

*“Who would not have been aware?”*

**The History of Fort Hare and its  
Student Activists, 1933-1973**



**Daniel Massey**

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**December 2001**



*For Govan Archibald Mbeki (1910-2001)*

*Dumo Jeff Baawa (1949-2001)*

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# The Fort Harians Interviewed for this Project



A. Makiwane



A. Masondo



B. Pityana



D. Bughwan



F. Mdlalose



G. Matanzima

G. Mbeki

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G. Oosthuizen



G.S. Tootla



H. Makgothi



H. Govinden



I. Dada



I. Mabindisa



I. Matsepe



J. Baqwa



J. Matthews



K. Matanzima



M. Buthelezi



M. Moerane



M. Stofile



N. Dwane



R. Thumbadoo



R.A. Pillay

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S. Baqwa



S. Dwane



S. Mabizela



S. Makalima



S. Satyo



T. Appavoo



T. Mtintso




V.R. Govender



W. Tsotsi

## Table of Contents

<b>Abbreviations</b>	i
<b>Chronology</b>	ii
<b>The Interviewees</b>	vii
<b>Map</b>	ix
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	x
<b>Introduction: The History of South Africa is the History of Fort Hare</b>	
<i>Prologue</i>	1
<i>Literature Review</i>	12
<i>Constructing Fort Hare's History from Oral Sources</i>	25
<b>Chapter One: The Emergence of an African Elite and the Origins of Fort Hare</b>	
<i>The Birth of a Politicised African Elite</i>	49
<i>An African Exodus and the Rise of Fort Hare</i>	54
	
<b>Chapter Two: From Black Englishmen to African Nationalists: Student Politics at Fort Hare to 1955</b>	
<i>A Missionary Start</i>	61
<i>The Birth of Student Politics</i>	64
<i>A Youth League is Born</i>	75
<i>The Z.K. Factor</i>	89
<i>The Early Fifties</i>	95
<i>Fort Hare 'High School'</i>	111
<b>Chapter Three: A 'Diversity': Multi-Racial Life and 'Possibility' at Fort Hare Before 1960</b>	
<i>A 'Colourless Lot'</i>	122
<i>The Melting Pot</i>	123
<i>Student Life</i>	132
<i>Extra-curricular Politics</i>	140
<b>Chapter Four: The Road to Takeover</b>	
<i>Taking Control</i>	149
<i>University Apartheid: The Birth of a Government Idea</i>	150
<i>Reaction at Fort Hare: The Official Response</i>	157
<i>Reaction at Fort Hare: The Students Response</i>	160
<i>The Response Outside Fort Hare</i>	172

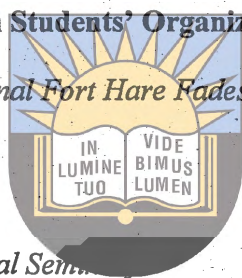
<i>Impending Doom</i>	174
<i>The Funeral</i>	183

**Chapter Five: Birth of a Bush College:  
The Onset of Apartheid at Fort Hare**

<i>Welcoming the Regime</i>	185
<i>The Government Takes Charge</i>	187
<i>The SRC and the Battle Over NUSAS</i>	201
<i>The Expulsion of Stanley Mabizela</i>	205
<i>The ANC Goes Underground</i>	213
<i>The Arrival of the Broederbond</i>	216
<i>Ghettoizing Fort Hare</i>	225

**Chapter Six: Countering Separate Universities:  
Fort Hare and the South African Students' Organization**

<i>A Widening of Scale: The Traditional Fort Hare Fades Away</i>	231
<i>A Divided Student Body</i>	235
<i>SASO Takes Control</i>	241
<i>To Stay or not to Stay</i>	247
<i>Turning Violent in '73</i>	251
<i>The Role of the Federal Theological Seminary</i>	263
<i>Beyond Fort Hare</i>	270



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<b>Conclusion</b>	274
<i>Epilogue</i>	290

<b>Bibliography</b>	291
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<b>Appendix One: Student Statistics</b>	304
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<b>Appendix Two: Andrew Masondo and Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri: Two Interviews</b>	306
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<b>Appendix Three: After Fort Hare: The Post-University Lives of 32 Fort Harians</b>	338
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<b>Appendix Four: Images from Alice</b>	353
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## Abbreviations

AAC	All African Convention
ANC	African National Congress
ASA	African Students' Association
BC	Black Consciousness
BPC	Black People's Convention
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
Fedsem	Federal Theological Seminary
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
NAD	Department of Native Affairs
NRC	Natives' Representative Council
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress of Azania
QVM	Queen Victoria Memorial
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SABRA	Suid Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasse Aangeleenthede
SACP	South African Communist Party
SANNC	South African Native National Congress
SASO	South African Students' Organization
SOYA	Society of Young Africans
SRC	Students' Representative Council
TLSA	Teachers' League of South Africa
UCM	University Christian Movement
UCT	University of Capetown
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNISA	University of South Africa
Wits	University of Witswatersrand
YL	African National Congress Youth League

# Fort Hare/South Africa Chronology

**1892:** Cape Franchise and Ballot Act raises property qualifications for voting.

**1901:** H. Isaiah Bud-Mbelle, a leader of Kimberly's Mfengu community, proposes the Queen Victoria Memorial (QVM) fund-raising campaign to establish a university for Africans.

**1903-05:** Following the decision of the Native Affairs Commission to support an African college, the Inter-State Native College Scheme quickly and powerfully overshadows the more radical QVM program.

**1905:** Planning begins in King William's Town for developing a tertiary education institute for Africans.

**1906:** The Bambatha Rebellion is brutally crushed in Natal.

**1912:** South African Native National Congress (SANNC) formed, with J.L. Dube as its first president.

**1913:** Natives Land Act is passed, making it illegal for Africans to own or rent land outside designated reserves. The act set aside just 7 percent of the country's land for Africans.

**February 1916:** Prime Minister General Louis Botha officially opens the South African Native College with Alexander Kerr as its first Principal. Kerr and D.D. T. Jabavu are Fort Hare's first lecturers.

**1919:** Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) formed.

**1916-1923:** As the South African Native College, Fort Hare is engaged in secondary school work, preparing students for the matriculation exam.

**1923:** Fort Hare is incorporated as a declared institution for higher education under the Higher Education Act of 1923.

**25 January 1924:** Z.K. Matthews becomes the first African to qualify for the degree of Bachelor of Arts of the University of South Africa (UNISA).

**1933:** Edward Roux lands at Fort Hare with his donkey and pitches a tent on Sandile's Kopf. He subsequently offers political education to the students, influencing such people as Govan Mbeki.

**1935:** Professor Jabavu founds the All-African Convention to protest the attack on the African franchise.

**1936:** Representation of Natives Act removes Africans from Cape voters' roll.

**1936:** Z.K. Matthews is appointed lecturer in Anthropology and Bantu Law and Administration.

**1939-1945:** World War Two provides the spark for many campus debates and, according to Joe Matthews, had a tremendous effect on politicising the student body.

**16 March 1940:** Kaiser Daliwonga Matanzima is awarded the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Politics and Roman Law.

**1941:** Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela leaves Fort Hare on principle following a disagreement with Principal Kerr over his serving on the SRC; Oliver Tambo is awarded the degree B.Sc.

**1942:** Residents of the Anglican Hostel, Beda Hall, protest against the university rule of prohibiting sporting activities on Sundays in what came to be known as the Beda Hall Tennis Court Dispute.

**1942:** Oliver Tambo, who remained at Fort Hare to study for a Diploma in Education, is expelled during a students' strike.

**3 April 1943:** Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, who completed his degree externally, is awarded the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Native Administration and Politics.

**1944:** The ANC Youth League is formed, with Anton Lembede elected its first President.

**1948:** The National Party comes to power with its apartheid platform.

**1948:** Alexander Kerr retires and Clifford Dent vacates his post in the Chemistry Department to become Fort Hare's second Principal.

**1948:** A.P. Mda and Godfrey Pitje meet and a branch of the ANC Youth League is established at Fort Hare. It was prohibited by the university authorities, but gained prominence nevertheless as the Victoria East Branch of the Congress Youth League

**1948:** Mongosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi begins his studies at Fort Hare and joins the ANC Youth League.

**1948:** Robert Mongaliso Sobukwe speaks at the Completer's Social on behalf of continuing students, providing the first glimpse of his political acumen.

**1949:** Sobukwe is elected SRC president.

**21 October 1949:** Sobukwe's speech at the Completer's Social on behalf of graduating students urges Fort Hare students to build a new Africa. "Only we can build it," he says.

**1950:** Z.K. Matthews is elected Vice-Chairman of Senate, Fort Hare.

**1950:** Among others, Joe Matthews and Mangosuthu Buthelezi participate in a boycott of the visit of Governor General Van Zyl and his wife to campus, charging that the-governor general is "a living embodiment of British Imperialism."

**1950:** Mangosuthu Buthelezi is expelled from Fort Hare for pouring water on the bed of W.M. Chirwa, who, despite advocating a student boycott of Governor General Van Zyl's visit to campus, attended the meeting anyway. Despite his expulsion, Buthelezi, in a letter to Principal Clifford Dent, refuses to regret his actions.

**1951:** The constituent colleges of UNISA are granted autonomy and as per the Rhodes University (Private) Act of 1949, Fort Hare affiliates to Rhodes and its name changes to the University College of Fort Hare

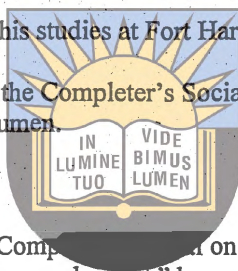
**1951:** Robert Mugabe is awarded a B.A. degree.

**1952:** Fort Hare student body votes to disaffiliate itself with the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS).

**1952:** Fort Hare students, led by ANC Youth League Leader Frank Mdlalose participate in the nationwide Defiance Campaign by ignoring curfew laws and segregated benches in Alice. Following arrests, Mdlalose led a delegation to the magistrate's court, singing freedom songs. The group was attacked by police who had had been called in from King William's Town.

**1955:** Universities Act No. 61 includes Fort Hare among the universities of South Africa.

**1955:** The South African government begins looking into the feasibility of separate university facilities for non-Europeans.



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**1955:** The Freedom Charter is adopted by the Congress of the People.

**2 May 1955:** The entire SRC resigns, charging the university senate with ignoring them.

**1955:** Fort Hare is temporarily closed down after the students boycott the graduation ceremonies. The Duminy Commission is appointed by the Department of Education to look into the governing of the university.

**December, 1955:** Z.K. Matthews is chosen as acting principal of Fort Hare.

**1956:** Treason trial of 156 defendants, including many Fort Harians, begins.

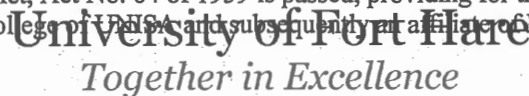
**1958:** With Z.K. Matthews on trial for treason, H.R. Burrows is appointed Fort Hare's fourth principal.

**1958:** SRC President Ambrose Makiwane leads a march in protest of the proposed Extension of University Education Bill-- made up of over 300 staff members, students, and Alice community members-- through the streets of Alice.

**18 August 1958:** The Extension of University Education Bill is passed, providing for the "establishment, management and control of university colleges for non-white persons; for the admission of students to and their instruction at university colleges; for the limitation of the admission of non-white students to certain university institutions; and for other incidental matters."

**1959:** Fort Harian Robert Sobukwe founds the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania.

**1959:** The Fort Hare Transfer Act, Act No. 64 of 1959 is passed, providing for the transfer of the university, once a constituent college of UoW and subsequently an affiliate of Rhodes University, to the apartheid government.



**1959:** Seven staff members resign their posts before September 23<sup>rd</sup>. After the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Z.K. Matthews resigns his post at Fort Hare and forfeits his entire pension three months before his intended retirement in protest over the assumption of control of the university by the Department of Bantu Education. Others soon followed. By the end of 1959, three out of every four staff members had either resigned or were fired.

**28 October 1959:** Plaque is unveiled marking the "death of Fort Hare," reading, "The University College of Fort Hare, in deep gratitude to all who between 1905 and 1959 founded, maintained and administered this college at Fort Hare and in remembrance of all who between 1916 and 1959 taught and studied here in association with the University of South Africa and Rhodes University."

**1959:** A delegation of academics who were due to assume control of the university after the transfer visit Fort Hare. Professor Ross, who was to be the first "apartheid rector," was greeted with a barrage of tomatoes hurled by the student body.

**1 January 1960:** The government takes control of Fort Hare after making arrangements to do so from 1955-1959, placing it in the hands of the Department of Bantu Education

**1960:** Fort Hare opens as a government institution with two senates: one made up of whites, and an advisory one made up of black staff.

**1960:** Police open fire and kill 69 at Sharpeville; Sobukwe is sentenced to three years in prison; Oliver Tambo leaves the country to set up an ANC mission in exile; State of Emergency is declared; ANC and PAC are banned.

**1961:** Stanley Mabizela is suspended for badmouthing Kaizer Matanzima. Matanzima overheard him saying, "Kuzele apha ziinyhwagi," and nantsi le nyhwagi uMatanzima." Matanzima was at the time a member of the all-black Fort Hare advisory council that the students felt was useless and made up of sell-

outs. Following protest by students and black staff, Mabizela was reinstated. As it turns out, Mabizela was not the student that directed the harsh words towards Matanzima. However, Mabizela took the rap, refusing to “sell out” his fellow student.

**1961:** Chris Hani is involved in the development of a non-collaboration plan against the creation of Republic. The underground ANC, very much present on campus, calls for a three day stay-away top protest the creation of the Republic.

**1961:** ANC adopts the armed struggle, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* formed, with Mandela as chief of staff.

**1968:** Professor de Wet, a member of the Broederbond, is appointed principal after Professor Ross retires. His installation ceremony is boycotted by the students, beginning a rocky relationship with the new rector that would culminate in the closure of the university later in the year. Amongst 23 others, Nyameko Barney Pityana and Kenneth Richidi are not allowed to come back.

**1969:** South African Students’ Organisation formed by Steve Biko.

**1970:** Fort Hare is granted autonomy, relinquishing its relationship with UNISA. Students now obtain Fort Hare degrees, but upset over what they perceived as the “ghettoization” of black education, they vehemently protest this change. Once autonomy was granted, students continued wearing UNISA robes to graduation.

**1971:** Supporting the principal of the 1959 SRC boycott, but believing the students needed an effective organisational body, a delegation of 23 students led by, among others, Jeffrey Baqwa, begins to campaign for the reintroduction of the SRC. In early 1972, the motion is supported wholeheartedly by a mass meeting of students. However, Principal de Wet refuses to accept the motion, charging that the meeting did not adhere to official regulations.



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**1972:** As students prepared to strike in protest of the university's refusal to recognise an SRC, O.R. Tiro is expelled from The University of the North at Turfloop for giving a speech deemed inappropriate by the university. A sympathy strike breaks out at Fort Hare as campus unrest coincides with a “national revolutionary upsurge.”

**1973:** In a continuance of the unrest of 1972, a student strike is sparked after the suspension of a student for breaking the notorious “Hogsback Rule,” which limited contact between men and women. The strike escalates and the police are called into campus.

**1974:** Worried that the Federal Theological Seminary, located on Fort Hare’s present-day East Campus, was being run by communists and that it was having a negative impact on its students, Fort Hare expropriates the seminary’s land, resulting in its closure.

**1976:** Following the Soweto Uprising, Fort Hare goes on extended holiday, reopening in October.

**21 March 1980:** Students stay away from classes to protest the impending “independence” of the Ciskei. By May, the university closes down.

**1982:** Confrontation between students and the Ciskei Security Police ensues following student protest of the intended presence of Lennox Sebe, Chief Minister of the Ciskei Homeland, at graduation. Unrest continues until the university is shut down.

**1986:** Fort Hare goes from being a “bush college” to a bantustan college, as control of it is transferred to the Ciskei government; Sebe finally attends graduation as the “guest of honor.”

**1990:** Bantu Education ends at Fort Hare. Sibusiso Bengu is appointed the first black principal of the university. Oliver Tambo, the new Chancellor, accepts his post and remarks that Fort Hare had been, “since its birth, a site of epic battles between forces of democracy and those opposed to it.”

**1992:** Following a bloodless coup, General Gqoza assumes control of the Ciskei government and sends his troops to Fort Hare to thwart student protest.

**1994:** Professor Mbulelo Mzamane assumes the rectorship as Professor Bengu takes up the post of Education Minister

**1996:** Fort Hare celebrates its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary in style as President Mandela and Miriam Makeba arrive on campus for the festivities.

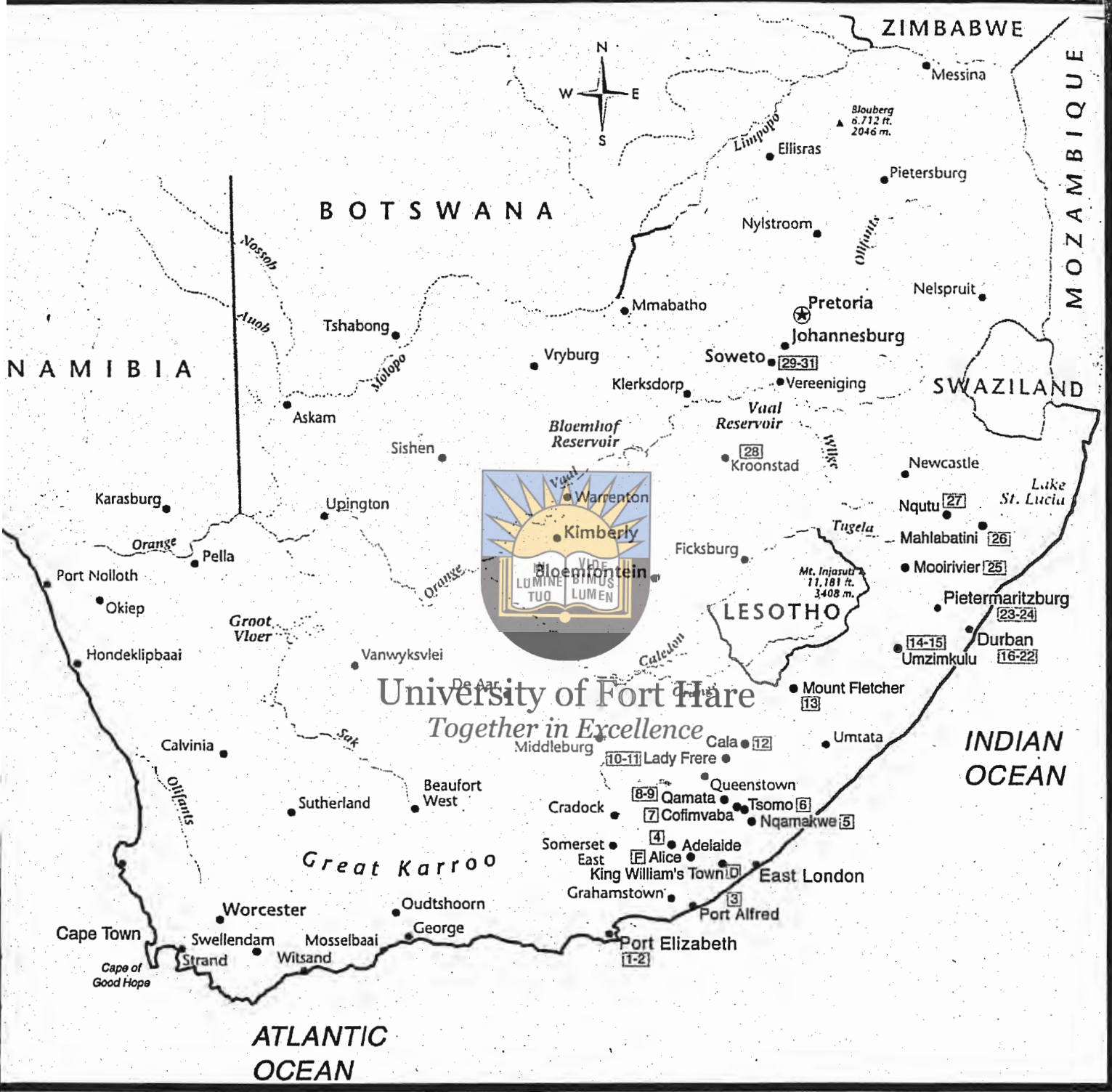
**1997:** Fort Hare is closed down for two weeks due to student protest over fees.

