice for the APF, she suggested however that these performances were seen as mere entertainment. “It worked to keep people energized but [was] not the real struggle...I don’t think we ever explored it as a real kind of tool and it is part of how [it] is valued in the organization.”¹² Because these were prominently youth activities, the performances were key sites for registering generational dynamics. According to the former Khanya staff member, older activists did not take the youths’ efforts seriously: “I think because the older people were too busy with the serious and because it wasn’t viewed as a real tool that you could use for proper mobilization.”¹³ Among the youth, however, as I have shown, there was a dynamic energy that fostered their creativity. BOCOSFO in particular used their performances to build their organizations—to recruit their peers and coordinate with pertinent issues on employment and educational rights. These performances were vehicles for working in schools, and coordinating organizational meetings. Unlike APF meetings which tended to run long, BOCOSFO meetings were often rehearsals. Recall Disebo’s earlier observation that when she first became involved, she just went to rehearsals and did not know “we were also BOCOSFO.” The prevalence of performance as an organizing tool maintained a high level of energy, and generated further involvement among members. For the former Khanya staff member, the political potential of these performances was never fully realized within the APF more broadly.

¹² Author’s interview, October 16, 2009, Johannesburg.

¹³ Author’s interview, October 16, 2009, Johannesburg.

These reflections about maintaining energy levels resonates more broadly in terms of the sensorial standards younger people held not just of meetings but of collective performances also. The generational difference in aesthetic standards was especially prominent in song. Buyisiwe and others expressed a preference for faster tempos when singing freedom songs in marches and meetings. Buyisiwe recognized the emotionally embodied impact of song, particularly that sad songs could spur his anger, an experience he did not relish: “so I don’t sing those songs hard you know.” Buyisiwe preferred faster-paced chants “so that people will have the hype and run. Like the soldiers you know, taking that giant step which was taken during apartheid regime.” He preferred songs and chants that placed him and the crowd in directed motion. Such songs generated energy, producing the hype and vibe that was appropriate to his sensibilities. He did not have much tolerance for slower-paced sad songs, “if they sing them I rather go and stand somewhere on the side.” There were multiple occasions in which young people would intercede to direct collective singing towards their preferred energy level. Buyisiwe drew my attention to a march in Orlando East, Soweto, in which protestors were dragging and getting tired:

they will sing one song walking slow, I mean it never gives that oomph you know and where we were at, started to change, then the people started to have that vibe and hype of chanting, running slowly because they want to listen to the vocalist. They are like the drums because the chanting songs like give an instruction, “Shay’izandla” (Clap your hands) then you will see the whole crew, you will hear the whole crew clapping hands.

Matt, a college student from Pretoria described a similar impulse. At an APF meeting (his very first one), he and his friends (about four young men) started clapping at a faster beat than APF members. As he explained:

It was to lead the rhythm of the song... I wanted the song to go a bit faster so that people will be able to dance to it that's why I was clapping a bit faster so that they will go with the rhythm of my hand...when it's slow its like boring, it doesn't give you time to like just be yourself...when its fast if you want to dance, you dance.¹⁴

For Matt, a fast rhythm established the base from which he could more fully express himself. Slow singing evidenced a lack of energy that was unappealing and stifling—"it doesn't give you time to just be yourself." Younger people did not always shun slow or sad songs, however. I was particularly impressed by college protesters, who were members of the Pan-Africanist Congress, singing profoundly plaintive apartheid-era songs in their protest against the ANC ruling party. Singing the same laments as their predecessors without any change in lyrics, they sought connection to the suffering these ancestors must have experienced in the past. My attempt, therefore, is not to generalize about the rhythmic or tempo preferences of youth. The subjective experiences of these elements are more compelling—for both Buyisiwe and Matt, the external tempo called up responses within themselves that they felt as either enabling or constrictive. For Buyisiwe, slow sad songs threatened to overwhelm his emotions and paralyze him. This explained his preference for songs that facilitated active movement. For Matt, sad songs weighed heavy, dampening rather than allowing his creative expressions, and preferred experience of self, to spring forth.

That BOCOSFO succeeded in using performance to keep up the energy level among its members can be more fully appreciated in light of such considerations. In their performances, they expected to draw energy and be engaged actively with one

¹⁴ Author's interview, June 2, 2010, Pretoria.

another. Their efforts were disrupted, however, when Tsibo split from BOCOSFO around 2003. The split occurred due to internal disagreement as well as suspected theft by a founding member. When they decided to part ways, the alleged thief continued working with Tsibo's education initiatives, and BOCOSFO lost a key mentor. Disebo described BOCOSFO's driving force during this split:

I think most of us we did not know what challenge...or battle that we are taking because it was very huge and our driving force that time was we wanted to show [the departing mentor] that we can do it even though he turned a blind eye that, we are not doing it for [him], we should be doing it for our community.

BOCOSFO achieved much following its split from Tsibo. Its members travelled to festivals and considered cultivating careers in the arts. But their drive was halted when their estranged mentor died from HIV-related illness. "Everything started to deteriorate up until now, now it's like silence. There is no more action, like nothing you know. We've lost the vision, that [reason] we wanted to fight, we've lost everything," Disebo reflected. BOCOSFO lost two other members to HIV-related causes within the span of a year (2007), losses that deeply shook the organization. Tshepang commented on the sorrow of that moment: "we were very young and we did so many things for this community, and one by one, the members fell." The losses raised members' awareness as the remaining members got tested for HIV, and expressed their determination to stay "[HIV] negative and keeping positive," in Tshepang's words. BOCOSFO was more diminished by the time I met them in 2009. I attended a few meetings but their activities were no longer consistent. Disebo and Tshepang sought to further BOCOSFO's efforts by starting a group for girls between seven and 10, a change from the teenagers who had constituted its core

membership. They taught the girls poetry and dance but their efforts were not sustained. Disebo felt that as BOCOSFO was no longer active, “it’s kind of like we let them down because they were young at this and they wanted to learn from us.”

Disenchantment

This chapter analyzed the activist experiences of youth especially through performance. To further this analysis, the decline of youth involvement is of as much importance as their motivations in pursuing community activism. BOCOSFO members experienced this decline acutely due to the death of key members. But other factors also contributed to their growing disillusionment with activist organizations, including the APF. The two most cited causes for concern were money and internal strife, elements of APF’s problematic internal dynamics that I discussed in chapter two. Young activists were understandably suspicious of financial support as they had witnessed acrimony within the APF and affiliate organizations due to funding.¹⁵ As Thokozani explained:

we end up having in-fights in our organizations because of the particular funding and for me its kind of like demoralising our struggle. You can look into it in 2 ways but most of the time people will say, you can’t survive without funding but I think if issues affect you in that way you can survive without it and after all if you want to make change you won’t rely on someone to make the change but you have to say that I’m going to be responsible to make that change.

Tshepang, was embittered by his experience working for Khanya college. As he explained, “your day has been spoiled because you know that you are going to meet the people who depress you more.” In response, he volunteered at a community

¹⁵ As Disebo put it when she recalled her involvement with Remmoho: “when the money came it was fighting and fighting.”

center: “instead of going somewhere to work for money but in return you are not happy. So I said, ‘No, let me just quit Khanya, quit APF and just come and help the community.’” He saw volunteering as a more direct way to help the community rather than through organizations like Khanya or APF.

Disebo also decided to withdraw from her activities with the APF because of gossip: “I cut myself from this because it’s too much. It’s way too much.” Furthermore, within three months, Thulani’s success with Redemption seemed to have waned. When I visited him in August 2010, Redemption was working at a panel beater workshop in front of his house, attending APF meetings was no longer a priority. He explained that “it’s hard for youth to engage with those veterans because they politicize personal issues and then you end up in the middle.” He attended meetings when he could, otherwise he would send his apologies. His words draw the particular challenges of youth activism into relief. In the APF youth served as figures caught in the middle between opportunity and constraints, between creative flourishing and harsh politics.