**1999:** Independent Assessor Stuart Saunders issues a report charging Mbulelo Mzamane with misuse of university funds. Students, staff and workers resign not to return to work until the “3 M’s” are removed from office. On March 25<sup>th</sup>, Mzamane, along with his deputy, Professor Maqashalala and the university registrar, Isaac Mabindisa, are asked by the council to take six month’s paid leave. In the meantime, an interim management team is set up, led by acting Vice Chancellor Professor Derrick Swartz.

**2000:** The university launches a strategic plan providing a blueprint for its transformation and repositioning. Underlying the plan is a universal commitment to make the university worthy of its rich inheritance.



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### Homes of the Fort Harians Interviewed for this Project

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>[1-2]</b> Stanley Mabizela and Barney Pityana</li> <li><b>[3]</b> Isaac Mabindisa</li> <li><b>[4]</b> Arnold Stofile</li> <li><b>[5]</b> Govan Mbeki</li> <li><b>[6]</b> Wycliffe Tsotsi</li> <li><b>[7]</b> Sipo Makalima</li> <li><b>[8-9]</b> Kaiser and George Matanzima</li> <li><b>[10-11]</b> Sigqibo Dwane and Sizwe Satyo</li> <li><b>[12]</b> Ambrose Makiwane</li> <li><b>[13]</b> Ntombi Dwane</li> <li><b>[14-15]</b> Jeff and Selby Baqwa</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>[16-22]</b> Devi Bughwan, Joe Matthews, Rama Thumbadoo, R.A. Pillay, Ismail Dada, G.S. Tootla, and Marumo Moerane</li> <li><b>[23-24]</b> Herby Govinden and Logan Naidoo</li> <li><b>[25]</b> V.R. Govender</li> <li><b>[26]</b> Mangosuthu Buthelezi</li> <li><b>[27]</b> Frank Mdlalose</li> <li><b>[28]</b> Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri</li> <li><b>[29-31]</b> Thenjiwe Mtintso (Orlando East), Henry Makgothi (Pimville), and Andrew Masondo (Sophiatown)</li> <li><b>[E]</b> University of Fort Hare</li> <li><b>[D]</b> My home base during research for this thesis</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

## *Acknowledgements*

The recollections of 33 Fort Harians form the heart of this thesis and I am indebted to all of my interviewees for their time, hospitality and most of all, their memories. Many of them would often ask how a kid from the Bronx ended up studying the history of Fort Hare; the answer is complicated and involves a long list of people and organizations.

InterStudy first encouraged me to attend Fort Hare in 1997. Brown University's Arnold Fellowship funded my return trip, giving me the opportunity to spend a year steeping myself in the history of Fort Hare. Anani Dzidzieyno would not allow me to consider a job offer at the National Broadcasting Company when South Africa beckoned. Michael Harper taught me to believe in myself. Newell Stultz introduced me to Tom Karis, whose enthusiasm regarding the project got me started and kept me going when doubts crept in. Tom introduced me to Gail Gerhart who read a copy of my M.A. proposal and has had many useful suggestions along the way.

At Fort Hare, Tim Stapleton and John Hendricks provided me with a background in South African history crucial to the implementation of this project. Ike and Mark in the Howard Pim Library answered all my questions. Members of the postal section always greeted me warmly, no matter how many times I bothered them for keys to the university archive. Alan Shaw provided me with access to that invaluable collection. Seán Morrow first gave me the idea of casting my research into an MA thesis. His friendship, patience, insight and enthusiasm (not to mention his cooking) throughout the process have been invaluable. In fact, his cooking also kept me nourished, but more importantly, she welcomed me into her family. Neli never complained when I came knocking on her door at three in the morning to watch my beloved Knicks fight for a National Basketball Association Championship and her daughter Thabi and nieces Dzindi and Natalia treated me like a brother.

Other friends helped make South Africa a place to which I will always return. Amanda Giyose gave me unconditional friendship, a surrogate family and a god-daughter, Dinilethu. Soccer matches, political chats and tsotsidaal lessons with Mzupela Maseti will always be cherished. The Taus —Motena, Mosa and Mathe— made their homes in Lesotho and King Williams Town my homes. Terri Barnes and John Pape cared for me during Cape Town research trips. Their young sons, Lewis and Lonnie, provided me with welcome breaks from work in the form of backyard cricket matches. Sipiwo Mahala kept me company on long road trips to Durban and the Transkei and treated my project as if it were his. His sisters Noncgi and Nompwiwo welcomed me into their home and hearts.

Many friends helped me put the thesis together. At all hours of the night, Lita Riddock lovingly aided with the printing and layout of the various photos that accompany the manuscript. Also working late into the night, Myra Margolin was my cartographer. John D'Aponte formatted the head shots that accompany the appendix.

But all that does not explain how I got to South Africa in the first place. I owe that to my family who instilled in me a sense of social justice that made South Africa a place I simply had to visit. Thanks Mom, Dad, Billy, Alicia, Bessie and Bonnie for being my biggest supporters.

## Introduction: The History of South Africa is the History of Fort Hare

*For history records the patterns of men's lives, they say; who slept with whom and with what results; who fought and who won and who lived to lie about it afterwards. All things, it is said, are duly recorded—all things of importance, that is. But not quite, for actually it is only the known, the seen, the heard and only those events that the recorder regards as important that are put down, those lies his keepers keep their power by.*

-From Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*<sup>1</sup>

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### Prologue

“There's no way you could have passed through Fort Hare completely unpoliticised,”

says Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri ('59-'61).<sup>2</sup> In 1997, while a junior at Brown University, I spent a semester at the University of Fort Hare in the Eastern Cape town of Alice studying South African history and began to realise this for myself.<sup>3</sup> Upon my arrival, posters of Chris Hani ('59-'61), the former *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) chief of staff and general secretary of the South African Communist Party and Oliver Tambo ('40-'43), the African National Congress (ANC) president from 1967-1991, adorned the walls of my hostel room and I was asked countless times whether I knew of the roles the two Fort Harians played in the country's history.<sup>4</sup> Scores of students told me that my hostel, Beda, once housed Tambo. It did not take long for me to become acutely aware of the prominent role the university played in the history of the South African liberation movement. Through both formal classroom study and informal social contact with my schoolmates, I began to realise the extent of Fort Hare's impact on the extra-parliamentary political history of South Africa. Anxious to understand the Fort Hare experience, I spent parts of 1998 and 1999 travelling through South Africa,

<sup>1</sup> Ellison, Ralph, *Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 439.

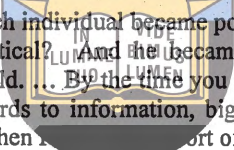
<sup>2</sup> Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author, Bloemfontein, 25 February, 1999. Except where noted, all quotations from ex-Fort Hare students are taken from interviews I conducted throughout 1998 and 1999; The numbers in brackets, here and throughout, refer to the years an individual spent at Fort Hare as a student.

<sup>3</sup> Over the years, Fort Hare has passed through a number of phases, with resultant name changes. Founded in 1916, Fort Hare opened as the South African Native College. In 1951, the institution affiliated with nearby Rhodes University and in 1952 its name changed to the University College of Fort Hare. In 1970, Fort Hare was granted independence and has been known as the University of Fort Hare since that time. (Fort Hare is popularly known as “The Fort.”) For the sake of consistency, I will refer to the university as ‘Fort Hare’ throughout this thesis.

<sup>4</sup> Those who attended Fort Hare are generally known as ‘Fort Harians.’

interviewing former students. I also extensively examined the archives of the university, a significant, previously untapped source of information on Fort Hare.

Each year, beginning in 1916, students brought their common experiences of growing up in South Africa to a small, tight-knit community in Alice. Over the years, students arrived at Fort Hare and began to develop a deeper understanding of how the political situation in South Africa affected their lives. As the political consciousness of students crystallised, activism ensued. Joe Matthews ('48-'50), who went on to become the president of the ANC Youth League shortly after leaving Fort Hare, says,



It's not just a subjective thing that each individual became political at Fort Hare. The question is why? Why did he become political? And he became political because of what was happening in the country and the world. ... By the time you get to university when fellows are now beginning to be freer with regards to information, bigger libraries, all the papers from different parts of the world. That's when I sort of become [political].<sup>5</sup>

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Although Thenjiwe Mtintso ('72-'73), arrived during the era of university apartheid in 1972, her case is not unlike those who arrived at Fort Hare from the nineteen thirties. She joined the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) while at Fort Hare, the ANC in 1979 and South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1990. While Mtintso's story is unique, it is, in a sense, symbolic of the Fort Hare experience, as her time spent at the university helped the future ANC Secretary General better understand her experience of growing up black in South Africa.

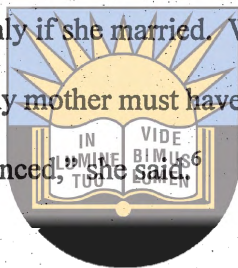
Born in the informal settlement of Shantytown, near Johannesburg in 1950, Mtintso, whose mother Hannah worked as a nurses' aide patching uniforms in Baragwanath Hospital, recalls the abject poverty in which her family lived:

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph Matthews, interview by author, Cape Town, 17 February, 1999.

My earliest memory is just this shack that is full of [17] people. My memory of family is actually asking my mother who exactly is my brother or my sister of the whole lot. There was never enough food. There was never enough sleeping place.

At the age of five, Hannah moved her family to a one-bedroom apartment in Orlando East, “an improvement,” according to Mtintso, “over the previous [shack] because in the other one there was no bedroom.” Around the age of six or seven, Mtintso’s mother sent her to the tiny Transkei town of Mpozolo to live with an aunt. In the Transkei, where her aunt was accused of being a witch, rural poverty and gender oppression added to the urban poverty and racial oppression Mtintso experienced in urban Johannesburg. She watched as her aunt was given one option. She would be pardoned only if she married. When her aunt rejected marriage, their hut was burnt down. “I thought my mother must have thrown me away. Transkei was worse than anything I had ever experienced.”<sup>6</sup> She said,



Back in Orlando East, Mtintso remembers stealing a shirt from her older sister, Lizzie, when she first went off to boarding school at Clarkebury, in Transkei. When she returned home, without comment, her sister burnt the shirt. When, months later, Mtintso told her sister she was embarrassed to bring friends to the house because of the crowded conditions, the older Mtintso decided it was time to begin her sister’s political education. Mtintso says, “she put me down and addressed me on poverty and pride, that as an individual you’ve got to be proud of what you are. It does not matter that you are poor. You did not make yourself poor. It’s not because of lack of intelligence. And then she started giving me a fuller picture.”<sup>7</sup>

Mtintso began to understand why her aunt’s employer, a white woman, lived alone in a house with twelve rooms while she and her sixteen relatives crowded into a single room.

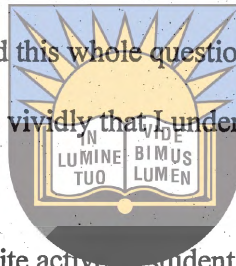
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<sup>6</sup> Thenjiwe Mtintso, interview by author, Johannesburg, 14 July, 1999; See also June Goodwin, *Cry Amandla! South African Women and the Question of Power* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1984), 12.

She remembers a man named Butshumi who lived in Orlando when she was a child.

Butshumi, who gave her a copy of Nelson Mandela's *No Easy Walk to Freedom*, was arrested for political activities. As she grew older, the image of Butshumi remained stuck in her mind and she began to understand the forces that conspired to result in his arrest. As a child, Mtintso remembers singing songs in the street during bus strikes. "We didn't know what [they] meant, but there was this signal, this sign you had to make with your thumbs up [while you were singing]. And I would be amongst the kids who were singing these songs."

Gradually, through her sister's prodding, the younger Mtintso began to come to terms with her experiences. "[My sister] explained this whole question of race, the relationship between race in South Africa and poverty ... so vividly that I understood."<sup>8</sup>



At Clarkebury, Mtintso was quite active in student politics, leading protests against the poor quality of food and hostel conditions. Eventually, activism led to her expulsion from the school. "I went as far as Form Two and I got kicked out," she says. Mtintso was expelled in 1966 because the administration thought she was influencing the students, but even though she assumed a position of leadership at Clarkebury, she had yet to mature, politically speaking. Mtintso then proceeded to Morris Isaacson High School, where she again received a lesson due to her poverty.<sup>9</sup> Her sister died and Mtintso was forced to leave school because she could not pay her fees.

She began working in a factory in Johannesburg that printed words and designs on ashtrays, glasses and pens. She wanted to save enough money to continue her education. While working, Mtintso took courses at Damelin College and received her matriculation

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<sup>7</sup> Mtintso, interview by author.

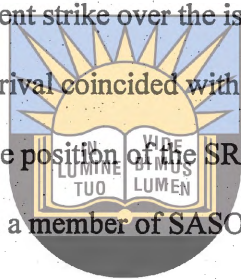
<sup>8</sup> op. cit.

certificate. In 1972, with the aid of two bursaries, at the age of 23, she entered Fort Hare, older than most students. She had already begun to understand that being born a black woman in poverty in South Africa she “had no choice as to whether [to] become a political activist or not.”<sup>10</sup>

Mtintso describes her state of mind upon entering Fort Hare:

Politically there was some relative awareness caused by the environment and the teachings of my sister and the reality of my life. ... To me it looked like there was only one choice, to be in some kind of struggle, to change not only my life, but the lives of those around me.<sup>11</sup>

She was greeted at Fort Hare by a student strike over the issue of the formation of a Students' Representative Council (SRC). Her arrival coincided with a fierce struggle between the students and the administration over the position of the SRC on campus. At the same time, Onkgopotse Ramothibi Abraham Tiro, a member of SASO, was being expelled from the University of the North at Turfloop for delivering a fiery graduation speech that attacked the system of separate universities. Combining their grievances against the rigid university administration and solidarity with the Turfloop students, the Fort Hare students walked out.



Mtintso explains how she got involved: “Before I knew what was happening, I was talking. I was asking questions and talking. And for some reason, people were clapping. People were asking, who is she?” Mtintso was recruited to be part of a committee that drafted a memorandum to be presented to the rector, Johannes Marthinus De Wet. When he refused to respond, the students walked out. And gradually, with the maturation of SASO, they began to realise that there were broader issues to be dealt with. During a strike the following year which Mtintso says, “completely politicised her,” a student got up and said,

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<sup>9</sup> Organisation for the 16 June 1976 protest against the use of Afrikaans as the language of instruction in schools took place at Morris Isaacson High School. The SOWETO uprising is often viewed as the event that signaled the end of apartheid.

<sup>10</sup> Mtintso, interview by author.

<sup>11</sup> op. cit.

man, the issue is Bantu Education here. We are busy dealing with somebody who gets expelled, this little bit there, or whether we should have an SRC, but the bigger problem is Bantu Education. Let's address Bantu Education.<sup>12</sup>

Her sister's political lessons nearly ten years earlier made more sense now. By this time, Mtintso was part of the core of SASO, playing the role of political educator to students around the country that her sister had so expertly assumed towards her during her childhood.

Like her stays at Clarkebury and Morris Isaacson, Mtintso's tenure at Fort Hare was brief. She was forced out after the 1973 strike. Yet, although she was only at Fort Hare for a year, it marked the beginning of her political maturation. She says,

I think the conscientising [sic] of myself started, with those discussions amongst us SASO activists, just talking about sharing our day to day experiences, sharing our lives, who we were, where you come from ... knowing who we are. ... I'm saying that my conscientising was mainly from the stories that I was getting from the people, their lives.<sup>13</sup>

Mtintso's path towards political consciousness was not unlike that of many Fort Harians. As with Mtintso, many students' arrival at Fort Hare coincided with a heightening of political tension nationally and they began to place their personal struggles in context. At various points, the administration, unwittingly, became a goad that spurred action. Fort Hare students bore the brunt of the country's racial policies. The words of Wycliffe Tsotsi ('33-'36), a foundation member of the All-African Convention (AAC) who went on to become president of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), are still relevant in discussing Mtintso's time at Fort Hare: "There was a ferment in the country and the students were part of the population in the country so they were also susceptible to what was going on in the rest of the country."<sup>14</sup> In his article on student politics, Terence Beard writes,

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<sup>12</sup> op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Wycliffe Tsotsi, interview by author, Port Elizabeth, 28 November, 1998.

[t]he community which brought them together ... stimulated the articulation of attitudes which had been internalised before coming to Fort Hare and the Fort became a centre for the political socialisation, and in the later years the political mobilisation, of the student body.<sup>15</sup>

As Tsotsi and generations of Fort Hare students to follow were thrown together in Alice, they began to discuss their experiences of growing up black in South Africa, leading to greater understanding and a fervent commitment to fight against the injustices in their everyday lives. And although Fort Hare, under apartheid government control during Mtintso's stay, was far less welcoming to students than it had been, parallel models of political development can be seen through the eyes of other Fort Harians.

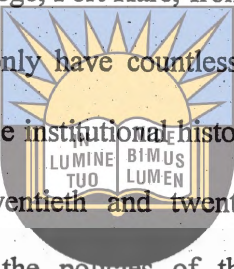


It is well documented that Fort Hare was the educational home of revolutionaries such as Govan Mbeki ('31-'36) the Eastern Cape ANC leader, Nelson Mandela ('39-'40), Oliver Tambo and Chris Hani. Its former students span a wide spectrum of South African political history, including ex-Labour Party Leader Allan Hendricks ('46-'50), ex-Transkei President Kaiser Matanzima ('35-'39), his brother, ex-Transkei Prime Minister George Matanzima ('42-'45), and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) President Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Former Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) President Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe ('47-'49) also studied at Fort Hare. Although these political figures arrived at Fort Hare with varying degrees of political awareness, their understanding grew during their time at Fort Hare. Beard makes the point that students were "united by the single fact of their common identity as members of the dominated groups of the population."<sup>16</sup> In the case of Mtintso, her experiences with poverty, racism and sexism while growing up prepared her for political development at Fort Hare. She had grown up singing protest songs; when she got to Fort Hare, she learned why she spent her childhood singing.

<sup>15</sup> Terence Beard, "Background to Student Activities at the University College of Fort Hare," in H.W. van der Merwe and D. Walshe, eds., *Student Perspectives on South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1972), p. 158.

<sup>16</sup> op. cit.

Yet the importance of Fort Hare goes well beyond that of the production of individual heroes. Indeed, the university itself has an intricate history that parallels much of what has taken place in the liberation struggle in South Africa. The foundation of this study is former SASO leader Selby Baqwa's ('69-'73) admonition that one cannot possibly understand the history of South Africa without examining the history of Fort Hare.<sup>17</sup> Fort Hare's story is indeed vital in gaining a comprehensive picture of modern South African history. Founded in 1916 as the South African Native College, Fort Hare, from its inception, was a microcosm of political life in South Africa. Not only have countless leaders of the liberation struggle matured politically at Fort Hare, but the institutional history of the university is vital towards gaining an understanding of the twentieth and twenty-first century African elite, the emergence of African nationalism, the policies of the apartheid government and the emergence of various resistance groups.



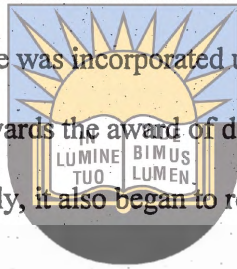
University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Although Fort Hare was a missionary school from the start, early members of the black elite such as John Tengo Jabavu and John Knox Bokwe influenced its founding. In the 1940s, when the African National Congress Youth League began to transform South African politics, one of the strongest branches was at Fort Hare. Although the attention of the nation and the world was focused on the evils of Bantu Education following the 1976 Soweto Uprisings, students at Fort Hare had been protesting against the system since the mid-fifties. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement revitalised the radical opposition to apartheid within South Africa, Fort Hare was once again to the forefront. Strikes in 1972 and 1973 resulted in over 400 expulsions, but more importantly, served to politicise a new generation of black South Africans.

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<sup>17</sup> Selby Baqwa, Letter to Author. 15 May 1999.

The organisational status of Fort Hare changed through the years. Prime Minister General Louis Botha opened the school in 1916 as the South African Native College with Alexander Kerr, a Scottish missionary, serving as the first principal. The Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches provided financial support for residences and the government made annual grants-in-aid to the university, which was the first for blacks in South Africa. From 1916 to 1923 it was a school engaged in secondary education, that is preparing students for the South African matriculation examination, a prerequisite to university entrance. In 1923, Fort Hare was incorporated under the Higher Education Act, thus adding to its curriculum study towards the award of degrees, which were those of the University of South Africa. Importantly, it also began to receive the same government subsidies offered to other universities.



## University of Fort Hare

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In 1937, Fort Hare abandoned matriculation work and focused solely on degrees and diplomas. Then, in 1951, Fort Hare was granted relative autonomy from the University of South Africa, affiliating itself with nearby Rhodes University. The following year its name was changed to the University College of Fort Hare and its students received Rhodes degrees. The goal was for Fort Hare to one day become completely autonomous, but that status was dealt a blow by the apartheid government's separate university legislation of the late 1950s. In 1960, following five years of protest by Fort Hare Senate, staff and students, the college was transferred to the Department of Bantu Education by Act No. 64 of 1959.

The years 1955-1960 thrust Fort Hare into a state of turmoil from which, in a sense, it has yet to emerge. What made the establishment of separate universities particularly grave in the case of Fort Hare was that, unlike the other proposed universities, Fort Hare had been in

existence since 1916 and had grown into a thriving home for black intellectual thought. Fort Hare had produced politicians, lawyers, clergy, and many other professionals. The universities to be formed under the Extension of University Education Act were to be created. Fort Hare, as it had been, was to be destroyed. Although Bantu education officially ended at Fort Hare in 1990, scars of the post 1960 era remain in the financial, organisational and academic spheres.

Thus, the purpose of this thesis will be twofold. In addition to examining patterns of political development as illustrated by students at Fort Hare, it is the aim of this study to use the perspective of student experiences to illustrate the place of the University of Fort Hare in South African history. I will explore the political history of the university and its role in the proliferation of extra-parliamentary activity in South Africa from the 1930s and 1940s, focusing on the 1960 government takeover and the effects of university apartheid at Fort Hare. While these two categories are not mutually exclusive and will inevitably overlap, there is an important distinction to be made: Fort Hare is not just an important place because it produced the likes of Mandela and Tambo. Many who went on to lead far less high profile lives were also touched by time spent at Fort Hare and an examination of what it was like to be a student at Fort Hare is vital in gaining a broader understanding of the University's role in South African history. In short, the influence of Fort Hare on the black South African community was both wide and deep.

A study of student experiences at Fort Hare is vital in gaining an overall picture of the development of political consciousness amongst oppressed South Africans. It is also interesting to note that some Fort Harians, like Alan Hendrickse, Kaiser Matanzima and Mangosuthu Buthelezi ended up participating in government structures. Was there anything

in their Fort Hare experience that led them to accept the government's separate development policies? Since there are no in-depth studies of the University of Fort Hare that focus on, and draw material from, the experiences of its students and since the university has been at the forefront of educating people who went on to become leaders in the struggle against apartheid, it is imperative to record and interpret the voices of those who called it home throughout the years.

There is also a pressing need for this study to be done now. Eight months after I interviewed George Matanzima, he passed away. Former SASO leader Jeff Baqwa died tragically in August 2001 and the world lost Govan Mbeki in September 2001. In recent years, Fort Harians such as Godfrey Pitje ('42-'47), the former ANC Youth League leader and John Pokela, the onetime PAC leader, have also died. People who studied at Fort Hare in the 1930s and 1940s are members of an aging population. Just days before my departure for South Africa to conduct the research for this project, I received a phone call from Thomas Karis, a professor at the City University Graduate Center in New York. I had spoken with Tom numerous times about my project and his advice and encouragement were invaluable, and his enthusiasm infectious, as I planned for my South African venture. On this occasion, we didn't discuss my project. He told me that Frieda Matthews, the wife of Zacchariah Keodirelang (Z.K.) Matthews ('18-'24)—the first graduate of Fort Hare—had passed away. She was 93.

My sadness over the death of a wonderful woman was exacerbated by the fact that, as I spoke to Tom, I held in my hand a letter, addressed to Joe Matthews, the Deputy Minister of Safety and Security, and the son of Frieda and Z.K. Matthews. In helping me organise the project, Tom suggested I start my interviews with Frieda, quite possibly one of the most

knowledgeable living people about the political history of Fort Hare up until 1960. She was familiar not only with the early years of the university, but with its tumultuous ones as well, resigning her post as librarian following the 1960 takeover. Tom had told me to write to Joe and arrange a trip to Botswana, where Frieda had lived since going into exile. He gave me a xeroxed copy of her book, *Remembrances*, which had gone out of print. And he told me to make her my first stop, as she was getting on in years and would undoubtedly be helpful in pointing me in the right direction. Although that meeting never took place, hopefully I will be able to embody the spirit of her book, which she described as being written to give her grandchildren and future generations “glimpses of [their] past.”



## Literature Review

# University of Fort Hare

Oral sources are the backbone of this study of the political development of Fort  
*Together in Excellence*

Harians. The oral foundation of this thesis distinguishes it from other works on the history of students and politics at Fort Hare. While scholars have attempted to explain the explosion of political activity at Fort Hare, they have neglected to conduct extensive interviews with students of the university. Thus, in a sense, the limited body of research into the political development of Fort Hare students removes the very students concerned from the equation. By failing to interview Fort Hare students, previous scholars are unable to grasp the complexity of the political nature of the campus. Rather than examining specific patterns of development, these scholars have sought to come up with broad themes that tend to remove agency from the students. The campus is looked upon as a whole, rather than examining individual student accounts and locating their place in a living and developing process of student political involvement.

Morrow and Gxabalashe deem the historiography of Fort Hare “remarkably underdeveloped” considering its importance in South African history.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, there are some studies worth mentioning that were useful in writing this thesis. Since this study focuses on the political development of black South Africans and the impact of university education and relies a great deal on the use of oral history this review will coalesce at the juncture of various analytical and methodological topics. There are no full-length student-centered studies of students’ politicisation at Fort Hare throughout the years. However, when examined as a whole, the available literature provides a prism through which to examine the role Fort Hare played in its students’ political development.



There are three articles that touch on student politicisation at Fort Hare. Burchell analyses the proliferation of African nationalist sentiment that swept across the campus in the 1940s and '50s, calling into question the position of the Fort Hare authorities.<sup>19</sup> This article presents a useful general outline of the origins of student political activity, focusing on the more militant and nationalistic outlook of Fort Hare students following the birth of the African National Congress Youth League. Burchell’s analysis of Fort Hare’s withdrawal from the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) is particularly useful. However, Burchell does not interview any of the students he writes about, thus failing to portray the breadth of their political development. Thus although Burchell comes to the conclusion that “there is no doubt that the Fort, as it was called, was decisive in the political socialisation and mobilisation of a number of students,” he focuses more on the general societal forces that led to the heightened political activity. While discussion of these themes

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<sup>18</sup> Sean Morrow and Khayaletu Gxabalashe, “Records of the University of Fort Hare,” *History in Africa* 27 (2000), 483; To compensate for the lack of written material on the history of Fort Hare, this study heavily relies upon material from the University of Fort Hare Archives. For an in-depth description of the material in the archives see the article by Morrow and Gxabalashe.

<sup>19</sup> D.E. Burchell, “The Emergence and Growth of Student Militancy at the University College of Fort Hare in the 1940s and 1950s,” *Journal of the University of Durban-Westville*, no. 3 (1986), pp. 149-67.

is undoubtedly relevant, excluding student voices when discussing the reasons for their political development simplifies the story.

Similarly, though Beard's essay on student life at Fort Hare depicts the multi-racial nature of Fort Hare before 1960 and analyses the reason for the political mobilisation that took place on campus before the takeover, it fails to include Fort Hare students' points of view.<sup>20</sup> While Beard's position as a faculty member at Fort Hare undoubtedly gave him insight into student life at the university, he does not take full advantage of his access to the students. Beard points to the location and residential nature of the university and the educational background of Fort Hare students as reasons for their political mobilisation. Like Burchell, he focuses on more general patterns, as when he writes, "[m]ost students had common experiences in White South Africa."<sup>21</sup> Yet he does not examine those experiences and tell us how they led to mobilisation at Fort Hare, thus oversimplifying the complexities of moves towards political consciousness. Additionally, Beard's study focuses on the three years leading to the 1960 takeover, and, while many of the themes he discusses are relevant in discussing other years at Fort Hare, the narrow time frame limits his account.

White looks into the establishment of the ANC Youth League at Fort Hare and the role Z.K. Matthews played in the process.<sup>22</sup> He shows how student politics in the 1940s became more militant in line with the thinking of the ANC Youth League. White's decision to interview Fort Hare staff and students and use letters written by them lends authenticity to his account. However, his focus is the origins of the ANC Youth League at Fort Hare and he looks at only one influence, important though it is, on student political development.

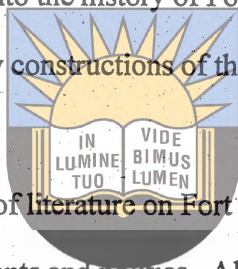
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<sup>20</sup>Beard, "Background to Student Activities."

<sup>21</sup> op. cit., 158.

<sup>22</sup> T.R.H. White, "Z.K. Matthews and the Formation of the ANC Youth League at the University College of Fort Hare," *Kleio* XXVII (1995), pp. 124-144.

Two studies appeared as I was preparing to submit this manuscript and were not available in time to be dealt with. Former Fort Hare Professor Donovan Williams' book should be a major addition to the literature on the university.<sup>23</sup> It focuses on the tumultuous 1950s, a time when the Fort Hare community was preparing for the imminent takeover of the university. The other study, a University of Chicago Ph.D., thesis by Zolani Ngwane entitled *The Politics of Campus and Community in South Africa: an Historical Ethnography of the University of Fort Hare*, delves back into the history of Fort Hare as a British fort and goes forward to examine near-contemporary constructions of the history of the university.<sup>24</sup>



Taken more broadly, the body of literature on Fort Hare's history is far from substantial and does not focus on students and politics. Alexander Kerr's account of the university from its earliest days until his retirement in 1948, while concerned more with the erection of buildings and university finances than student politics, is the closest there is to a general history of Fort Hare.<sup>25</sup> Though he pays cursory attention to student unrest in the early 1940s, Kerr, Fort Hare's first principal, makes no attempt to trace the genesis of student political sentiment. His work is predominantly an organisational history and is useful in examining the various stages of Fort Hare's physical and institutional past.

M.O.M. Seboni's D.Ed. thesis, supervised by Broederbond member J.H. Cilliers of UNISA, examines Fort Hare from its embryonic stages up until 1954 and essentially justifies

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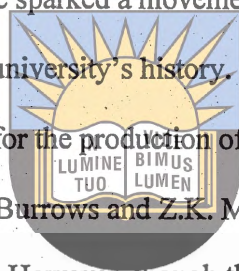
<sup>23</sup> Donovan Williams, *A History of the University College of Fort Hare, South Africa, the 1950s: The Waiting Years* (Lewiston: Edward Mellen Press, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Zolani Ngwane, *The Politics of Campus and Community in South Africa: an Historical Ethnography of the University of Fort Hare*. Ph.D. Thesis. University of Chicago, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Alexander Kerr, *Fort Hare, 1915-1948: The Evolution of an African College* (London: Shuter and Shooter, 1968).

the existence of separate universities.<sup>26</sup> While it adds to Kerr's book and is important in getting a glimpse into the psyche of a certain type of Fort Harian, it is overwhelmingly and unnecessarily descriptive, limiting its use to me. Furthermore, it is important to note that Seboni was one of the few African staff members who supported the government takeover of Fort Hare. He was despised by many of his students as a collaborator and this thesis must be examined in the light of its source.

The 1960 takeover of Fort Hare sparked a movement among those associated with the traditional Fort Hare to document the university's history. Following a decision by the University Senate to set aside monies for the production of a book to preserve the memory of Fort Hare as an open institution, H.R. Burrows and Z.K. Matthews produced a short history of the university, including pictures.<sup>27</sup> However, though this account contains some useful information regarding the official university protest against the separate university bills, it is not really an academic work.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Though they do not trace political development, articles on particular themes add to the overall picture of Fort Hare. Burchell supplements Kerr's memoir with his account of the early years of Fort Hare.<sup>28</sup> He calls Kerr a conservative liberal and looks at the former principal's attempt to placate the emerging black elite through a fusion of liberal Western curriculum and African studies.<sup>29</sup> Burchell describes Fort Hare as only partially open and liberal, charging the Fort Hare authorities with failing to properly critique the South African

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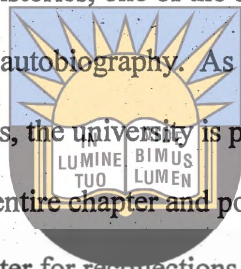
<sup>26</sup> M.O.M. Seboni, "The South African Native College, Fort Hare, 1903-1954: An Historical Critical Survey of its Development and an Assessment of its influence on the Education of the Non-European Races of South Africa in general, but on that of the Southern Bantu in particular, together with suggestions for future development," D.Ed. Thesis, UNISA, 1959.

<sup>27</sup> H.R. Burrows and Z.K. Matthews, *A Short Pictorial History of the University College of Fort Hare, 1916-1959* (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1961).

<sup>28</sup> D.E. Burchell, "African Higher Education and the Establishment of the South African Native College, Fort Hare" in *South Africa Historical Journal*, 8.

political order, perhaps going too far in asserting that attitudes towards the students at Fort Hare in the 1950s resembled the character of the institution after 1960.<sup>30</sup> Kros examines the political and educational ideas of Z.K. Matthews, attempting to show how they interacted.<sup>31</sup> Beale estimates the extent to which the Extension of University Education Act and the Fort Hare Transfer Act achieved the government's desired objective of recasting Fort Hare as an institution to provide the homelands of Transkei and Ciskei with a corps of administrators.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to conducting oral histories, one of the best ways to trace political development is through biography and autobiography. As Fort Hare played an instrumental role in the lives of many South Africans, the university is prominently featured in many such works. Frieda Matthews dedicates an entire chapter and portions of others to her memories of Fort Hare and reserves another chapter for reconstructions of University Apartheid and the effect it had on her and her husband.<sup>33</sup> In his autobiography combined with Monica Wilson's memoir, Z.K. Matthews talks of both his student, teaching and administrative days at Fort Hare, and though he is worthy of a more detailed biography, this account does contribute to knowledge of his political development and the impact Fort Hare had on him.<sup>34</sup> Nelson Mandela describes his tumultuous stay at Fort Hare and the effect it had on his political growth.<sup>35</sup> Phyllis Ntantala recalls meeting her husband, the isiXhosa writer A.C.



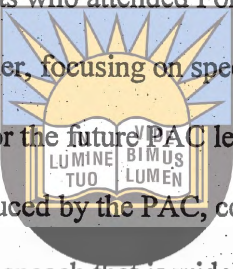
University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

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<sup>29</sup> D.E. Burchell, "Alexander Kerr of the University College of Fort Hare: South African Liberalism and the Domestication of an African Intelligentsia." *Acta Academica*, 23.2 (1991) pp. 1-33.  
<sup>30</sup> D.E. Burchell, "The Pursuit of Relevance Within a Conservative Context: The University College of Fort Hare to 1960," *CON-TEXT*, 1 (1988), pp. 45-67.  
<sup>31</sup> Cynthia. Kros, "Deep Rumbings': Z.K. Matthews and African Education Before 1955." *Perspectives in Education*, 12.1 (1990): pp. 21-40.  
<sup>32</sup> E. Beale, "The Task of Fort Hare in Terms of the Transkei and Ciskei: Educational Policy at Fort Hare in the 1960s." *Perspectives in Education*, 12.1 (1990): pp. 41-54.  
<sup>33</sup> Frieda Matthews, *Remembrances* (Cape Town: Mayibuye Books, 1994).  
<sup>34</sup> Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for My People: The Autobiography of Z.K. Matthews: Southern Africa, 1901-1968* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1986).  
<sup>35</sup> Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994).

Jordan and mentions the sexism she encountered as a student and faculty-wife at the university.<sup>36</sup>

Temkin describes Mangosuthu Buthelezi's student days, homing in on the current IFP leader's relationship with Z.K. Matthews, his political growth, and his ultimate expulsion from Fort Hare.<sup>37</sup> Pogrund provides glimpses into the development of Robert Sobukwe's political consciousness during his time as a student leader. This book is particularly useful as Pogrund interviews a number of students who attended Fort Hare with Sobukwe. He shows Sobukwe's emergence as a student leader, focusing on specific people and events that represented significant growth points for the future PAC leader.<sup>38</sup> In addition, "Speeches of Mangaliso Sobukwe 1949-1959," produced by the PAC, contains, amongst others, Sobukwe's famous Completer's Social speech that is widely credited with being the earliest public display of his ideas regarding black nationalism.<sup>39</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

Colin Bundy's introduction to Govan Mbeki's prison writings provides a biographical sketch of Mbeki, paying specific attention to his political development.<sup>40</sup> Bundy's "Schooled For Life" provides a more in-depth look at Mbeki's politicisation, including Fort Hare's role in the process.<sup>41</sup> Though not a biography, Goodwin's *Cry Amandla! South African Women and the Question of Power*, focuses on the life of Fort Harian Thenjiwe Mtintso, paying specific attention to her rise to consciousness.<sup>42</sup> Volume four of *From Protest to Challenge* and volume five of Shelagh Gastrow's *Who's Who in*

<sup>36</sup> Phyllis Ntantala, *A Life's Mosaic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>37</sup> Ben Temkin, *Gatsha Buthelezi: Zulu Statesman* (Cape Town: Purnell, 1976).

<sup>38</sup> Benjamin Pogrund, *How Can Man Die Better* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1990).

<sup>39</sup> PAC Department of Publicity and Information, *Speeches of Mangaliso Sobukwe*. 1993.

<sup>40</sup> Govan Mbeki, *Learning from Robben Island: The Prison Writings of Govan Mbeki* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991).

<sup>41</sup> Colin Bundy. "Schooled for Life? The Early Years and Education of Govan Mbeki." Paper presented at the University of Cape Town Centre for African Studies Seminar, 30 March, 1994.

<sup>42</sup> Goodwin, *Cry Amandla!*

South African Politics are also useful biographical sources on many Fort Hareians and were particularly helpful to me in writing the appendix.<sup>43</sup>

Most of the students at Fort Hare prior to 1960 came from the Eastern Cape and had been educated in missionary institutions prior to their arrival at Fort Hare. In large part an indirect result of mission education, the Cape was the birthplace of African opposition politics in South Africa. As White argues, militancy at Fort Hare must be viewed as part of this long tradition.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the development of student politics at Fort Hare must be seen in the context of the literature available on the emergence of an African political elite. Higgs studies the public career of Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu, Fort Hare's first black staff member and the son of John Tengo Jabavu, an influential early member of the African elite. She describes the limited higher education options available to Africans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and cites J.T. Jabavu's decision to send his son overseas to study as one of the factors instrumental in the founding of Fort Hare.<sup>45</sup> She also covers D.D.T. Jabavu's tenure at Fort Hare.

Gish's biography of Alfred Xuma provides another example of an account of the life of an early member of the African elite. Gish's study is useful in that it provides evidence of the reactionary origins of Fort Hare. Xuma is one of many black South Africans whose politics were radicalised through exposure to black American ideals. Xuma's ties to people like Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Paul Robeson and organisations such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the National Association for the Advancement of

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<sup>43</sup> Karis, Thomas and Gwendolyn M. Carter, eds. *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882-1964*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press. Vol. 4, *Political Profiles, 1882-1964*, by Gail Gerhart and Thomas Karis (1977); Gastrow, Shelagh. *Who's Who in South African Politics: Volume 5* (Cape Town: Galvin and Sales, 1995).

<sup>44</sup> White, "Z.K. Matthews and the Formation of the ANC Youth League," 126.