If performance registers as the language of youth, drawing on Thulani’s designation in his assessment of Redemption’s capability, it is its affective qualities of generating positive sensory associations and sociality that was especially motivating. Such motivation occurred in a manner similar to Remmoho members’ experiences, but involving different techniques. So perhaps it is critical to recast a post-apartheid politics of enjoyment in light of these preferences, inasmuch as youth activists were demoralized by strife and motivated by what seemed frivolous to

elder activists. This was not an escapist enjoyment; its potential exists in the recognition of performance as the very groundwork to generate activism.

conclusion

In an interview conducted in 2010, Ahmed Veriava described the advantage of pursuing a project on APF's history at that particular point in time. He noted that with "so many narratives of the APF before the story was over—you never knew how it might conclude. I think you can finally tell the story of how the APF finally concludes. But hopefully that end is also a new beginning."¹ Writing with awareness of APF as a movement that is no more colored the analytic choices of this dissertation. It encouraged my sober reflection on APF's strengths and the impact of its members' struggles even as it lent more weight to understanding ruptures in the organization's internal solidarity and the disenchantment among its members and targeted constituents.

In spite of its decline, APF changed South Africa's post-apartheid political landscape. The ANC government has had to adapt its policies in response to the agitation of the movement and other mobilizations that it spurred. Lucien van der Walt encapsulated this achievement:

we stopped the state commodifying basic things—in a limited way true—but a decommodification from below, basically through those struggles helped. Not solely the APF but the APF was an important part of the struggle. Helped de facto to prevent the commodification of those resources, and the state had to accommodate to that. I mean what it did when they wrote off those debts? They were essentially recognizing a fact on the ground that we had already helped create. When the state started giving free water, it was recognizing the fact that they couldn't actually enforce their policies all right, then and there. So it had big victories in that sense.²

¹ Interview with Ahmed Veriava, conducted by Dale McKinley, February 19, 2010, Johannesburg.

² Interview with Lucien van der Walt, conducted by Dale McKinley, March 23, 2010, Johannesburg.

As one of the first organizations to consolidate budding post-apartheid discontent in dispersed communities, APF's visibility and notoriety changed South Africa's political landscape, paving the way for later struggles concerned with service delivery. The movement also produced personal transformations among its members, many of whom credited the political education they received through the APF with helping them project authority in their community organization work. For some, this political education has contributed to the cultivation of careers in unions, academic research, community-based organizations, and activist philanthropy.

APF's legacies are well documented particularly through an oral history and document collection hosted by the South African History Archive. This collection has been invaluable in supplementing the historical framework for my project. The collection, however, does not completely capture APF's legacies. It features dominant ideas of politics that I argue must expand. My attention to performance and aesthetics ought not to be a specialized endeavor, just as these practices were not epiphenomenal to APF activism.

I examined the role of performance in the constitution of activist community in two related ways. The first two chapters engaged with the performance of everyday life—how routine negotiations of political sensibilities shaped APF's emergence and the organizational form it assumed. APF constituted itself through its members' acts of reproduction that came to be taken for granted over time as I described in chapter one. These reproductive acts involved the structure of membership, the conduct of meetings, and the tactics for political confrontation. While early APF activists sought to inaugurate new approaches to collective

mobilization that would overcome the shortcomings of apartheid-era organizations, their attempts generated new dilemmas. I give two examples. First, by seeking to be as inclusive of different perspectives as possible, APF activists encouraged debate in its meetings. Over time, the manner of debating set a combative tone for APF meetings and alienated many members. Second, APF founders sought to prioritize community struggles by recognizing three categories of membership and curtailing the privilege of some of its members. Such a structure nonetheless contributed to a complex imbalance of power, belying the ethical intentions with which it was set. In chapter two, I discuss how the organization fell short of ethical ideals by examining the ruptures in its internal solidarity. While the first two chapters consecutively described the performative emergence and decline of the APF, the latter three chapters incorporated a second dimension of performance that was rooted in creative expression such as singing freedom songs, creating rituals, and staging dramas. Through these expressions activists generated alternatives to the combativeness of the APF.