Colored People were just the bonds that officials were trying to break in establishing Fort Hare. In essence, then, Xuma was a part of the last group of elite South Africans to go overseas for higher education before Fort Hare opened.<sup>46</sup>

Odendaal's *Vukani Bantu* is particularly useful in tracing the origins of the mission elite in the Cape. Odendaal argues that a continuum can be drawn from the earliest stages of elite resistance to the birth of the more modern African nationalism that was at the forefront of the mass resistance to apartheid. He examines the long tradition of African political activity, and in doing so, touches on many themes important to the understanding of student participation in politics at Fort Hare.<sup>47</sup> Les Switzer's *Power and Resistance* examines many of the themes relating to the mission elite that Odendaal addresses. His account of the battle between the founders of Fort Hare and those who wanted a more African-controlled institution shows the complexities of early elite politics.<sup>48</sup> Songezo Ngqongqo's *Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana 1858-1910: The Making of the New African Elite in the Eastern Cape* also focuses on the reactionary origins of Fort Hare, paying specific attention to the role played by Walter Rubusana in promoting a more radical university plan.<sup>49</sup>

Studies of apartheid and education, education in general, and South African history in general are also worth noting. Beale investigates the background to the Extension of University Education and Fort Hare Transfer Acts in an attempt to decipher why the Nationalist Party intervened into the field of university education. She assesses the

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<sup>45</sup> Catherine Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality: The Public Lives of D.D.T. Jabavu of South Africa, 1885-1959* (Athens: University of Ohio Press, 1997).

<sup>46</sup> Steven D. Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> Andre Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu! The Beginnings of Black Protest Politics in South Africa to 1912* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1984).

<sup>48</sup> Les Switzer. *Power and Resistance in an African Society: The Ciskei Xhosa and the Making of South Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

relationship between university apartheid and other apartheid policies and concludes that university apartheid, in its final form, must be seen as a response to African political opposition in the 1950s. Beale convincingly argues that political and not educational considerations were of prime importance in constructing university education policies.<sup>50</sup> Her study's strength is its examination of the correlation between apartheid government educational philosophy and the rising tide of African nationalism. With specific regard to my study, Beale's account is vital in that it shows how the government's policy backfired and led to even greater political mobilisation at Fort Hare.



In his study, Nkomo makes a similar point, concluding that carefully constructed African ethnic university education inadvertently developed a distinct culture of resistance which contradicted the stated intentions of the official education policy.<sup>51</sup> Hyslop adds to the studies of Beale and Nkomo by analysing the paradox of a schooling system created to solidify racial domination producing exactly the opposite result.<sup>52</sup> Moodley also examines student activity and experience.<sup>53</sup> Dreijmanis has assembled useful statistical information and provides an account of the legal and administrative roles of government in its provision of education.<sup>54</sup> The Fort Harians Kerr and Matthews have both written on the topic of separate universities.<sup>55</sup> In his edited collection of essays, Kallaway adds to Beale's contribution, concluding that, "[t]he state policy of Bantu Education ... attempted to secure

<sup>49</sup> Songezo Ngqongqo. *Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana 1858-1910: The Making of the New African Elite in the Eastern Cape*. MA Thesis, University of Fort Hare, 1996.

<sup>50</sup> Mary Beale, *Apartheid and University Education, 1948-1959*. MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1994.

<sup>51</sup> M. Nkomo, *Student Culture and Activism in Black South African Universities: The Roots of Resistance* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1984).

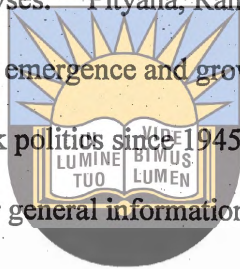
<sup>52</sup> Jonathan Hyslop, *The Classroom Struggle: Policy and Resistance in South Africa 1940-1990* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1999).

<sup>53</sup> K.A. Moodley, "The Politicization of Ethnic Universities: Experiences Within South Africa's 'College Brews'" in Van den Berghe, P.L., ed. *The Liberal Dilemma in South Africa* (London: Croom Helm, 1979).

<sup>54</sup> J. Dreijmanis, *The Role of the South African Government in Tertiary Education*. Johannesburg: SAIRR, 1988.

the appropriate conditions for the reproduction of capital in general at a particular phase of South Africa's political development under the hegemony of Afrikaner Nationalist ideology in the 1950s and 1960s."<sup>56</sup> Kallaway's collection contains a well-documented piece on the evolution of educational policy in South Africa.<sup>57</sup> Behr delves into the ethnic segregation of universities and reaction to it.<sup>58</sup>

The five volumes of *From Protest To Challenge* edited by Carter, Karis and Gerhart provide some key documents and analyses.<sup>59</sup> Pityana, Ramphele, Mpuwana and Wilson give a broad and informative account of the emergence and growth of the South African Students' Organisation.<sup>60</sup> Lodge's work on black politics since 1945 and Gerhart's book on the evolution of black power are useful for general information about the rise of extra-parliamentary activity.<sup>61</sup>



## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

Histories of other South African universities are worth examination. Though they explore the pasts of predominantly white institutions, Murray's work on Witswatersrand University and Phillips' study of the University of Cape Town are not merely institutional

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<sup>55</sup> Z.K. Matthews, "Ethnic Universities" in *Africa South*, Volume 14, 1957; Alexander Kerr, "University Apartheid" in *South African Outlook*, 87 (Alice: Lovedale Press, 1957).

<sup>56</sup> P. Kallaway, ed., *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1984), 18.

<sup>57</sup> Frank Molteno, "The Historical Foundations of the Schooling of Black South Africans," in P. Kallaway, ed., *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1984), pp. 45-107.

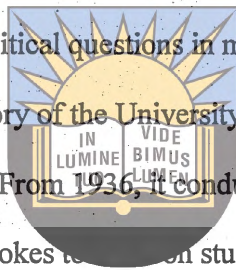
<sup>58</sup> A.L. Behr. *Education in South Africa: Origins, Issues and Trends: 1652-1988* (Pretoria: Academica, 1988).

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Karis and Gwendolyn M. Carter, eds., *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882-1964*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press. Vol. 1, *Protest and Hope, 1882-1934*, by Sheridan Johns III (1972). Vol. 2, *Hope and Challenge, 1935-1952*, by Thomas Karis (1973). Vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence, 1953-1964*, by Thomas Karis and Gail Gerhart (1977). Vol. 4, *Political Profiles, 1882-1964*, by Gail Gerhart and Thomas Karis (1977).

<sup>60</sup> N. B. Pityana, M. Ramphele, M. Mpumwana, L. Wilson, eds., *Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko & Black Consciousness* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1991).

<sup>61</sup> Tom Lodge. *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1997); Gail Gerhart. *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

histories.<sup>62</sup> While Murray does provide an organisational history of Wits, he also takes time to focus on social questions such as the debates surrounding the admission of blacks and the treatment of Jewish, Afrikaans-speaking and women students and staff. Murray also focuses on the students' increasing interest in politics beginning in the late 1930s, noting the principal's growing concern with the accelerating involvement of students in political issues and movements.<sup>63</sup> He even mentions the debate on campus surrounding the admission of Fort Hare to NUSAS. Phillips refers to a similar debate at UCT and also reserves a significant amount of space to discussing students and student life. Thus, a picture emerges of white students heatedly debating political questions in much the same manner as students at Fort Hare. Brookes records the history of the University of Natal, which, unlike UCT and Wits, was not an "open" university.<sup>64</sup> From 1936, it conducted separate "non-European" classes. Like Murray and Phillips, Brookes touches on student life, noting division over issues such as academic segregation. However, his account is bland and lacking in detail. It is also worth noting that though South Africa, in higher education as in so many areas, had many specific characteristics it also shared some with other parts of Africa. For example, in *Imperialism, Academe and Nationalism*, Nwauwa examines the relationship between university education and nationalism elsewhere in the continent.<sup>65</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Since oral sources are at the center of this study, the substantial body of literature available on oral history must be mentioned. In *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, Kennedy and Davis show how oral histories can be used to construct a social history.<sup>66</sup> Their book

<sup>62</sup> Bruce Murray, *Wits: the early years* (Johannesburg: Witswatersrand University Press, 1982); Howard Phillips, *The University of Cape Town, 1918-1948: The formative years* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town in Association with UCT Press, 1993).

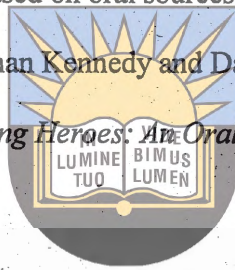
<sup>63</sup> Murray, *Wits*, 345.

<sup>64</sup> Edgar Brookes, *A History of the University of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1966).

<sup>65</sup> Apollos Nwauwa, *Imperialism, Academe and Nationalism: Britain and University Education for Africans* (London: F. Cass, 1997).

<sup>66</sup> Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994).

provides an example of an academic study based entirely on oral sources. In examining the emergence of a lesbian working class consciousness in Buffalo, New York, Kennedy and Davis delineate what I am trying to achieve with the history of Fort Hare. Their introduction is particularly useful in that it discusses both the benefits and drawbacks to an orally based study. Morrow and Vokwana's "Shaping in dull, dead earth their dreams of riches and beauty': Clay Modelling at e-Hala and Hogsback in the Eastern Cape, South Africa" is an example of a successful South African based study that relies predominantly on oral sources.<sup>67</sup> Other examples of books based on oral sources, though less focused on the construction of a community identity than Kennedy and Davis', are Patai's *Brazilian Women Speak* and Moon's *Untold Tales, Unsung Heroes: An Oral History of Detroit's African American Community 1918-1967*.<sup>68</sup>



## University of Fort Hare

Considerable scholarly writing has been devoted to oral history methodology.  
*Together in Excellence*

Examined as a whole, this scholarship helped me to better understand both the process of interviewing and the resultant finished product. Grele's *Envelopes of Sound*, an edited account of six practitioners discussing oral history, touches on many oral history-related topics, including the relationship between history and memory.<sup>69</sup> Grele's *Movement Without Aim*, first published in 1975, is one of the earliest examinations of the complexities of the medium of oral history. He calls for expanded theoretical introspection by oral historians, outlining early debates on the reliability of memory and the legitimacy of individual

<sup>67</sup> Seán Morrow and Nwabisa Vokwana, "Shaping in dull, dead earth their dreams of riches and beauty': Clay Modelling at e-Hala and Hogsback in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. *Journal of South African Studies*, Volume 27, Number 1, March 2001, pp. 137-161.

<sup>68</sup> Daphne Patai, *Brazilian Women Speak* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988); Elaine Lutzman Moon, *Untold tales, unsung heroes: an oral history of Detroit's African-American community 1918-1967* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994).

<sup>69</sup> Ronald Grele, ed., *Envelopes of Sound: Six Practitioners Discuss the Method, Theory, and Practice of Oral History and Oral Testimony* (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1975)

testimony.<sup>70</sup> Portelli's "What Makes Oral History Different" examines some of Grele's questions, showing that the criticisms of oral history—its narrative form, subjectivity, reliance on the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, and the credibility of memory—are what make it unique and should be considered strengths and not weaknesses.<sup>71</sup> In his "Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence," Lummis writes of the nature of individual accounts and argues that the problem at the heart of oral history is that of moving beyond the individual account to a social interpretation. Lummis also emphasises the importance of using multiple sources of evidence and increasing the number of interviewees to help move beyond individual accounts.<sup>72</sup>



Schraeger shows how similarities and differences in narrators' accounts can be used as evidence about socialisation in the past. In *Anzac Memories*, Thomson underscores the relationship between individual memory and national myth, showing that myths elucidate rather than obscure the past.<sup>73</sup> Willis' "Two Lives of Mpmamizo: Understanding Dissonance in Oral History," shows that historians can learn from contesting accounts of the past offered by a single individual or different people.<sup>74</sup>

Aside from providing access to some of the above articles, three anthologies—*The Oral History Reader*, *A Shared Authority*, and *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*--

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<sup>70</sup> Ronald Grele, "Movement without aim," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 38-52.

<sup>71</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 63-74.

<sup>72</sup> Trevor Lummis, "Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 273-283.

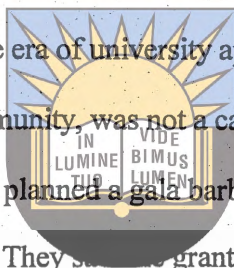
<sup>73</sup> Alistair Thomson, "Anzac Memories: putting popular memory into practice in Australia," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 300-310.

<sup>74</sup> Justin Willis, "Two Lives of Mpmamizo: Understanding Dissonance in Oral History," in *History in Africa* (Vol. 23, 1996), pp. 320-330.

were helpful for learning about issues and problems of oral history research.<sup>75</sup> Thompson's *The Voice of the Past* and Tonkin's *Narrating Our Pasts* were also useful for general information.<sup>76</sup>

### Constructing Fort Hare's History From Oral Sources

In 1970, Fort Hare was granted autonomy by the Fort Hare Act passed by the apartheid government. Long a constituent college of various other "white" institutions, Fort Hare was finally given the chance to issue its own degrees and move along its own path of development. However, in 1970, in the era of university apartheid, autonomy, a long sought after goal for the entire university community, was not a cause for celebration for the students of Fort Hare. While the administration planned a gala barbecue complete with fireworks, the students were not in a mood to rejoice. They saw the granting of autonomy as the cheapening of their degrees and the "ghettoization" of their education. They viewed the act as the continuation of the apartheid policy of curbing the critical and independent thinking for which Fort Hare had become known and replacing it with a curriculum designed to promote the policy of separate development.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Yet there is no hint of the students' sentiments towards autonomy in the administrative records of the university. The minutes of Senate meetings show excitement on the part of the management of the university over the prospect of autonomy and a feeling of accomplishment once it was granted. The huge festival planned to celebrate the university's

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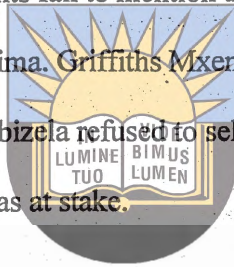
<sup>75</sup> Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998); Michael Frisch, ed., *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, eds., *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1984)

<sup>76</sup> Paul Thompson. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

independence and even a commemorative book to mark the occasion are mentioned.

Curiously, however, there is no record of the students' boycott of the festivities.

The case of Stanley Mabizela depicts a similar story. According to university records, he was expelled for calling Kaiser Matanzima, a member of the Advisory Senate of the University of Fort Hare after the government takeover, a dog and a sellout. Mabizela was, at the time, the president of the ANC Youth League (YL) at Fort Hare and a thorn in the side of the administration. The documents fail to mention that Mabizela was not the student who made the comments about Matanzima. Griffiths Mxenge ('57-'61), a less politically active student, was the guilty party. Mabizela refused to sell out this younger comrade, all the while aware that his academic career was at stake.



## University of Fort Hare

Tonkin asserts that written accounts can be full of prejudices, false inhibitions, and myopias.<sup>77</sup> Portelli points out that oftentimes, written documents are only the uncontrolled transmission of unidentified oral sources.<sup>78</sup> As the above examples illustrate, there is a considerable dissonance between the administrative records of Fort Hare and the recollections of its students. When the government took over the university in 1960, the Fort Hare administration was transformed into an extension of the apartheid regime. Portelli writes that oral sources give us information about social groups whose written history is either missing or distorted.<sup>79</sup> The history of the students of Fort Hare, where documented, is largely misrepresented.

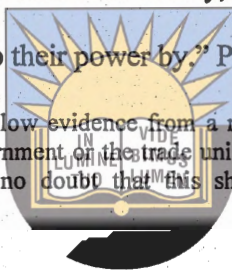
Oral history is a valuable technique for recording the experiences of those people Ralph Ellison would call the invisible. To a certain extent, the students of Fort Hare fall into

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<sup>77</sup> Tonkin, 84.

this Ellisonian category. Though Fort Harians comprised an elite group of black South Africans, their educational experiences occurred within the confines of missionary and then apartheid control. Documents on the history of Fort Hare from a student perspective are difficult to find. While I uncovered some minutes from SRC meetings in the archive at Fort Hare, most of the available documentary sources, as in the cases noted above, are written from an administrative point of view. And, since Fort Hare was first a missionary and then an apartheid government institution, using these materials to find out what it was like to be a student at Fort Hare is inherently problematic. Inevitably, these sources fall into Ellison's category of "those lies his keepers keep their power by." Portelli writes that the

critical effect of oral history is to allow evidence from a new direction. The historian can juxtapose the statements of the government of the trade union headquarters with the voice of the rank and file. There can be no doubt that this should make for a more realistic reconstruction of the past.<sup>80</sup>



Oral history attempts to provide answers to Ellison's affirmation in *Invisible Man* that people are forced to live outside of history. *Invisible Man* asks, "We who write no novels, histories or other books. What about us?"<sup>81</sup> By trying to make the unknown known, and attempting to give a voice to the traditionally unheard, oral history expands the realm of history to include previously unrecorded lives and events. Portelli writes that the

recounting of a strike through the words and memories of workers rather than those of the police and the (often unfriendly) press obviously helps (though not automatically) to balance a distortion implicit in those sources. Oral sources are a necessary (not a sufficient) condition for a history of the nonhegemonic classes; they are less necessary (though by no means useless) for the history of the ruling classes, who have had control over writing and leave behind a much more abundant written record.<sup>82</sup>

Yet oral sources do more than just unmask straight history. Unlike letters, personal papers or other documents, oral history "paves the way for a new social history which asks questions not about what happened, but about the historical processes of complex

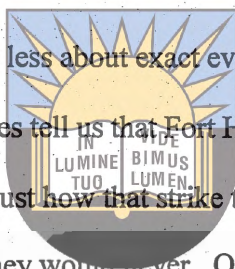
<sup>78</sup> Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," 68.

<sup>79</sup> op. cit., 64

<sup>80</sup> op. cit., 72

societies.”<sup>83</sup> In *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, the authors use oral history to show how a working class and lesbian consciousness emerged in Buffalo. In “Oral History and the Presentation of Class Consciousness: *The New York Times* v. The Buffalo Unemployed,” Frisch’s point is not the unpleasantness of life for the unemployed in Buffalo. Rather, what he is trying to depict is a consciousness amongst narrators that attempted to understand while it transcended the hardships of everyday life.<sup>84</sup>

Though my interviews with Fort Harians often revealed unknown events or unknown aspects of known events, oral history is less about exact events and more about their meaning in a bigger picture. While written sources tell us that Fort Harians supported nurses' strike at Lovedale in 1949, oral accounts relate just how that strike thrust many of those involved on a course of political action from which they would never. Oral histories enable us to trace the development of political consciousness amongst Fort Hare students. It not only tells us about the boycott of the Governor-General’s visit in 1950, but what that boycott meant to those involved. Portelli writes that oral sources are unique because they



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did. Oral sources may not add much to what we know, for instance, of the material cost of a strike to the workers involved; but they tell us a good deal about its psychological costs.<sup>85</sup>

In the case of Fort Hare, oral sources do add to our knowledge of specific events; more importantly, however, they help us gain an overall picture of how specific events and people worked to create a spirit of nationalism on a campus created to curb just that.

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<sup>81</sup> Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 439.

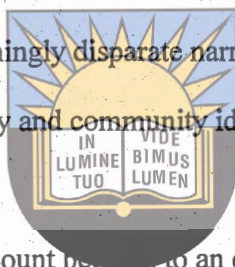
<sup>82</sup> Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 72.

<sup>83</sup> Grele, *Envelopes of Sound*, 3.

<sup>84</sup> Michael Frisch, “Oral History and the Presentation of Class Consciousness: *The New York Times* v. The Buffalo Unemployed,” in Michael Frisch, ed., *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990*), pp. 59-80.

<sup>85</sup> Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 67.

In his article entitled “What is social in oral history,” Samuel Schraeger applauds this transcendent feature of oral history. He notes that “experience comes to make sense by being connected with others’ experiences.”<sup>86</sup> In his own work, Schraeger interviewed immigrants to Idaho and recalls that “every person I have recorded could tell how their family came to Idaho.”<sup>87</sup> Much like Schraeger’s narrators telling of how they arrived in Idaho, each Fort Harian I spoke with related how they got to Fort Hare. When put together, these individual accounts provide a historical record of the educational opportunities available to black people in South Africa and help elucidate the development of political consciousness amongst Fort Harians. Finding commonality in seemingly disparate narrators’ accounts links together fundamental matters of personal, family and community identity.<sup>88</sup>



Schraeger writes, “the single account belongs to an entire narrative environment. It is only by recognising its resemblance to related accounts that we can begin to locate its traditionality. Heard in the context of other narratives rather than in isolation stories are full of resonances.”<sup>89</sup> In the case of Fort Hare the piecing together of narratives does indeed allow us to construct a social history of the university. Specifically, it allows us to at least attempt to find answers as to how Fort Hare consistently produced political leaders. Through interviews, the political culture of Fort Hare becomes apparent. By looking into individuals’ backgrounds and then locating what Schraeger calls their traditionality, themes of political development emerge. For example, many students were first sensitised politically by witnessing their parents or other respected elders participate in the Defiance Campaign of 1952. Others were influenced by black teachers at mission high schools who led discussions or provided them with newspapers. When examined as a whole, the path of political

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<sup>86</sup> Samuel Schraeger, “What is Social in Oral History,” in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 288.