Performance and Collective Politics

What can bringing together multiple dimensions of performance reveal about collective politics? In 1964, W.B. Gallie suggested that certain concepts are succinctly indefinable—these concepts have “disagreement about their essence built into the concept itself”(Gallie 1964: 187-8). Performance, as one such “essentially contested concept” (Strine et al 1990: 183; cf. Carlson 2004:1-5), is useful in studying the spectacular along with the mundane (Palmer and Jankowiak 1996),

particularly when it comes to politics. Defined as “restored behavior” (Schechner 1985), Elin Diamond discusses the political implications of the “terminology of ‘re’” in describing performance:

“Re” acknowledges the preexisting discursive field, the repetition—and the desire to repeat—within the performative present, while “embody,” “configure,” “inscribe,” “signify,” assert the possibility of materializing something that exceeds our knowledge, that alters the shape of sites and imagines other as yet unsuspected modes of being. Of course, what alters the shape of sites and images into existence other modes of being is anathema to those who would police social borders and identities. (Diamond 1996: 2)

Performance holds the potential to reinforce and yet trouble boundaries, and a consideration of the interconnections between performance and politics benefits from an expansive consideration of the term (Hamera and Conquergood 2006: 419-420). Jon McKenzie notes its ubiquity in sociopolitical considerations: “from annual performance reviews to high-performance missile systems—and yes, even to ritual and theatre—performance now gathers together a vast array of contemporary phenomena” (2003:118). Performance similarly appears in this dissertation as the conduct of politics, including members’ appraisals of one another and of their social movement organization, and as creative expression involving song, dance, ritual, and theatrical staging. How do these multiple considerations contribute towards an expansive view of the performance of politics and the politics of performance? Two interrelated themes emerge from the dissertation.

The first regards how creative expression facilitated and reinforced political action. In her discussion of the strengths of tactical diversity with social movements, Haugerud posits an even more direct connection between play (an activity cognate with performance) and collective politics. “It is play that keeps political life healthy,”

she proposes (Haugerud 2013:196).³ Play, and performance, by extension, contributes not just tactical diversity but facilitates political action. Can such a relationship exist between APF members' creative displays and their political life? In the third chapter, I showed how singing together enabled cohesion and provided respite from the divisiveness that ordinarily pervaded activist interactions. Such cohesion was however transient, lasting only as long as the performance was upheld. Furthermore, variation existed within such cohesion and my attention to gendered and generational distinctions in the fourth and fifth chapters engaged with such variation. I described the wellness modalities (involving ritual, physical exercises such as tai chi, and acupressure) towards which many women activists gravitated. Remmoho's emphases on healing and collective care sought to establish an alternative mode of political engagement that was not fully appreciated within the broader APF forum. In a parallel manner, the performances that young APF members enjoyed and used to build their organizations were encouraged but nevertheless undervalued as mere entertainment.

By elaborating these sites of meaningful practice that were either overlooked or taken for granted in prior analyses, the dissertation draws together different perspectives (Hodgson 1999; Hodgson 2011: 12-17) towards greater appreciation of the political implications of these performances. I engage with performance through a consideration of political aesthetics—how politics erupts through the reconfiguration of sensory experience. I show how APF activists are dynamically

³ Haugerud here tempers this assertion with a consideration of Huizinga's on play: "if life, Huizinga says, is to be 'lived as play,' then that is to accept the wisdom of Plato 'when he called man the plaything of the gods' and to know deeply that 'none of our pronouncements is absolutely conclusive'" (Haugerud 2013:196; quoting Huizinga 1955:212).

embodied, constituting the organization in ways that can be visibly marked but are not always. I draw attention to internal processes—emotions, sensations, and sensibilities that, however delicate, are no less powerful.

Sensorial experiences shape aesthetic preferences and influence the mobilization experiences that activists pursue. The preceding chapters present many examples of this dynamic including: the pull to attend protests that Ndumiso in chapter 3 described as envy; the glimpse of personal connection that drew Willeen to Remmoho, a moment she described as her spirit remembering her soul; the warmth and positive sociality that secured the commitment of many a youth member. Towards opposite effect, sensorial experience also yielded aversions: the distress of not having a say in APF meetings resulting in refusal to attend another one; the combativeness that eroded solidarity and alienated many APF members. Such examples constitute the inner life of participation, and how this inner life mattered.

Returning to the argument that “it is play that keeps political life healthy,” APF members’ experiences raise a consideration that performance and its cognate activities, including play and ritual, kept political life not only healthy but also desirable. Recall observations among youth members regarding how performance was the pathway to their involvement in community struggles. Also recall the sense of reconnection and recommitment expressed by activists whose participation had lagged upon their re-immersion to collective protest singing.

Such reconnection was perhaps fueled by remembered rapture as became apparent to me during an interview I conducted with Charmaine, an APF member

who was active with Sedibeng Committed Artists. I had asked her about the kinds of places where activists used performance, and she mentioned road barricades. I then confessed my inexperience saying that I had never been present at barricades. “You’ve never participated in barricading a road...oh!” She exclaimed, continuing: “That’s funny, you have to try it.”⁴ When I asked why, she responded, “because you put tyre, put petrol and police will come after you but if they catch you, you are going to stop smiling. I remember that time when we were barricading there,” she pointed down the dirt road, “I really enjoyed that day, I enjoyed it, it was like a good experience to me.” “Why is it so good?” I queried. Our conversation revealed how road barricades involved coordination and were somewhat stimulating. Activists agree to meet at a certain place and time, usually at a major roadway in the middle of the night (about 2AM) with the necessary materials so that by the morning, if they have not been caught by the police, the whole location is set ablaze and traffic is halted. There is nothing inherently fun in these procedures, yet Charmaine comments throw its playful dimensions into relief: “So first we are going to the grounds and discuss what we were going to do, how we were going to do it, then we go there and we start singing.” Here, she mentioned that these songs involved vulgar lyrics, and her younger sister, for example, would be prohibited from singing them due to her age.

The playful atmosphere generated in performance provided a sense of freedom from social norms and contributed such great enjoyment. “I don’t know...it was so good,” Charmaine recalled, “even if I was arrested I would have enjoyed

⁴ Author’s interview, March 18, 2010, Johannesburg. All of the quotes and comments from Charmaine in this section are from this interview.

every minute when I was arrested and in the cells.” Pressing further, I asked, “but what made it feel good?” She responded, “because I know I did that.” Here, Charmaine suggested that road barricades yielded a sense of delightful accomplishment despite or perhaps because of the risks and damages involved. Capturing the attention of the police, and the subsequent chase becomes a game, and part of the enjoyment is in not getting caught. The efficacy of protest in more immediate experience is the delight of provoking the authority represented by the police, and the reward of achievement that is a performance of power (Bozzoli 2004:11). As Charmaine noted, the element of enjoyment was experiencing her agency—knowing that she did that. It is also evident from her recollections that this enjoyment took place in a context of coordination with others, and the collective bond enabled through song and shared risks.

Charmaine’s associations were not singular. Our conversation prepared me for similar sentiments, including one offered by Redemption, that he had missed such actions when he was not involved in the APF, and that participating again in marches and barricades reminded him of a part of himself that had been missing. Of the significance of night vigils and song to ensuring participation in demonstrations, one activist recalls learning from APF members before his community became affiliated:

I remember at one stage we had a march and previously we did not have night vigils but the APF comrades came to us and said “no you see in order to have a successful march you start the night before, hold a night vigil, sing all night long and you’ll see no person will go to work, they would want to join this march” and it happened that way and we had a massive march. A very huge march, which made a very huge impact and that march went to the office of the President. That was one of the biggest marches that our affiliate

had at the time and it was because of the relationship that we had with the APF.⁵

Songs secured participation, and a march was in no way diminished but invigorated by holding a singing vigil the night prior.

Thus far, I have discussed how performance, understood as creative expression, was connected to the conduct of politics inasmuch as these expressions influenced the mobilization experiences activists pursued and recommended. The second theme that emerges in drawing out the relevance of multiple performance dimensions for politics regards how members' appraisals of their organization's "performance" fostered alternative forms of participation within the APF and beyond. In chapter two, Buyisiwe discussed APF's decline as a failure of performance, offering the relevance of this concept as a category of appraisal. His assessment of APF was that despite achievements of the past, performance was "now low": "today, I don't see more action and activity and that hype you know, I mean for me the struggle today, eish, drags slow."⁶ For Buyisiwe, APF's performance involved its public visibility in terms of political action and activity. That this visibility was in decline was due, according to Buyisiwe, to a disconnect between APF's leadership and its members. This constituted a failure of performance as APF's constituent elements were not working in synchrony. Others made similar appraisals of APF's activities, and of their experience within the organization. Such appraisals fostered the generation of alternatives. This was particularly the case with Remmoho, whose members criticized several elements of activist practice,

⁵ Interview with Mashao Chauke, conducted by Dale McKinley, August 19, 2010. Johannesburg.