<sup>87</sup> op. cit., 288.

<sup>88</sup> op. cit., 288

maturation for Fort Hare students included some or all of the following: parental influence, mission high school experiences, personal encounters with oppression, the volatile political situation in the country, influential fellow students and staff, and conditions at Fort Hare.

In all, I collected stories from 33 people associated with Fort Hare, beginning with Govan Mbeki, who arrived at Fort Hare in 1933 and ending with people such as Thenjiwe Mtintso and Selby Baqwa, who left Fort Hare in the aftermath of the 1973 tumult. Since my method is oral history, I was forced to start in the 1930s because that is as far back as living Fort Harians' memories reach. I believe, however, that the 1930s are an appropriate place to begin examining the development of a radical student body at Fort Hare. This decade witnessed the formation of a new, more assertive African identity that would develop rigorously in parallel with the growth of extra-parliamentary politics in the 1940s. Similarly, 1973 is an appropriate time to end this study. Following the 1973 school year, many student leaders abandoned their studies at Fort Hare to work for SASO. The strike that resulted in the expulsion of over 400 students marked the culmination of more than thirteen years of protest that rocked Fort Hare following the 1960 government takeover. As protest spread to the ethnic universities around the country, the importance of Fort Hare in the nation's political landscape began to subside.

I do not claim to be writing the definitive history of Fort Hare. Noting that it is impossible to exhaust the entire memory of a single informant, Portelli suggests that historical work using oral sources will always be unfinished due to the nature of the sources.<sup>90</sup> Additionally, in order to go through all the possible sources for Fort Hare history, one would have to interview thousands of people multiple times. As Portelli suggests, any

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<sup>90</sup> op. cit., 289.

sample would only be as reliable as the sampling methods used, and could never guarantee against leaving out exceptional narrators whose testimony alone might be worth ten of those statistically selected.<sup>91</sup>

With the assistance of Professor Thomas Karis, I set about identifying Fort Harians who went on to lead politically active lives. Though my initial parameter for identifying potential narrators was their political involvement, as I delved deeper into the project and made more contacts with the Fort Hare community, I was able to identify interviewees who might not have been as involved politically, but whose stories were essential towards gaining a more adequate understanding of the university's history. The authors of *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* describe their difficulty in finding African American lesbian women to interview because they were not members of that community. They even admit that had they been able to come up with more than five African American subjects, their entire book might have assumed a different course.<sup>92</sup> In choosing the people they wish to interview, oral historians introduce their own judgements about the historical process. "Why men rather than women? Strike leaders rather than followers? Strikers rather than strikebreakers?"<sup>93</sup>

I did not limit myself when selecting narrators. Although my initial list of prospective interviewees was comprised mostly of people who went on to lead politically active lives after Fort Hare, as those were the easiest people to identify, when looked at as a whole, the interviews I conducted were with a diverse group of people. While some were political leaders before they arrived at Fort Hare, others became active during their student days. Still others never became overtly active, but developed social and political consciousness by

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<sup>90</sup> Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," 71.

<sup>91</sup> op. cit., 71.

<sup>92</sup> Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather*, 25.

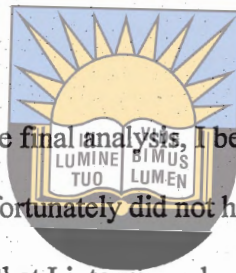
<sup>93</sup> Grele, *Envelopes of Sound*, 5.

observing and participating in the daily life of campus. When I began, I assumed that I would only be interested in what the political leaders had to say. However, the non-political narrators, many of whom were Indians, taught me a great deal as well. Through a large contingent of Indian ex-students I met in Durban, I learned of the importance Fort Hare had in opening them up to a wider, more diverse world.

To a certain extent, many of my findings were the result of luck. Though I carefully constructed a list of people I hoped to interview, most of the time the successful arrangement of an interview depended upon who called me back and whose secretary delivered my fax. While Mangosuthu Buthelezi answered my fax minutes after he received it, it took me six months to arrange an appointment with Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile ('70-'79), the Premier of the Eastern Cape. Nthato Motlana ('46-'48), an influential Youth Leaguer who was on my original list, did not respond to repeated requests for an interview. Though various administrators in charge of coordinating Nelson Mandela's schedule answered my numerous queries, they never granted me a meeting with the former President.

On the other hand, luck was often on my side. When I met with Isaac Mabindisa ('59-'62), who was easy to identify as a narrator because he was the registrar at Fort Hare in 1998, he suggested I meet with Ambrose Makiwane ('55-'58), the former SRC president, who had not been on my original list. It turned out that Makiwane was a key political figure on campus during the 1950s. Serendipity struck again when I visited Durban to meet with Devi Bughwan ('42-'44). When I spoke with Dr. Bughwan on the phone, she recommended I speak with Herby Govinden ('47-'49), who in turn recommended I speak with his friend, Rama Thumbadoo ('45-'48). Once I arrived in Durban, the three had all thought of other people I "had to interview" while I was there. Govinden arranged an appointment for me

with G.C. Oosthuizen, a white staff member sympathetic to the students' struggles during the 1960s. Their suggestions also led to fruitful meetings with Ratinasabapathy Arumagam Pillay ('50-'54), Loganathan Naidoo ('54-'57), Vadaval Ramsay Govender ('56-'59) and Goolan Suleman Tootla ('59-'62). Tootla, in turn, put me in touch with Marumo Moerane ('59-'61), a friend and patient of his who studied at Fort Hare in the late fifties and early sixties. Additionally, it was often much easier to arrange appointments with those Fort Harians who did not work in government as the schedules of politicians were often not conducive to setting up meetings.



Though far from scientific, in the final analysis, I believe my method of selecting narrators was productive. Though I unfortunately did not have the opportunity to meet with any coloured students, I otherwise feel that I interviewed a cross section of the Fort Hare student population. The lack of coloured interviewees was somewhat compensated for by the fact that, according to many of the Indians, the coloured students had similar experiences to themselves at Fort Hare.

To gain a full understanding of the social history of Fort Hare, I met with people representing different political tendencies, ethnicities, races and classes. Wycliffe Tsotsi came out of the UNITY Movement, while Ambrose Makiwane emerged as an activist in the ANC tradition. Kaiser and George Matanzima supported separate development while Govan Mbeki, a contemporary of Kaiser's, fought, wrote and philosophised fervently against it. Stofile grew up steeped in the notion of non-racialism, while Selby and Jeff Baqwa ('68-'72) supported SASO, with its Black Consciousness ideology, from its inception. Thenjiwe Mtintso describes her background as extremely poor, while the Baqwas say they grew up in a

comparatively middle class family. I met with Indians and Africans from various ethnic groups.

Yet despite the varied origins of my narrators, there are inescapably homogeneous aspects to the group. Having studied at Fort Hare, all the narrators were part of an elite, well-educated sector of society, and all possessed an understanding of politics that rendered them aware of the quasi-political nature of their story-telling. Thus, though diverse when viewed holistically, all the narrators had common experiences and educational backgrounds that must be taken into account when analysing the interviews. It is difficult to say precisely what effect this has had on the project, but it must be noted.



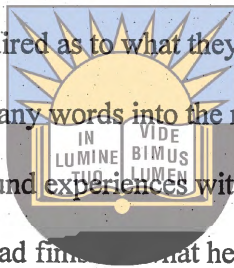
Time and financial constraints limited my research to a South African context. This is not to trivialise or limit the importance that the university had on students who came from other parts of Africa. Fort Hare educated many of the leaders of the newly independent East and Southern African countries and the national liberation movements that swept across the region in the mid to late twentieth century. Many of the international students participated in campus political activity and transplanted those experiences to their homelands upon graduation. The loss of these students from throughout Africa following the government takeover contributed heavily to the decline in student life after 1960.

After deciding, or having it decided for me by logistics, who my narrators were going to be, my focus shifted to the structure of the interview sessions. I adhered to the advice Allesandro Portelli offers when he writes, “accept the informant and give priority to what she or he wishes to tell, rather than what the researcher wants to hear.”<sup>94</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>94</sup> Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 70.

knowing that I was primarily interested in writing about the role that time spent at Fort Hare played in the development of a student's political consciousness, I had to be sure that narrators gave me comparable information relating to the development of their political views. Thus, I attempted to ask questions of each narrator without interrupting their control over the flow of the interview. To achieve this, I designed short, open-ended questions, beginning with asking the narrator to tell me something about his or her family background. Often, this would be enough to elicit the interest of the narrator and he or she would begin to elaborate without much further encouragement from me. If not, I asked if the informant's parents were politically active and inquired as to what they had done for a living. I made a conscious effort to avoid putting too many words into the mouth of the interviewees, hoping that they would share *their* most profound experiences with me. I interjected questions only when it was obvious that the narrator had finished what he or she was saying or if I needed clarification.



## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

After soliciting some initial background information, my first question was often “what is your earliest memory of the unique racial situation in South Africa?” Essentially, I was trying to locate a political turning point or moment of conversion in each narrator's life. What factors led to their politicisation? What events inside Fort Hare and what events outside Fort Hare made a difference? What people had the greatest influence?

Beyond this loose structure, I did not construct a fixed interview format. In general, topics I hoped to cover included: family background, political influences, the missionary nature of pre-1960 Fort Hare, campus politics, the South African political scene and its affect on Fort Hare, student life, the multi-racial campus, and the government takeover and its aftermath. As I conducted more and more interviews, I began to notice a discernible

difference between the way students who attended Fort Hare prior to 1960 talked about the college as compared to those who were students following the government takeover. In subsequent interviews, I tried to find out as much as I could about the differences in university life before and after that watershed year. In an effort to stimulate the memory of the narrators, I often asked about their teachers and friends while they were at Fort Hare. Mention of Z.K. Matthews triggered Henry Makgothi's ('48-'51) memory and he responded with salient recollections of the Professor's influence at Fort Hare.



Similarly, I tried to arrive at the interviews armed with as much specific information as possible about the events at Fort Hare and in South Africa during the time the narrator spent on campus. Often, mention of a specific event or person would spur the narrator's memory, resulting in the uncovering of new detail. As I was looking at the development of political consciousness, I generally limited the interviews to discussion of the narrators' lives leading up to and through their Fort Hare experiences. However, I often asked how time spent at Fort Hare affected their political orientation later in life. For instance, was there anything in Wycliffe Tstotsi's Fort Hare experience that led him towards the Unity Movement while his contemporary, Govan Mbeki, joined the ANC and the South African Communist Party?

Hoffman writes that the interview is a

kind of social transaction in which each party has a direct, though perhaps indeterminate, effect upon each other. The whole array of stimuli emitted by the interviewer—his age, appearance, his manner of speech, his reactions, his preparations, his credentials—will determine how he is perceived by the person being interviewed. And the way he is perceived will in certain measure determine the content, style, and quality of the response he elicits.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Alice Hoffman, "Reliability and Validity in Oral History," in David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, eds., *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1984), p. 73.

Indeed, the information gleaned from oral history is the result of a relationship between the narrator and the researcher. Portelli calls it “a shared project in which both the interviewer and the interviewee are involved together. ... Researchers often introduce specific distortions: informants tell them what they believe they want to be told and thus reveal who they think the researcher is.”<sup>96</sup> In the case of my Fort Hare interviews, I had to be particularly cognizant of the importance of the relationship between narrator and researcher and the affect that this relationship can have on the resulting historical information.

As a white American, I felt I had to be extremely sensitive about approaching potential narrators. I wanted to show that I had both a genuine interest in the history of Fort Hare and an understanding of the important role it played in the history of South Africa. I did not want to appear as if I was an outsider with anything less than sincere objectives. To accomplish this, I wrote to each potential interviewee, informing them that I had become interested in the history of Fort Hare when I studied at the university as an exchange student during 1997. I also informed them that I had spent time looking through the university’s records. My familiarity with Fort Hare helped me form a bond with the interviewees. Wycliffe Tsotsi enjoyed the fact that I stayed in Beda Hall during my time at Fort Hare and laughed over the fact that we would have been rivals had we been contemporaries at the university.

More often than not, I would be interviewed before I did the interviewing. Many of the narrators were curious as to how an American ended up at Fort Hare. Oftentimes, the narrators had questions for me about present day Fort Hare and frequently, our sessions would start with them asking me questions about my experiences. That conversation would

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<sup>96</sup> Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 71.

eventually evolve into a more formal interview setting. V.R. Govender was particularly cautious prior to our meeting. Before he agreed to be interviewed, he peppered me with questions about Fort Hare for forty-five minutes over the telephone. He finally consented to a meeting, telling me he gave me such a hard time because he did not believe an American could possibly have a true feeling for how important Fort Hare was to the people who went there. When we finally met, his suspicions had evaporated and he was extremely open with his recollections.

Similarly, Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, who was Premier of the Orange Free State at the time, entered our interview with some reservations. When I asked her if she could give me some information on her family background, she replied, "I never give such information." After a few terse responses to further questions, I asked, "I noticed on your application to Fort Hare you put down your home language as being Afrikaans." She replied, unknowingly, "I did? ... I didn't know I did that." From that point on, Matsepe-Casaburri opened up, transforming herself from someone who never gives personal information to a loquacious storyteller in a matter of minutes. By referring to her Fort Hare application, I established myself as someone serious in purpose who she could trust with her personal recollections.

The very existence of oral history depends on the intervention of an interviewer who collects and presents a version of the stories gathered. As Daphne Patai notes, narrators' stories do not exist "pristine and unchanging in some sphere outside the vicissitudes of human interaction."<sup>97</sup> Despite my best efforts to refrain from interjecting my own views into the interview sessions, the resulting tapes must be seen, as Patai notes, "as a point of intersection between two subjectivities—theirs and mine, their cultural assumptions and

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<sup>97</sup> Patai, *Brazilian Women Speak*, 2.

mine, their memories and my questions, their sense of self and my own, their hesitation and my encouraging words or gestures ... and ... more.”<sup>98</sup> Importantly, although the interviewer asks the questions, this does not mean that he or she plays the defining role in the interview. It is the speaker, the bearer of the memories, who has ultimate control over his or her own stories.<sup>99</sup>

The memories that the narrators shared with me were lively, informative, and imbued with a sense of participation in significant, even heroic, events. However, my purpose was not to merely collect individual stories. I wanted to be able to use those histories as a major source for constructing the history of Fort Hare and its role as a political crucible. I wanted to use the oral sources to build a collective biography of Fort Hare students. In looking at the interviews as a whole, I examined them for any patterns that might emerge. Some students became active at Fort Hare through other students or because of events on campus. Others honed activism that had been instilled in them by their parents or at high school. Still others observed the politically charged environment at Fort Hare and though they never became political activists, left Fort Hare with a sense of political understanding they would have gotten nowhere else. Aside from George and Kaiser Matanzima, who were both advancing in age and not entirely in command of their faculties, and who led starkly different political lives than most other Fort Harians, all of the narrators credited time spent at Fort Hare with playing an important role in their political development.

After meeting with people who were politically prominent in their student days such as Joe Matthews and Jeff Baqwa and those who were not so active, like University of Cape Town Professor Sizwe Satyo ('68-'70) and Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, I discovered that people

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<sup>98</sup> op. cit., 2.

arrive at politics through different paths. Mangosuthu Buthelezi was drawn into politics from “his mother’s knee,”<sup>100</sup> while Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri arrived at politics “much later in life.”<sup>101</sup> Ntombi Dwane (‘61-’64) was not very active at Fort Hare, but developed an understanding of politics through such classmates as Chris Hani and Monto Mali Tshabalala (‘59-’61), the current Minister of Health for President Thabo Mbeki.<sup>102</sup> Frank Mdlalose (‘50-’53) had very little to do with politics until he arrived at Fort Hare and met Buthelezi.<sup>103</sup> Despite the divergent paths that people took and the varied routes that led people to those paths, it is impossible to ignore the fact that for so many, the journey towards political consciousness and activism included a stop at Fort Hare.



Constructing a social history through oral sources does present problems. Individuals are bound to experience history as biography. My task, as Trevor Lummis suggests, was to move beyond the individual account to a social interpretation.<sup>104</sup> Though my interviewees spoke of their individual roles in events at Fort Hare, my job was to examine how their experiences contribute to revealing the role Fort Hare played in politicising students. As Lummis writes, if interviews “cannot be used to contribute to historical understanding, there is no reason for historians to interview people.”<sup>105</sup>

University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Asking people to discuss their university experiences inevitably lends itself to a certain amount of romanticising of the past. This is especially problematic with Fort Hare. Those who attended Fort Hare have elevated the university to myth-like proportions. Buthelezi fitted me into his schedule in the evening following a meeting with the King and

<sup>99</sup> op. cit., 9

<sup>100</sup> Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, interview by author, Cape Town, 17 February 1999.

<sup>101</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

<sup>102</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author, Pinelands, 19 February 1999.

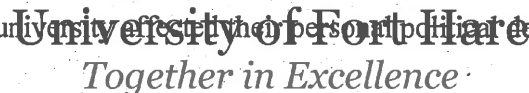
<sup>103</sup> Frank Mdlalose, interview by author, Johannesburg, 25 May 1999.

<sup>104</sup> Lummis, “Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence,” 282.

Queen of Spain and the Prime Minister of Belgium. When I arrived at the Great Place in Qamata, I found the Matanzima brothers eagerly awaiting me in matching Fort Hare blazers. Sixty years removed from their Fort Hare experiences, the university inspired them to dress up for the interview. Stofile told me that rugby and Fort Hare are topics he can talk about for hours. To a certain extent, the role the university played in educating high profile leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, and Chris Hani leads to the myth-like stature of the university. Consider this statement by Stanley Mabizela:

You know this Fort Hare really has a history. Before there were universities in the whole of Southern Africa, from Central to Southern Africa, there was only Fort Hare. ... Fort Hare is one of the oldest universities of black people in Africa. And indeed the University of Fort Hare, the people who were students at Fort Hare played a very important role in the liberation of South Africa. If you take people like Nelson Mandela, the late Oliver Tambo.<sup>106</sup>

I frequently had to steer interviewees away from general comments about the importance of Fort Hare as the educational home of the Matanzima in order to get them to talk more specifically about how the university affected their personal and political development.



In analysing the interviews, I was aware of the potential for romantic narratives. Simultaneously I was plagued by an inability to determine how much of the testimony I heard was the result of the myth of Fort Hare and how much could be attributed to legitimate historical recollection. I was comforted by Ronald Grele's belief that myth and history can operate on the same plane. Grele writes, "the historical vision of the past does not replace a mythic vision; rather, in historical societies they exist in dialectical tension with one another and by combination and interaction, they produce a variety of historical visions."<sup>107</sup> Similarly, Thomson writes that oral history can help us to understand how and why national mythologies work for individuals and society in general.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, Fort Hare's myth-like

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<sup>105</sup> op. cit., 277.

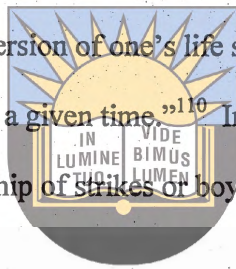
<sup>106</sup> Mabizela, interview by author.

<sup>107</sup> Grele, "Movement Without Aim," 46.

<sup>108</sup> Thomson, "Anzac Memories," 310

stature does not render student reminiscences useless. The mythic vision of Fort Hare is part of its history.

Similarly, people often turn their own stories into myths by telling what they want you to know about themselves. Grele writes, “they feel as though they ought to be a certain kind of way or to believe certain kinds of things about themselves and they are reluctant to reveal themselves as not being that way or not feeling those things.”<sup>109</sup> Patai writes, “the act of telling one’s life story involves a rationalisation of the past as it is projected and leads into an inevitable present. ... A particular version of one’s life story may become an essential component in one’s sense of identity at a given time.”<sup>110</sup> In the case of Fort Hare, this may involve various students taking ownership of strikes or boycotts or over-emphasising their role in the politics on campus.



## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

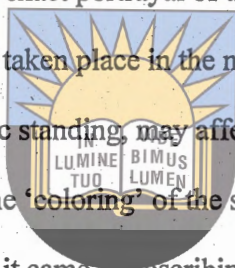
Without mentioning specific names, one must acknowledge that people are inevitably going to portray history as revolving around their lives. In truth, there is no question that people like former SASO President Barney Pityana ('66-'68) and Ambrose Makiwane were remarkable leaders. In the cases of those two, I learned of a great deal of the breadth and intensity of their leadership from other students and administrative records. As Grele suggests, where written sources are available, they should be used as background as well as corroboration. This underscores an important point about oral history. Oral sources do not replace written ones. Where written sources are available, oral accounts complement them. In my research, I attempted to establish the reliability of my interviews, as Lummis suggests, through use of “maximum triangulation with other sources.”<sup>111</sup> These additional sources were often newspaper accounts, university records, or oral accounts from other Fort Harians.

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<sup>109</sup> Grele, *Envelopes of Sound*, 69.

By using various sources, interviews are strengthened. To a certain extent, it allows the researcher to distinguish between what the narrator wants him to think about them and what they really feel about themselves.<sup>112</sup>

A frequent criticism of oral sources is that that they are distant from events and therefore undergo the distortion of faulty memory.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, I was interviewing people years removed from their Fort Hare experiences. Clearly, as Grele suggests, oral history is “someone’s memory of an event, not an exact portrayal of the event.”<sup>114</sup> Portelli writes that “changes which may have subsequently taken place in the narrators’ personal subjective consciousness or in their socio-economic standing, may affect, if not the actual recounting of prior events, at least the valuation and the ‘coloring’ of the story.”<sup>115</sup> He talks of interviewees he encountered who were reticent when it came to describing illegal forms of struggle, such as sabotage. Portelli writes,



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

this does not mean that they do not remember them clearly, but that there has been a change in their political opinions, personal circumstances, or in their party’s line. ... In these cases, the most precious information may lie in what the informants *hide*, and in the fact that they *do* hide it, rather than what they *tell*.<sup>116</sup>

Many of the ex-students of Indian descent that I interviewed focused more on the student life of the university than the political scene. Does their failure to emphasise the political side of events reflect a sense of guilt that they did not do as much as some of their African colleagues in the political sphere upon leaving Fort Hare?

Justin Willis professes that the “dissonances” of oral history can be useful to historians. Contesting accounts of the past offered by different people force the oral historian

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<sup>110</sup> Patai, *Brazilian Women Speak*, 8.

<sup>111</sup> Lummis, “Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence,” 274.

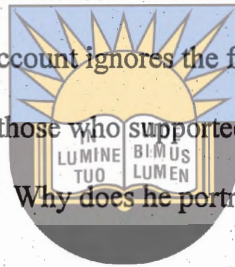
<sup>112</sup> Grele, *Envelopes of Sound*, 69.

<sup>113</sup> Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 68

<sup>114</sup> Grele, *Envelopes of Sound*, 14.

<sup>115</sup> Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 69.

to try to understand what causes them. The dissonances reveal varying ideas of the past and suggest why these exist and what their historical significance may be.<sup>117</sup> Wycliffe Tsotsi says that he wrote to Kaiser Matanzima after the latter supported Bantu Authorities, breaking off their friendship. Matanzima, on the other hand, says that he and Tsotsi are the best of friends and meet every now and then. Matanzima's failure to acknowledge the rift between himself and Tsotsi may result from his knowledge, at an advancing age, that he made mistakes for which he will never be able to compensate. Jeff Baqwa and Makhenkesi Stofile offer starkly different accounts of a 1972 SASO election. Stofile seems to suggest that the campus was divided over the SASO election. His account ignores the fact that the divisions on campus were the result of differences between those who supported SASO and those who considered themselves followers of non-racialism. Why does he portray SASO as the reason for a divided student body?



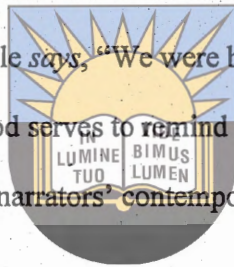
## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

Trevor Lummis writes that contemporary values clearly shape informants' interpretation of their own past, and impose the subconscious historical structure of the narrative. He notes that people may rationalise an account of the past to harmonise with present viewpoints, writing, "since people frequently become less radical as they grow older, oral evidence probably has an inherent tendency to under-report conflict, and history as individual experience seems likely to strengthen that trend."<sup>118</sup> Many former revolutionaries are now a part of the government of South Africa and with their new responsibilities may come new renderings of the past. For example, Stofile is an ANC colleague of former SASO leader Thenjiwe Mtintso. In her interview, Mtintso says that Stofile gave the SASO leaders a "hard time," but she too tends to downplay the rift as friendly. Do their roles in the ANC affect their telling of the tales of divisiveness in their student days?

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<sup>116</sup> op. cit., 69.

In writing this collective history of Fort Hare, I interweave the narrators' voices with both my own and various documentary sources. Though I sought out written evidence where available, the subject matter lends itself to focusing on what the narrators have to say. The voices of the narrators, unedited when possible, are therefore given a paramount role in the narrative. As a whole, these memories place the historical significance of Fort Hare in an appropriate perspective. They show the powerful role that time spent at Fort Hare played in students' political development. As is standard with oral histories, I set the voices of the narrators in the present tense, i.e., Stofile says, "We were brought up in the ANC..." As Kennedy and Davis suggest, this method serves to remind the reader that the narrative is "built from oral histories, that is, from narrators' contemporary memories about the past."<sup>119</sup>



## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

As the history of Fort Hare is so closely connected with that of South Africa, the chapters are organised chronologically. Because of the relationship between Fort Hare and broader South African history this chronological organisation naturally lends itself to a thematic one as well. Chapter one places the study in a historical context, examining the nature of the origins of Fort Hare. Chapter two shows how both campus and national events transformed the consciousness of some of Fort Hare's students from the 1930s, significantly altering the character of the college. Specific attention is paid to the birth of the ANC Youth League on campus and its role in student politics. Chapter three discusses the multi-racial nature of Fort Hare before 1960, preparing for chapter four, which focuses on the apartheid government's attempt to crush that incipient rainbow nation and the response from within Fort Hare. Chapter five looks at how the government takeover negatively affected both student and academic life at Fort Hare. Chapter six shows that the apartheid government

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<sup>117</sup> Willis, "Two Lives of Mpamizo," 320.

takeover of Fort Hare failed to achieve the desired result of quelling student activism.

Themes in South African liberation movement history are woven throughout the chapters as they affected life for students at Fort Hare. Some aspects of South African history that are illuminated include: missionary education and the birth of an African elite, the explosion of extra-parliamentary politics in the 1940s, The ANC Youth League, the Defiance Campaign, Bantu Education, university apartheid, and Black Consciousness.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

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<sup>118</sup> Lummis, "Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence," 276.

<sup>119</sup> Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather*, 25.

## The Emergence of an African Elite and the Origins of Fort Hare

*Your cattle are gone, my countrymen  
Go rescue them! Go rescue them!  
Leave the breechloader alone  
And turn to the pen  
Take paper and ink  
For that is your shield  
Your rights are going  
So pick up your pen  
Load it, load it with ink*



The first time I thought of dedicating a significant amount of time to studying the history of Fort Hare, I was in Providence, Rhode Island. It was my first day back at Brown University, following eight months in South Africa studying at Fort Hare. Upon visiting an English Professor of mine, Michael Harper, I was instructed to go and see Professor Anani Dzidzienyo. After introducing myself to Professor Dzidzienyo, I told him that Professor Harper had sent me to his office because I had just returned from a semester at the University of Fort Hare in South Africa. "You what?" he said. I repeated myself. A big smile flashed across his face and, disregarding the fact that we had just met, he opened his arms and gave me a hug.

Dzidzienyo had been taught by Fort Harians in his native Ghana and his reaction to my mention of Fort Hare illustrates the university's importance throughout Africa over the years. Fort Hare played a defining role in the development of an African elite not only in South Africa, but Southern Africa as a whole. Youngsters from various regions of the

continent, like Robert Mugabe, of Zimbabwe, who arrived at Fort Hare in 1949, journeyed to Fort Hare, as there was nowhere else for them to receive a university education. Within South Africa, and specifically within the eastern Cape, Fort Hare helped create a relatively large African elite, many of whom became important figures in the nation's twentieth century liberation struggle.

Yet while Fort Hare is most widely remembered as being the seedbed of liberation movements throughout Southern Africa, its historical significance is less clear cut. Fort Hare has a paradoxical history. While providing the foundation for the development of an elite class of educated Africans, Fort Hare was, over the years, institutionally a part of the colonial and apartheid systems that controlled South Africa and dominated the racial majority. Thus, the emergence of a class of political leaders from Fort Hare can only indirectly be attributed to the university. Missionary, followed by apartheid control, did not seek to create a core of revolutionaries. It is the products of Fort Hare, not the intentions of its managers, that this paper will focus on.



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### **The Birth of a Politicized African Elite**

The origins of Fort Hare can be traced back to the mission schools that proliferated in the eastern Cape and Transkei in the nineteenth century and thereafter. Missionaries had been particularly active in the Cape and the Transkeian territories and nowhere was there such a high density of mission schools. Odendaal writes that the number of Africans receiving an elementary mission education rose from 9000 in the 1850s to 100,000 by the end of the century—most of whom studied in the Cape.<sup>2</sup> Gish quotes a 1912 estimate citing 26.5

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<sup>1</sup> Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu*, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*, 3.

percent of African children in the Cape and Transkei attending schools, far surpassing the percentages of other territories.<sup>3</sup>

By the 1880s and 1890s the work of European missionaries was beginning to create a recognizable class of westernized, elite Africans. As more and more mission stations were founded, increasing numbers of Africans were trained as teachers, law agents, magistrates, clerks, interpreters and ministers. In just over three decades after 1874, 1,502 teachers were trained at various schools in the Cape.<sup>4</sup> Walshe quotes the SANAC report of 1905 which noted that education and Christianity had more than anything else made Africans “feel that we have interests in common, and are one with white people.”<sup>5</sup> The elite felt that Christianity had social implications and that it required equality with Europeans.<sup>6</sup> They fashioned themselves as members of a western society and sought the same rights as any other educated westernized citizen. Odendaal attributes the political awareness of this new class of Africans to three main factors: the influence of Christian missions, the development of a non-racial constitution in the Cape, and economic integration.<sup>7</sup> Higgs uses the term “equal rights for all civilized men,” which was utilized frequently at the time to describe the contemporary desires of the African elite. They felt that their qualifications entitled them to membership in European society.

The number of westernized Africans was significant by the 1880s, but even more important was the fact that most of them could vote. The Cape Province had a non-racial franchise, with the right to vote based on educational qualification and land ownership. The

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<sup>3</sup> Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Walshe, “The origins of African Political Consciousness in South Africa,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 7 no 4 1969 583-610, 591.

<sup>6</sup> op. cit., 591.

<sup>7</sup> Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu*, 3.

non-racial constitutional Cape tradition, sometimes referred to as the Cape liberal tradition, originated in legal terms from Ordinance 50 of 1828, which abolished all existing restrictions applying to Khoikhoi and other men of color. From 1836, blacks participated in Cape municipal elections and the constitution of the Colony, established in 1853, codified the non-racial franchise.<sup>8</sup> All male citizens over the age of 21 who earned sufficient income or owned a stipulated amount of property could vote, regardless of race. However, increasingly, the African portion of the voting bloc grew into a disappointed one.

As the Cape government became threatened by the burgeoning African voting rolls, it responded with a series of legal attacks aimed at limiting the number of Africans who could vote. Odendaal writes, "In theory Africans in the Cape were equal to all others, but in practice white colonialists were 'more equal' than they were."<sup>9</sup> In 1884, the Registration of Voters Act cut off about 20,000 voters in the Cape by tightening property qualifications. With the incorporation of the Transkei, which had been home to a large number of mission stations, into the Cape in 1894, the government again sought to prevent the formation of a large African voting bloc. In 1892, the Franchise and Ballot Act was passed, raising the property qualifications and introducing a literacy test to determine franchise eligibility. Because of the attack on the non-racial franchise, educated Africans in the eastern Cape and Transkei adopted a more assertive and radical stance towards the government.<sup>10</sup>

This new elite laid the foundations for modern African nationalism in South Africa. As early as the 1880s, missionary-educated Africans in Thembuland had organized new political associations to voice their opinions to the colonial state. Instead of trying to assert African independence as many chiefs had done in the period of colonial conquest, the

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<sup>8</sup> op. cit. 4.

emerging elite accepted the new order and tried to change it. Among the best educated were John Knox Bokwe, John Tengo Jabavu, Walter Rubusana and A.K. Soga. Products of missionary schools, such individuals took up the reins of African politics in the late nineteenth century after the final military subordination of the region's traditional leaders in the late 1870s. Odendaal writes, "[t]he numbers of the new educated class had...by now swelled to the extent that these Africans were identifiable as a distinct, well-established stratum of society."<sup>11</sup> African independent churches and new western style political organizations, initially run as associations, not political parties, were founded.



The Native Educational Association (NEA),<sup>9</sup> formed in 1879, was the first such association of which records remain. An organization of African teachers in the Cape, its main goal was to improve African education. Though not overtly political, the NEA was a step towards the formation of more radical organizations. In 1882, Imbumba Yama Nyama, an explicitly political organization with the goal of uniting Africans “in fighting for national rights,” was established.<sup>12</sup> In 1884 an African Electoral Association played a key role in getting James Rose Innes, a politician sympathetic to African causes, elected.<sup>13</sup> By the early 1900s, the African elite formed the Transkei Native Vigilance Association and the Transkei Territories African Union in order to safeguard their communities’ interests.

The establishment of African language newspapers was also a crucial development in the emergence of the elite’s political influence. Odendaal notes that while the political associations helped generate awareness, John Tengo Jabavu’s *Imvo Zabantsundu*, the first newspaper controlled by Africans, was more successful in mobilizing African opinion. He

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<sup>9</sup> op. cit., 4.

<sup>10</sup> op. cit., 8.

<sup>11</sup> op. cit., 6.

<sup>12</sup> Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality*, 12.

writes that Jabavu “tirelessly projected African aspirations” and that the newspaper’s views “were carefully noted in England and by Cape newspapers and politicians.”<sup>14</sup> Though they were not overtly militant or anti-colonial, the mission-educated elite began to recognize that they could organize themselves to address their grievances with the government.

In the 1880s, religion and politics became intertwined as increased European racism led Africans to break away from mission churches and form independent churches. In the mid-1880s, evangelist Nehemiah Tile broke from the Wesleyan fold and founded his own Thembu church, the first African Independent Church in South Africa. Tile had been rebuked by Wesleyan officials for calling attention to Thembu grievances, thus crossing the line between religious and political work.<sup>15</sup> Greatly influenced by the presence of African American missionaries in the Cape, African Independent Churches sprung up at a rapid pace, revealing a sense of disillusionment at what had purported to be a Christian society. Walshe notes that these churches “represented an urge for withdrawal from the reality of European conquest and racial discrimination.”<sup>16</sup>



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These churches, founded by African Christians seeking freedom from missionary control, began to gain a wide following in the 1890s. The Ethiopian Church was founded in 1892 and the American African Methodist Episcopal Church, a black American church which evangelized in South Africa, started up in 1898. Though grounded in religion, the Ethiopian movement had clear political motivations, emphasizing that white power should be opposed by black unity.<sup>17</sup> Gish writes, “[b]y the 1890s black American missionaries were forging links with numerous African communities in the eastern Cape and Transkei. Their presence

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<sup>13</sup> Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> op. cit., 12

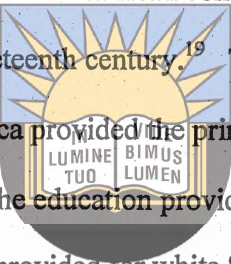
<sup>15</sup> Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma*, 11

<sup>16</sup> Walshe, “The Origins of African Political Consciousness,” 592.

had a dramatic impact. By encouraging the spread of African independent churches, black Americans helped sow the seeds of a heightened political consciousness among Africans.”<sup>18</sup>

### **An African Exodus and the Birth of Fort Hare**

On a winter morning in August, 1913, Alfred B. Xuma set off from Manzana in the Transkei for Tuskegee University in Alabama in the United States. Xuma was part of a long line of Africans who had chosen to leave South Africa in search of educational opportunities. South Africa’s Christian, missionary-educated African community had been sending their children to study overseas since the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> The lack of educational opportunities for Africans in South Africa provided the primary impetus for overseas study. In addition, many Africans sensed that the education provided by the missionaries, while valuable, was not equal to the standard provided for white South Africans. Lovedale was the only school offering Africans a complete secondary education.<sup>20</sup>



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Beginning around the time of the founding of the first African Independent Churches in South Africa, Africans, most coming from the Cape Colony and the Transkei, left to study in the United States where they attended black colleges—notably Lincoln University (Pennsylvania), Wilberforce University (Ohio), Hampton Institute (Virginia), and Tuskegee Institute (Alabama).<sup>21</sup> Often sponsored by independent African and African American churches, at least a hundred Africans from the Cape Colony alone left to study overseas between 1898 and 1908.<sup>22</sup> Gish writes that 150 Africans, most from the Cape and Transkei,

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<sup>17</sup> Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma*, 21.

<sup>19</sup> op. cit., 20

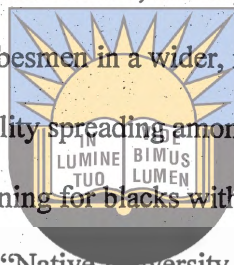
<sup>20</sup> op. cit., 21; for more information on the Lovedale Institution, see R.H.W. Shepherd, *Lovedale, South Africa: The Story of a Century, 1841-1941* (Alice, Lovedale Press, 1941); T.R.H. White, “Lovedale 1930-1955: The Study of a Missionary Institution in Its Social, Educational, and Political Context” (M.A. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1987).

<sup>21</sup> Switzer, *Power and Resistance*, 177.

<sup>22</sup> op. cit., 177.

left to study in the United States in the approximately twenty years from the mid 1890s to the onset of World War I.<sup>23</sup>

The students who left for the United States received an education both inside and outside the classroom. Gish writes, "They came face to face with African-American notions of education, progress, and politics and eventually imported a good many of these ideas back home."<sup>24</sup> Walshe writes, "they returned with visions of social, economic and political progress for their people, ideals of racial toleration, and expectations of gradual but steadily increasing participation by educated tribesmen in a wider, multi-racial South Africa."<sup>25</sup> The fear of black American notions of equality spreading amongst educated Africans led to plans to establish an institution of higher learning for blacks within South Africa. In 1878 Principal James Stewart of Lovedale spoke of a "Native University - Christian in spirit, aims and teaching" evolving from Lovedale, but the idea really gained credence during the peak years of the African exodus to the United States, when it was raised as an issue before the South African Native Affairs Commission of 1903-5.<sup>26</sup> Switzer writes, "the realization that Africans were actively seeking postsecondary education, and would continue to do so, generated support for a local college to meet their needs."<sup>27</sup>



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The motivation behind the scheme to create a university for blacks was reactionary. Missionaries felt that their control over African education would be weakened if a college or university for Africans was not established in the Cape.<sup>28</sup> Gish notes that as the migration of Africans to the United States increased, so too did white paranoia. He writes, "eventually

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<sup>23</sup> Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma*, 20.

<sup>24</sup> op. cit., 20.

<sup>25</sup> Walshe, "The Origins of African Political Consciousness, 590.

<sup>26</sup> Higgs, *The Ghost of Equality*, 17.

<sup>27</sup> op. cit., 33.

<sup>28</sup> Switzer, *Power and Resistance*, 177.

authorities came up with an idea to stem the outflow—they would establish a South African ‘native college’ and thereby reassert their control over what Africans learned and how they learned it.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, white anxieties over the growing educational exodus of Africans to America were clearly articulated during the 1903-05 hearing of the South African Native Affairs Commission where missionaries and government authorities testified that American-educated Africans returned to South Africa with ‘inappropriate’ ideas of equality and freedom.<sup>30</sup>

James Henderson, Stewart’s successor at Lovedale, testified that Africans who had been sent by separatist churches to colleges in the Southern United States would “bring back with them the attitude of mind towards the Europeans which the former slavery of the States, and the present hostility towards the black race and the lynching, have inculcated.”<sup>31</sup> In 1908, citing

John Tengo Jabavu’s decision to send his son, Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu to the United Kingdom, the, South African Native Races Committee—composed of white legislators and educators from the four colonies, Basutoland, Bechuanaland, Swaziland and Southern Rhodesia—endorsed a college for Africans as an idea whose time had come.<sup>32</sup>

In a letter to the *Christian Express*, the Reverend J.D. Don supported this idea, voicing concern over the anti-European stance of many of the African separatist churches.

He wrote:

It will be better for us amid discussions and struggles which lie before us in this country that the leaders of the native people should be men whom a liberal education of the best kind has enabled to form a just estimate of the facts of history and life, to take a sane view of any situation and bring a sound judgement to bear on questions that may emerge, instead of being blinded by passion and prejudice and incapacitated by ignorance and narrowness of view for recognising their own true interests and those of the whole country.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma*, 24.

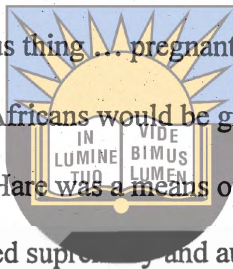
<sup>30</sup> *op. cit.*, 24.

<sup>31</sup> Switzer, *Power and Resistance*, 33.

<sup>32</sup> Higgs, *Alfred B. Xuma*, 33

<sup>33</sup> Higgs, *Alfred B. Xuma*, 17.

It is not surprising that the SANAC enthusiastically supported the notion of a college for Africans in the Cape. The commission viewed the college as a means of placating the emerging elite and thus curbing their political aspirations. The SANAC generally supported a segregationist policy and was alarmed by the growing political power of the mission-educated elite. According to Odendaal, it favored separate voters' rolls for Africans and whites and urged a restriction of African political rights in the Cape colony. It predicted that the liberal political system allowing common voter rolls was "sure to create an intolerable situation and is an unwise and dangerous thing... pregnant with future danger."<sup>34</sup> The commission sought a system whereby Africans would be granted representation without political power. In essence, then, Fort Hare was a means of assuring that there would be no "weakening in any way the unchallenged supremacy and authority of the ruling class."<sup>35</sup>



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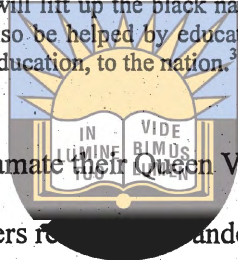
Following the decision of the Native Affairs Commission to support an African college, protracted negotiations over the funding, location, and curriculum of the proposed institution began. The plan, known as the Inter-State Native College Scheme, quickly and powerfully overshadowed a more radical program set forth by the South African Native Congress (SANC), who had themselves been planning to establish an African college. The SANC, founded in 1894, was an outspoken critic of the SANAC. H. Isaiah Bud-Mbelle, a leader of Kimberly's Mfengu community and a member of the SANC, initially proposed a fund-raising campaign to establish a university for Africans in 1901. The Queen Victoria Memorial (QVM), as it was called, became a major project of the SANC in the early 1900s with the ultimate goal of establishing a university for Africans in the eastern Cape.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu*, 65.

The QVM proposal stood in stark contrast to the Inter-State Native Scheme. While the latter was largely a conservative reaction to the flight of African scholars to the United States, the QVM plan, like the African Independent Churches, was a pro-active attempt to establish institutions completely independent of white control. Though it was named in honor of Queen Victoria, the SANC project represented a break from the previous missionary-dominated educational control. Walter Rubusana, a SANC leader and proponent of the QVM scheme said:

I am not an Ethiopian, but I could just as well be one because the Ethiopian says our nation must help itself since no white man will lift up the black nation...every nation is uplifted by its educated members. Africa will also be helped by educated Africans who will work hard and give themselves, with their little education, to the nation.<sup>37</sup>



The SANC was urged to amalgamate their Queen Victoria Memorial scheme with the new Inter-State plan, but SANC members refused to abandon their vision of an African university free of white control. While the Inter-State scheme received support from influential whites and Africans in all the colonies, QVM support was confined mainly to SANC supporters. Ultimately, the QVM scheme could not keep up with its opponents' organizational skills and resources.<sup>38</sup> The Inter-State plan was directed mainly by whites and backed by the Cape government. In contrast to the exclusively black QVM proposal, John Tengo Jabavu and Simon P. Gasa were the only Africans on the executive committee board of the Inter-State scheme.

Switzer writes that although the QVM scheme never really got off the ground, the QVM/Inter-State debate delineates the different factions that had begun to emerge in African politics. On the one hand, there were those who sought an integrated society, albeit on

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<sup>35</sup> op. cit., 65.

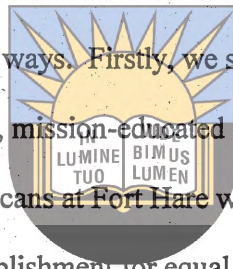
<sup>36</sup> Switzer, *Power and Resistance*, 179.

<sup>37</sup> op. cit., 179.

<sup>38</sup> Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu*, 67.

colonial terms, and on the other hand, those who preferred to proceed solely on African terms.<sup>39</sup> Led by John Tengo Jabavu, the former group opposed the idea of a strong African political organization. Jabavu envisioned Africans participating with whites, not separate from them, in a single non-racial party, as the ultimate goal. He felt that a strong African group would be seen as a threat to whites and articulate racial distinctions rather than promote non-racialism.<sup>40</sup>

Fort Hare was borne from the conflict between these divergent views. Its history is paradoxical and must be viewed in two ways. Firstly, we see a Fort Hare whose roots can be traced to the emergence of a politicized, mission-educated elite in the Cape Colony. The availability of higher education for Africans at Fort Hare was a result of the strides made by the nascent elite in challenging the establishment for equal rights and non-racialism. At the same time, though the fight for Fort Hare represented a triumph for equal access and was a crowning achievement for the emerging elite, its founding must also be looked at more critically. What ended up as a missionary school, with the inherent paternalism that comes with such an institution, could have been a revolutionary experiment in African self-development as exemplified by the African Independent Churches that sprang up in the latter part of the nineteenth century.



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The SANC's African-led Queen Victoria university scheme was overpowered by the more conservative approach of by SANAC, providing Africans with prospects for a university education while simultaneously working to control the nature of that education. The SANAC approach centered on promoting the status quo by placating the emerging elite and keeping African students in South Africa, where they would be at a safe distance from

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<sup>39</sup> Switzer, *Power and Resistance*, 180.

black American notions of equality. Yet South African history is full of unanticipated consequences and as we will see, the school created to entrench the power of the ruling class ultimately ended up educating students who threatened the status quo.



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<sup>40</sup> Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu*, 15.

## From Black Englishmen to African Nationalists: Student Politics at Fort Hare to 1955

*You sent us the truth, denied us the truth;  
You sent us the life, deprived us of life;  
You sent us the light, we sit in the dark,  
Shivering, benighted in the bright noonday sun*  
-“The Prince of Britain,” a poem by Mqhayi<sup>1</sup>

*Fort Hare wasn't created as such [a revolutionary center]. But, it could not avoid being that. When social changes take place, you don't seek the permission of the founders.*<sup>2</sup>

-Govan Mbeki

### A Missionary Start

In the winter of 1933 Eddie Roux, a member of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), arrived in Alice on a donkey, with his new wife, Winifred. The two pitched a tent on Sandile's Kop, a hill overlooking the Fort Hare campus, and during a series of outdoor meetings, shared the teachings of communism with the youngsters studying at the university. The Rouxs discussed the world situation with them, focusing on the role played by both communism and organized religion. They brought the students literature that attacked Christianity. The Rouxs recalled the students relating “their life in college and how they were disciplined and treated as schoolboys.” In turn, the Rouxs “told them of the movement and of *Indlela Yenkululeko*” (The Road to Freedom), a recently launched monthly magazine.<sup>3</sup> Wycliffe Tsotsi says that the magazine made the students aware of the extent of political strife in the country.<sup>4</sup>

While the students were eager to listen to Roux, the authorities felt his teachings were contrary to those of the College. Alexander Kerr, the school's first principal, was “squarely

<sup>1</sup> Mqhayi (trans. Robert Kavanaugh), “The Prince of Britain” (1925), in *The Making of a Servant and Other Poems*, pp. 14-16. Quoted in Sampson, *Mandela*, 23

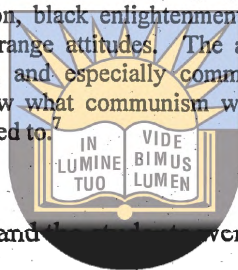
<sup>2</sup> Govan Mbeki, interview by author, Port Elizabeth, 19 November 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Colin Bundy, “Schooled For Life,” 18.

<sup>4</sup> Tsotsi, interview by author.

against the college becoming a political agency. ... [He] wanted the Fort Hare authorities to control, channel and domesticate African aspirations.”<sup>5</sup> Tsotsi says, “[t]he authorities were not interested in us involving ourselves in [political activity]. Any sign of activity by the students which was independent of the authority was crashed down.”<sup>6</sup> Siphon Makalima (’36-’40) describes early Fort Hare as a “very conservative place,” and says that despite what may have been the best of intentions on the part of the missionaries who ran Fort Hare in its early years, it was not an “open university.” He adds,

[t]here was always a very strange attitude. The church people who were very, very religious seemed committed to black education, black enlightenment, but had very strange attitudes towards black advancement, very strange attitudes. The attitudes to contact with outside people, especially black Americans, and especially communists. We hardly knew what communism was but before we knew what communism was, we knew that there were so many people who should not be listened to.<sup>7</sup>



Roux was barred from campus and his lectures were forbidden from attending his lectures. Kerr believed that religion and education went hand in hand. In the early days at Fort Hare, Scripture readings complemented academic lectures. Roux was seen to be rocking the foundation Kerr strove so hard to build. “The idea was,” says Tsotsi, “that we shouldn’t worry ourselves about the situation there because God is there, God will look after us and change the situation one day. We don’t have to do anything about it.”<sup>8</sup> When the liberal-Christian basis of the College was thought to be under attack, restrictions replaced open discussion. The visit of Roux brought into focus the view of the Fort Hare authorities that it was not the role of a university to critique the political system. According to Kerr, religion, not politics, was the cornerstone of university life.

Although Fort Hare ended up playing an important role in liberation movements throughout Africa, it wasn’t created to breed revolutionaries. In fact, during its early years it

<sup>5</sup> Burchell, “Alexander Kerr,” 20.

<sup>6</sup> Tsotsi, interview by author.

<sup>7</sup> Siphon Makalima, interview by author, Alice, 26 October 1998.

was seen as a vehicle for promoting the *status quo*. When the college began its first year in 1916, it received the staunch support of the government, with General Smuts present at the official opening ceremony. Burchell argues that its founding, occurring against the backdrop of “Ethiopian” dissent that led to the creation of the African Independent Churches, was a way to accommodate the growing elitist aspirations of Africans and to thwart political unrest. He also points out that there was a concern over a growing number of Africans going on to the United States to study.<sup>9</sup> Similar situations arose elsewhere in colonial Africa later in the century when British support for African universities, previously non-existent, began to grow. It became evident to colonial authorities that it was far more dangerous to British imperial prestige, politically and socially, to deny Africans access to university education than to satisfy their urge to be educated.<sup>10</sup>



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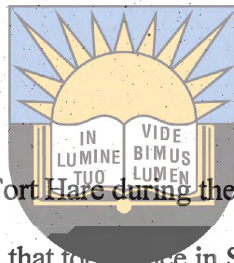
The origins of Fort Hare can be traced back to 1878 when Dr. James Stewart made his first public appeal for an institution of higher learning for Africans at a missionary conference in London. After successfully running Lovedale College for a number of years, Stewart, along with the Reverend James Henderson, like Stewart a Scottish missionary, decided to embark on the more large-scale project of building a university for Africans. In 1905 the Colonial Native Affairs Commission officially recommended the establishment of a college for blacks in South Africa. Late in that same year an African convention resolved to petition for an inter-state native college. Buoyed by a gift of land from the Free Church of Scotland, a grant of 10,000 pounds from the Transkeian Territories General Council and other contributions, the South African Native College opened in Alice following 10 years of planning on 8 February 1916.

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<sup>8</sup> Tsotsi, interview by author.

Although Africans such as John Knox Bokwe and John Tengo Jabavu influenced the founding of Fort Hare, it was very much a missionary operation from the start, with financial support for residences provided by the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches. Kerr, who was plucked from relative obscurity in Scotland where he was a headmaster, saw his role as religious and deeply moral. Although probably the first non-clerical head of an institution for the higher education of the African, he was in no sense a secular educationist. Trained under a Scottish system that, until 1907, entrusted its education to the Church, Kerr was in full agreement with a Christian missionary ethos.<sup>11</sup>

### The Birth of Student Politics



The birth of student politics at Fort Hare during the 1930s must be viewed within the broader context of the political changes that took place in South Africa during the decade.

Colin Bundy writes that the 1930s saw a "burgeoning sense of African identity, and a new, more forceful assertion of African grievances and demands."<sup>12</sup> He notes that in the '30s, an industrialising economy and an expanding educational system increased the numbers of the black petty bourgeoisie, making it large enough to "permit awareness of shared identity and interests."<sup>13</sup> At the same time that their numbers were increasing, educated blacks had to come to terms with an attack on their rights.

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Legislative measures of the 1920s and 1930s, particularly those following the coming to power of the Pact government in 1924, had a crippling effect on black South Africans. The Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 codified the pass laws that greatly restricted the freedom of blacks. Labor laws gave preference to white workers while restricting the rights

<sup>9</sup> Burchell, "Alexander Kerr", 2.

<sup>10</sup> Apallos, *Imperialism, Academe and Nationalism*.

<sup>11</sup> Burchell, "Alexander Kerr", 2.

<sup>12</sup> Bundy, "Schooled For Life," 21.

of their black counterparts. During the depression years from 1929 to 1933 the number of black workers in manufacturing industries dropped by almost ten thousand while that of whites increased by three thousand.<sup>14</sup> Poll taxes, combined with the attack on and eventual abolition of the already limited Cape franchise through the 1936 Representation of Natives Bill proved the notion “equal rights for all civilized men” to be a farce. With segregation firmly entrenched, this new generation of educated Africans was finding it “ever harder to follow in their fathers’ footsteps.”<sup>15</sup> It became increasingly clear that education alone was not going to bring about equality. Jean and John Comaroff wrote, “[t]he terms in which this state was being formed were already ensuring their politico-economic exclusion, and making a mockery of the generalized liberal promises of mission morality.”<sup>16</sup>



A new, more assertive nationalism began to develop in the country. While this “new” nationalism took root firmly with the advent of the ANC Youth League in the 1940s, it had already begun to filter into Fort Hare by the mid 1930s. An examination of Govan Mbeki’s student days shows how the Fort Hare students of the 1930s began to develop along nationalistic, and in some cases socialistic, lines.



Govan Mbeki was born on 8 July 1910, the youngest of his father’s eight children spanning two marriages. He began his schooling in 1918 at a Methodist primary school six miles from his home in the Nqamakwe district of the Transkei. Mbeki’s father became a staunch Methodist and his mother was the daughter of a Methodist minister. Mbeki himself was strongly influenced by a minister who broke away from the Methodists to form an

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<sup>13</sup> op. cit., 21.

<sup>14</sup> Mbeki, *The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa: A Short History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1992), 34.

<sup>15</sup> Helen Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom: The ICU in Rural South Africa, 1924-1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 64-65. Quoted in Bundy, 21.

<sup>16</sup> Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, Volume 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 230. Quoted in Bundy, 21.

independent church. "He used to hold concerts at his church ... to raise funds for the ANC. ... He told us why the ANC came to be and indicated the areas in which the views of the white people differed from the views of the African people," says Mbeki.<sup>17</sup>

Though the minister stimulated Mbeki's political interest, the greatest early influence on his political life took place at Fort Hare in 1933, where he was strongly affected by the radical vision of the Rouxs. Mbeki, who arrived at Fort Hare in 1931 following four years at Healdtown, recalls the open-air meetings with the Rouxs as eye opening:

We used to go to that tent and Eddie Roux would give us lectures on Marxism, Leninism. He would answer questions about what Hertzog was doing which the missionaries could not answer. He could show us the way forward, which the missionaries could not do.<sup>18</sup>

Bundy writes that for weeks after Eddie Roux's visit, "excitement gripped some who had heard him. A student from Durban, George Singh, owned a brightly striped blazer, and his friends took it in turn to sport the garment, explaining that 'as communists, you see, we must share!'"<sup>19</sup>

Max Yergan, a black American who worked in South Africa from 1922 to 1936 for the Young Man's Christian Association, also influenced Mbeki. Yergan lived in Alice and worked from the Christian Union Hall on the Fort Hare campus. Though Yergan initially had very little contact with the students at Fort Hare, his interest in them grew following a trip to the Soviet Union. Wycliffe Tsotsi says,

[h]e did not seem to me to have a real political interest in the students at Fort Hare. ... But he did talk to me ... about the situation in South Africa, especially when he came from ... Moscow. ... He was saying we had to do something more radical ... we should strike deep.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Mbeki, interview by author.

<sup>18</sup> op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> Bundy, "Schooled for Life," 19.

<sup>20</sup> Tsotsi, interview by author.

Mbeki also noticed the change in Yergan following his Soviet sojourn.<sup>21</sup> He tells Colin Bundy that before his trip, Yergan was “very Christian and highly religious,” and adds, “when he came back it was not the Yergan we had known.”<sup>22</sup> The new Yergan delivered lectures on communism and fascism to Mbeki’s political science class. He also “fed” the young Mbeki with literature, lending him books such as Lenin’s *The State and the Revolution* when the student visited his home.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time, Mbeki and his fellow students were influenced by their surroundings. Mbeki’s classmate, Wycliffe Tsotsi speaks about the first time he became aware of the tumultuous situation facing blacks in South Africa: “I remember taking a friend of mine to my home in the Transkei. ... When we got off [the train] we had to get transport. ... My friend and I were made to lie on an open lorry on top of sacks of mealie meal. And the driver was by himself. There was nobody with him in the front seat.”<sup>24</sup> Mbeki recalls the vicious pass laws, which made him aware of the situation in the country:

When I went out in the evening with a girlfriend, I would be stopped on the streets ... the fact that a policeman, you have to pull something out of your pocket to show a policeman, and he allows you through. ... And if there’s anything unsatisfactory in those documents you are jailed. Who could not have been aware?<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, as Bundy points out, the students of Mbeki’s generation began to construct a “new identity type.”<sup>26</sup> He quotes Phyllis Ntantala, who remembers Mbeki as part of a circle of “progressive” and “politically-minded” students at Fort Hare that included A.C. Jordan,

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<sup>21</sup> Mbeki, interview by author.

<sup>22</sup> Bundy, 19.

<sup>23</sup> David H. Anthony, “Max Yergan in South Africa: From Evangelical Pan-Africanist to Revolutionary Socialist,” *African Studies Review*, Volume 34, Number 2 (September 1991), 43; In 1948, disillusioned by the onset of the Cold War, Yergan abandoned leftist activism in favor of ultra-conservatism. For more information on Yergan, see Anthony’s article.

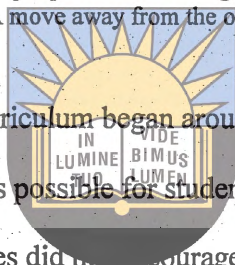
<sup>24</sup> Tsotsi, interview by author.

<sup>25</sup> Mbeki, interview by author.

<sup>26</sup> Bundy, “Schooled for Life,” 23.

Tsotsi, Paul Mosaka and Ernest Mancoba.<sup>27</sup> “We were the first group of students who ... became nationalistic,” says Mbeki. This nationalism began to transform a conservative missionary institution that produced in its first decade and a half, in Mbeki’s words, “Black Englishmen,” into one that produced African nationalists. The change could be seen in the students’ new vision of their education:

We were not happy about the fact that when we came there most students had majored in ethics, in English, in logic, things like that. We said it was wrong. Fort Hare was producing Black Englishmen. ... They had no contact with the people. They had teas with the students, the missionaries, white missionaries, never mixing with the people. ... We said, in the language of the student in those days, ‘bugger it,’ we must not be Black English people. So we changed courses. I majored in political science and psychology. ... A move away from the old tradition.<sup>28</sup>



The push to radicalise the Fort Hare curriculum began around 1934. As a constituent college of the University of South Africa, it was possible for students to study the curricula of the broader university, though the authorities did not encourage it. Mbeki, along with McLeod Mabude became the first two students to major in political science, despite having to study on their own because there was no qualified staff member to teach the final year course.