⁶ Author's interview, June 16, 2010, Johannesburg.

including the erosion of community and the silencing of female members' participation as a result of the pervasive combattiveness of APF meetings. In constituting their collectivity, Remmoho therefore chose to emphasize different modalities of activism, including a focus on bodily wellness and care, attention to sensuality through the practice of ritual, and fostering a sense of community through investment in one another's lives.

Remmoho presented a case in which alternatives were sought in alliance with the APF. There are, however, other instances in which critique led to disenchantment and eventual withdrawal from the APF. This was the case with Tshepang, along with others, who chose to focus not on the coalitional politics of the APF, but to work directly in his community of residence. Tshepang's reflections, which I discussed in chapter five, echo in the explanation another activist gave for why he vacated his APF leadership position:

I realised that the focus of the affiliates of the Anti Privatisation Forum is not on building the struggles but it was only for personally building individuals. There is a lot of individualism in the APF whereby people are attending each and every meeting at the APF without having a constituency from where they come...when we attend the CC [Coordinating Committee] most of the time the discussions were around money, money transport money, people were putting the requisition for money for projects that were not existing. Now I decided not to disturb or not to force people to change. Let me direct my energy to the community and then because Anti-Privatisation Forum is in my blood I can work or I can do Anti-Privatisation work in the community.⁷

The activist's comment that APF "is in my blood" signaled that APF constituted more than was contained in organizational structures. In this instance, APF was the work that the activist pursued in his community outside of a coalitional structure that had lapsed into monetary disputes and individualism. Such appraisals remind us that,

⁷ Interview with Richard Mokolo, conducted by Dale McKinley, March 18, 2010, Johannesburg.

despite fervent intentions, movements are not inherently liberatory (Juris 2008a:17). Members' critiques signaled alternate possibilities for the conduct of politics that were previously unrealized.

Like Ahmed Veriava, many APF members expressed hope for the regeneration or continuation of the movement even if in a different guise. While APF as a coordinating forum has declined, some of its community-based affiliates remain active. Investigating how community-embedded organizations and political groups that affiliated with the APF continued in their struggles is a possibility for further research. Regarding APF's demise and hope for its regeneration, one activist offers a compelling reflection. She clarified that attempts to address the divisiveness among its members needed to engage more than just the organizational structure. Rather she acknowledged an intangible collective bond as absent from APF's latter engagements that must be rediscovered: "there's something—if I was religious I would say a soul—or something that we need to find again and it was there."⁸ In her estimation, APF needed to rediscover its spirit and reconstitute a sense of community and ethical collectivity. This rediscovery would involve drastic changes: "it does need a big shuffling, shaking up and maybe if that shaking up is not possible, it will have to die, it will have to go through a process where things don't work out and you start fresh, sometimes that is also necessary." Such assessment extends an appreciation of APF's decline beyond the disappointment of loss, as the opportunity for new beginnings.

⁸ Interview with Nina Benjamin, conducted by Dale McKinley, March 9, 2010, Johannesburg.

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Completed Thesis with High Honors.

PUBLICATIONS:

- 2012** "Cross-Circulations and Transnational Solidarity: Historicizing the U.S. Anti-apartheid Movement through Song." *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 13(3-4): 317-337.
- 2010** Co-editor, *Women Writing Resistance in Africa and the African Diaspora*. University of Wisconsin Press, (with Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez, Pauline Dongala and Anne Serafin).
- 2007** "My Grandmother" (Poem). *Women's Studies Quarterly* 35(3-4): 26-29. Published under nom de plume, Zindzi Bedu.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

- 2011-Present** **Winter/Summer Instructor**
Rutgers University, Department of Anthropology
Courses taught:
 - Ritual, Performance, and Play (Winter 2012)
 - Visual Anthropology (Summer 2011, Summer 2012 as an hybrid course)
- Spring 2011** **Teaching Assistant**
Rutgers University, Department of Anthropology
Course: Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology

Summer 2005**Graduate Assistant**

International Human Rights Exchange, Cape Town, South Africa

- Worked with residential staff and faculty to provide 70 international students with a month-long intensive, interdisciplinary course in the theories and practices of human rights
- Created arts immersion experiences that linked the arts to human rights activism for program participants
- Tutored course electives on:
 - State Politics and Its Opposition
 - Culture and Identity

Spring 2005**Teaching Assistant**

Simon's Rock College, Theatre and Dance Department

Courses:

- (THEA 101M1) Text: Personalization
- (THEA 102M2) An Introduction to the Art of Acting
- (THEA 201) Listening, Analysis and Characterization
- (THEA 202) Voice: Resonating with Words

2001-2004**Writing and Music Tutor**

Simon's Rock College, Tutoring and Writing Center

- Trained in techniques for coaching and boosting writing confidence
- Assisted students with writing papers and tutored music theory

ACADEMIC WORK EXPERIENCE:**2012 – Present****Fellowship Advisor**

Rutgers University,

Gradfund, the Resource Center for Graduate Student External Support

- Advise graduate students on external funding support for fellowships, grants and research awards.
- Provide feedback and advice on effective writing techniques to graduate students in all fields of the sciences, engineering, humanities and social sciences.

2006 – 2008**Research Assistant**

Rutgers University, Geography and Anthropology Departments

- Provided data processing assistance for Professor's research project. Transcribed audiotapes; scanned and stored graphic images and news articles; compiled bibliographic citation records.
- Assisted graduate advisor on variety of tasks and projects including audiotape transcription and document processing.

Summer 2006**Graduate Assistant**

Rutgers University, Anthropology Department

- Assisted staff in the day-to-day administration of the department.

Spring 2001**Research Assistant**

Simon's Rock College, Language and Literature Department

- Provided research assistance for *The Paper Bag Principle*, Audrey Elisa Kerr's book on color, power and institutional prejudice in Black Washington, D.C.
- Compiled packet on African American research resources at Simon's Rock and area colleges.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE ACTIVITIES:

2012	Organizer and Chair for panel on "Activisms" at the African Studies Association Annual Meeting, November 29-December 2, Philadelphia, PA.
2012	Organizer for invited session on "Activisms" at American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, 14-18 November, San Francisco, CA.
2012	Organizer and Chair for panel on "Gendered Contestation: Ethnographic Perspectives on Power and Uncertainty" (with Jessica Johnson) at the European Association of Social Anthropologists Biennial Conference, held in Paris, France, on 10-13 July.
2012	Chair/Discussant for panel on "States of Struggle," at the symposium on "Gender Justice in Africa: Historical and Comparative Perspectives," held at Rutgers University on February 24th.
2011	Invited Panelist – Rutgers GradFund Roundtable on "Applying for External Funding: Advice, Guidance and Reflections."
2011	Chair for panel on "Globalization, Modernization and the State in African Perspective," at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting.
2009	Invited Panelist – Rutgers GradFund Panel on "Applying for External Funding: Advice on How to Get Started and Make it to the Review."
2007 – 2009	Founding Member, Black Graduate Students Association, Rutgers University.
2005	Playwriting Judge, Leslie Sanders Writing Contest, Simon's Rock College.
2004	Student Representative, Diversity Task Force, Simon's Rock College.
2004	President, Multicultural Students Organization (MSO), Simon's Rock College.
2002 - 2003	Conference Coordinator, MSO's annual conference, Simon's Rock College.
2001 - 2003	Founding Editor, <i>Contact</i> , a publication of the MSO, Simon's Rock College.

COVERAGE OF MY WORK:

"Get Up, Stand Up." *Rutgers Magazine*, Winter 2010.

"Omotayo Jolaosho Imagines Life Onstage." *Simon's Rock College: The Magazine*, Fall 2004.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

African Studies Association
 American Anthropological Association
 American Ethnological Society

Association for Africanist Anthropology
Association of Black Anthropologists
Association for Feminist Anthropology
Association for Political and Legal Anthropology
Music and Sound Interest Group
National Association of Student Anthropologists
Society for Cultural Anthropology
Society for Visual Anthropology