University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

According to Mbeki, their interest drawn by Roux and Yergan, students began to abandon courses in English and logic in favor of fields such as history and political science.<sup>29</sup>

Tsotsi led a similar move to diversify the Fort Hare curriculum. Along with classmate Victor Npopo, he wanted to study history, which was not offered as a subject in 1935. The two approached the principal, Alexander Kerr, and asked to be assigned a lecturer in history. Kerr told them to take psychology. Tsotsi and his friend decided that they were going to do history anyway. They acquired all the necessary reading material, made monthly trips to nearby Rhodes University, and ended up passing the history exam at the end of the year—without the aid of a teacher. Alexander Kerr had warned Tsotsi that his “blood would be on

<sup>27</sup> op. cit., 19.

<sup>28</sup> Mbeki, interview by author.

his own hands,” but it was Tsotsi who had the last laugh. After the success of Tsotsi and his classmate, a permanent lecturer in history was added to the Fort Hare staff.<sup>30</sup>

However, the new history department didn't help Siphon Makalima in 1940, when he attempted to become the first Fort Hare student to earn an M.A. in History. “In my thesis, I brought in new attitudes which were not accepted by the missionary historians,” he says. “They emphasized that causes between black and white over the frontier were caused by cattle thieving. The Xhosa people were *stealing cattle* from the Whites. And I said the cattle were only an element in the struggle. The main struggle was on land.”<sup>31</sup>

Bundy writes that Mbeki and his contemporaries were “less patient” than the previous generation of educated Africans, which included D.D.T. Jabavu and Z.R. Mahabane.

Visiting Fort Hare in 1937, Ralph Bunche observed that the students resented older Africans who were “duped” by attempts to divide them from the black masses.<sup>32</sup> Events of 1935 and 1936 “whipped up so much feeling” amongst the students.<sup>33</sup> With the passage of the Native Representation Act, the enthusiasm over the All-Africa Convention, and Italy's attack on Ethiopia, Fort Hare students were “absolutely moved.”<sup>34</sup> Mbeki joined the ANC in 1935 and though he did not join the CPSA while at Fort Hare, he developed an interest in socialism through Roux and Yergan. In 1936, in part moved by the changing Franchise laws, Fort Hare students attended the ANC conference in Bloemfontein.<sup>35</sup> “Those were serious days,” says Mbeki. “The students were alive. They were debating these issues [the Hertzog Bills]. ...

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<sup>29</sup> op. cit.; see also Bundy, 18.

<sup>30</sup> Tsotsi, interview by author.

<sup>31</sup> Makalima, interview by author.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Edgar, ed., *An African-American in South Africa: The Travel Notes of Ralph J. Bunche* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1992), pp. 134-36.

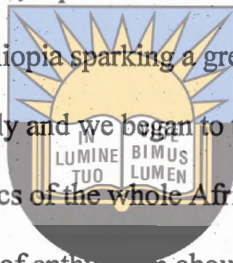
<sup>33</sup> Bundy, “Schooled for Life,” 23.

<sup>34</sup> op. cit., 23.

<sup>35</sup> William Nkomo, interview by Thomas Karis, April 1964, Pretoria.

We turned around to our missionaries to find an answer. ... They were afraid to come out openly against Hertzog. They wouldn't."<sup>36</sup>

Tsotsi remembers political discussion at Fort Hare prompting him to attend the initial meeting of the All-Africa Convention, where he became a founding member of the organization.<sup>37</sup> William Nkomo ('35-'37) says that as president of the All-Africa Convention, Professor Jabavu "influenced students and some of his thinking naturally was passed on to the students."<sup>38</sup> Both Tsotsi, Sipho Makalima, Kaiser Matanzima and William Nkomo recall Mussolini's attack on Ethiopia sparking a great deal of debate amongst the students. "We followed that very closely and we began to take an interest not only in the politics of South Africa but in the politics of the whole African continent," says Nkomo.<sup>39</sup> Makalima says, "there was a great deal of enthusiasm about ... a state in Africa being taken by a state in Europe."<sup>40</sup> Matanzima says, "If the students were interested. And there was discussion amongst themselves. The senior students were much involved."<sup>41</sup> Bundy quotes Mbeki's reminiscence of 1936 as "a year that decided the future course of most of us then at Fort Hare."<sup>42</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

The new political fervor on campus in the mid to late thirties took on many forms. Phyllis Ntantala remembers intense discussions "during leisure time, or in the reading room and C[hristian] U[nion], or on the lawn."<sup>43</sup> Paul Mosaka protested against the employment by Fort Hare of white women as domestic workers when there was so many unemployed

<sup>36</sup> Mbeki, interview by author.

<sup>37</sup> Tsotsi, interview by author.

<sup>38</sup> Nkomo, interview by Karis.

<sup>39</sup> op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> Makalima, interview by author.

<sup>41</sup> Kaiser Matanzima, interview by author, Qamata, 9 March 1999.

<sup>42</sup> Bundy, "Schooled for Life," 22, from *Inkundla ya Bantu*, September 1940, obituary of Benedict Fushane.

<sup>43</sup> op. cit., 23.

Africans in the region. A.C. Jordan wrote a poem in Xhosa condemning the invasion of Abyssinia by Italy. Successful protests against segregation were organized at the Alice Post Office and at a Lovedale athletics meeting.<sup>44</sup> The 'civilised labor policy,' which ensured inflated wages for unskilled white laborers, prompted Fort Hare students to empty tins of jam marked 'Manufactured by white labour' onto the tables and floor in the dining room.<sup>45</sup>

More often than not, the new spirit enveloping the Alice campus could be seen in clashes between the students and the missionary authorities. One of the earliest incidents of student unrest occurred in 1935 when members of Iona House organized a mixed dance despite the objections of the authorities. "We wanted to invite the women who were working as domestics in the institution to come in and that infuriated the authorities," says Tsotsi, an Iona resident. Makalima says, "[d]uring the proceedings, the authorities ... clashed with the house committee because ... they played the piano and played some drums, and in one of the items, the gentlemen took ladies and had a mixed dance [laughter] and that was such a big broil."<sup>46</sup> When the warden tried to stop the party, he clashed with the Iona House Committee. Tsotsi remembers telling the warden to "go to bed." It nearly ruined his chances of receiving an education. He says, "[w]e were just surrounded by barbed wire rules and regulations. Even our movements. We couldn't go to certain places, we couldn't meet at certain places."<sup>47</sup>

The forties brought more campus unrest. In 1940, Nelson Mandela got into trouble for flouting college regulations by refusing to sit on the Students' Representative Council

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<sup>44</sup> op. cit., 23.

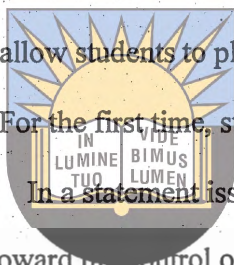
<sup>45</sup> Mbeki, *The Struggle For Liberation in South Africa*, 33.

<sup>46</sup> Makalima, interview by author.

<sup>47</sup> Tsotsi, interview by author.

(SRC) in protest against the poor quality of dining hall food.<sup>48</sup> The first of countless mass actions embarked upon by Fort Hare students occurred a year later when, during the absence of Kerr, the students demanded the dismissal of the Dining Hall Boarding Master for assaulting a servant in the kitchen. About three-quarters of the students carried out the threat to strike.

In 1942, discontent boiled over in what became known as the “Beda Hall Tennis Dispute.” Although the reason for the controversy was ostensibly the refusal of the warden of Beda Hall, an Anglican residence, to allow students to play tennis on Sundays, the 1942 disruption was about more than tennis. For the first time, students began overtly to show their contempt for missionary authority. In a statement issued by the Committee of Beda Hall, the students expressed animosity toward the control of the warden:



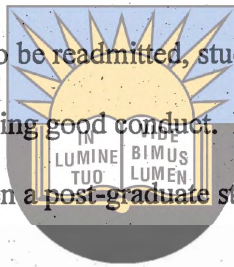
The warden of Beda Hall has refused to understand the students (sic) point of view on any matters affecting the smooth running of the Hostel. This attitude of the warden...culminated in his refusal to allow the Anglican students to play tennis on Sundays...a thing to which the Church of the Province does not object.<sup>49</sup>

They also resented the bullying attitude of the principal who “insists on treating post-matric and post-grad students as children in a kindergarten school.”<sup>50</sup> Upset over the poor quality of food, interference in holding student meetings, prohibitions on dancing, visits to the bioscope in Alice, and yes, playing tennis on Sundays, the students refused to perform their normal hostel duties. After the Beda Hall Committee was suspended, 54 students signed a petition in its support. The disagreement culminated in a student boycott of classes from 18 to 20 September.

<sup>48</sup> Though Mandela attributes his “expulsion” from Fort Hare to the aftermath of this student protest, the details surrounding his exit are cloudy. It is possible that he used the spat as a way to avoid an unwanted arranged marriage. In a letter responding to Alexander Kerr’s inquiry about a newspaper article that mentions Mandela’s expulsion, W.W. Shilling, who was on the staff at Fort Hare in the forties, wrote, “To the best of my knowledge Mandela was not suspended from Fort Hare.” (Shilling to Kerr, 11 September 1962, Cory Library, PR 4095). After leaving Fort Hare, Mandela went to Johannesburg, thus extricating himself from the unwanted union.

<sup>49</sup> Statement by Beda Hall Committee, undated, Fort Hare Papers.

The authorities viewed the strike very seriously and it dominated discussion in Council and Senate meetings. They resolved that it was “not a question of religious beliefs but of submission by the students to the authority of the Senate.”<sup>51</sup> One of Kerr’s main principles was that students should show respect for authority and thus he was determined that the students should be punished for their actions. Striking students who had also participated in the 1941 strike were suspended for the remainder of the school year. First year students were suspended until 5 October and all other students were asked to leave until the commencement of examinations. To be readmitted, students had to pay a one pound fine each and had to sign a declaration pledging good conduct. In all, 25 students were suspended, including Oliver Tambo, then a post-graduate student, who was allowed back in 1943.<sup>52</sup>



## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

Z.K. Matthews, one of the few black staff members at the time, recognized that the campus was not isolated from the rest of the country. His insight into the cause of the disturbance foreshadowed more unrest to come. At a Senate Meeting called to discuss the Beda Hall Tennis Dispute, he pointed out that the situation at the College was “made difficult because the students regarded any attempt to govern them as a form of oppression. This was probably because the majority of the staff was European.”<sup>53</sup> Though Matthews’ warning fell upon deaf ears, he had acutely identified the cause of the cause of the problem. The students could not help but equate their treatment within the college to that of their people throughout the country. Two sources of activism emerged: one was organized around campus discontent and the other used campus discontent to express wider political grievances. Bundy writes

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<sup>50</sup> Burchell, “Alexander Kerr,” 15.

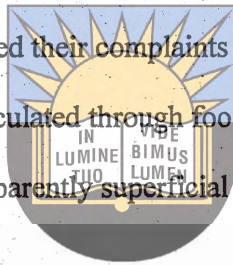
<sup>51</sup> Senate Minutes, 17 September 1942, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>52</sup> Senate Minutes, 10 November 1942, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>53</sup> Senate Minutes, 9 March 1942, Fort Hare Papers.

that the students' politics were shaped "not only *in* mission schools but also in reaction *against* them."<sup>54</sup>

Devi Bughwan ('42-'44), who became the first Indian woman professor of English in all of Africa, says, "[y]ou felt they're treating you as infants, that you haven't sufficiently evolved yet. You're still black. Whether there were shades of blackness and brownness didn't matter. There was a paternal attitude."<sup>55</sup> In the early forties, with the ANC in a sluggish state and extra-parliamentary politics far from the fevered pitch they would reach later in the decade, the students expressed their complaints locally. Campus issues dominated student debate and grievances were articulated through food strikes, which were annual rites of passage. Bughwan describes how apparently superficial complaints often led to deeper discussion:



They had to get permission to hold a mass meeting. You couldn't hold one to discuss the state of the country. So it would be ~~gumming~~ about food for the purpose we shouldn't have to have lights out. That excuse to have a mass meeting. Then one thing would lead to another, that they're treating us like we're black. And it would always lead to a total free-for-all about the state of the country, the oppression, the apartheid. That is how in my recollection the mass meetings became platforms for fiery tirades against the government at the time.<sup>56</sup>

Tsotsi offers a similar view, saying that the students were forced to collaborate amongst themselves:

The rules that bound them, they had to obey rules which they thought were not proper in an institution like Fort Hare. ... The treatment of the students ... the deficiencies ... were associated with the political situation and [it was felt] that the authorities were carrying out the government policy against the black man.<sup>57</sup>

Kerr's disciplinarian approach also contributed to mounting rebellion over domestic issues among the students. Mandela recalls, "In those days Fort Hare was little better than a high school. .... The principal was a well-informed man, but of course he was white, and he

<sup>54</sup> Bundy, "Schooled for Life," 22.

<sup>55</sup> Devi Bughwan, interview by author, Durban, 26 April 1999.

<sup>56</sup> op. cit.

had his own conception of how black students should develop.”<sup>58</sup> Although Kerr seemed to comprehend that the disturbances at Fort Hare and other mission schools had to be viewed in the wider light of opposition to oppression, he was never able to sanction student activism in any form.<sup>59</sup> Buthelezi recalls Kerr, in later years, walking around campus, referring to Fort Hare as “my college” and saying, “don’t do this in my college.”<sup>60</sup> George Matanzima remembers Kerr as

a very strict man. He sometimes got up in the middle of the night and went around the hostels himself. I remember one day in the night I was studying with the use of a candle. When he saw that his temper came. ‘Put it off, put it off, my son. You are going to burn this whole institution.’ ... In the morning, he announced it during the prayers. He said, last night, I dreamt Fort Hare was in fire. And when I went to the hostels I saw one student using a small candle and I told him to put it off.<sup>61</sup>

Indeed, Kerr was extremely possessive of Fort Hare and did not take action perceived to be against his college lightly. It was this heavy-handedness that often led to unrest. Thus, while early protest at Fort Hare can be viewed broadly as a response to the political situation in South Africa, in its initial stages it manifested itself predominantly in domestic confrontations with the missionary authorities of the university.

### **A Youth League is Born**

The nineteen forties brought about a further increase in student militancy. A combination of events radicalized students at Fort Hare and continued to transform the missionary institution into a political crucible. The revitalization of the ANC under the direction of Dr. A.B. Xuma, coupled with the unsettling events of World War II and the surprising National Party victory in the 1948 elections, all contributed to a heightened sense of awareness at Fort Hare. As politics in South Africa fermented in the 1940s, the student

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<sup>57</sup> Tsotsi, interview by author.

<sup>58</sup> Nelson Mandela, interview by Mary Beale, Johannesburg, 15 January 1999, quoted in Beale, *Apartheid and University Education*, 56.

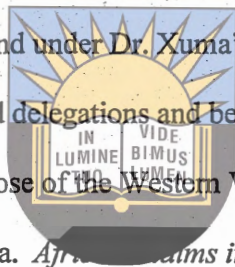
<sup>59</sup> Burchell, “Alexander Kerr”, 19.

<sup>60</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author.

<sup>61</sup> George Matanzima, interview by author, Qamata, 9 March 1999.

Fort Hare produced moved further and further away from Mbeki's "Black Englishman." The authorities could expel Eddie Roux from the college grounds, but ultimately they were powerless against a growing spirit of nationalism that began to envelop the university in the nineteen forties as intelligent, educated youngsters came together and increasingly began to relate events outside the campus to their lives within Fort Hare.

The Atlantic Charter of 1941 promulgated by Roosevelt and Churchill laid the groundwork for a post-fascist, democratic world with political and economic freedom. African political leaders took notice. And under Dr. Xuma's presidency, the ANC moved away from its history of deputations and delegations and began to transform itself into a modern political organization akin to those of the Western World, albeit operating in the exceptional environment of South Africa. *African Claims in South Africa* was issued in 1943, calling for, amongst other things, land distribution, trade union rights and, for the first time, unqualified universal suffrage.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

World War II accelerated industrialization and brought more blacks from the rural areas to the cities. The war also provided the impetus for a great deal of debate at Fort Hare, as conflicts arose at home due to the fighting abroad. Joe Matthews says,

[p]eople at first were saying how can we go to the war when we are not armed, when we haven't got freedom. ... And the next thing everybody is saying the attack on the Soviet Union alters the character of the war and now you must support the war effort. And there were debates going on right there in the university arguing why are you supporting the war now when you were saying you were against it the previous week.<sup>62</sup>

Nelson Mandela writes, "Each evening, the warden of Wesley House used to review the military situation in Europe, and late at night, we would huddle around an old radio and listen to BBC broadcasts of Winston Churchill's stirring speeches." He adds that, like his

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<sup>62</sup> Matthews, interview by author.

classmates, he was “an ardent supporter of Great Britain.”<sup>63</sup>

In 1940, the graduation speaker was the Prime Minister, Jan Smuts. Although the students applauded Smuts’ stance on the war, his visit provoked a great deal of discussion on English oppression in South Africa. Matthews recalls another visitor to Fort Hare, a government recruiter, becoming annoyed when he was asked by the students, “what’s the use of us being recruited to the war when it is said that we won’t be armed? How will we face Italian and German soldiers without weapons?”<sup>64</sup>



The seeds of majoritarianism were laid by the *African Claims* document in 1943, but the transformation of the ANC did not stop there. There were other parallel movements within the ANC that would greatly affect both the organization and the entire South African political scene. The rumblings of change would reach Fort Hare by the end of the decade, profoundly influencing campus life. The Youth League (YL) was established in 1944 in Johannesburg, where white wealth and black poverty were most stark, and where the most skilled, educated, politicized and frustrated portion of the African population lived. The YL saw itself as more radical than its parent organization. Led by such ex-Fort Harians as Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela, its leaders initially considered starting a separate body, but eventually decided to join as a pressure group within the ANC to affect transformation of the organization. The more militant YL, made up mostly of mission-educated, politicized young people, felt the ANC tended to yield to oppression and was thus unable to advance the cause of African freedom. Joe Matthews, writing in 1949, summed up the YL philosophy:

We are not asking for a greater share to be given to the African in the running of the country. We are without apologies going to fight for a S.A. which will be ruled by the majority i.e. by the Africans. We intend to struggle for a return of sovereignty to the rightful owners of the country.

<sup>63</sup> Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 42.

<sup>64</sup> Matthews, interview by author.

Students, he added, should view themselves “as part of a nation army preparing themselves for their destiny which is to rule this country and indeed the continent.”<sup>65</sup>

In 1948, the YL began to grow convincingly under the direction of A.P. Mda. Joe Matthews says, “before Mda came on the scene the Youth League was really only in the Transvaal Province. And Mda tried to spread it to all the different provinces.”<sup>66</sup> Determined to link the Fort Hare campus with the YL, Mda sought to establish a branch there. As Fort Hare was home to the leading members of South Africa’s black intelligentsia, and teachers trained at Fort Hare went on to educate people around the country, the university was strategically important for Mda.<sup>67</sup> In the forties, the Society of Young Africans (SOYA), the youth wing of the All-African Convention (AAC), had received more support on campus, but with the coming to power of the National Party, that began to change. The resuscitation of the ANC under Xuma, the unsettling effect of the war, and Malan’s victory over Smuts in 1948 had all “roused the Fort Hare student body to a new pitch of political concern.”<sup>68</sup> The AAC’s compliant stance was increasingly looked down upon as a more confrontational position was embraced, especially by the youth.<sup>69</sup>

The change in atmosphere could be seen in *Beware*, a daily commentary on political issues prepared by Robert Sobukwe, Dennis Siwisa (’47-’49) and Pelem Galazi Stamper (’47-’49) that was posted on campus notice boards. Hand-written, the topic of choice of these daily manifestos was non-collaboration, with fierce attacks on such advisory bodies as

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<sup>65</sup> Joe Matthews, “The Significance of the African Nationalist Programme,” *Inkundla ya Bantu*, 5 November 1949. Quoted in Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 69.

<sup>66</sup> Matthews, interview by author.

<sup>67</sup> Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 127.

<sup>68</sup> op. cit., 128.

<sup>69</sup> T.R.H. White. “Z.K. Matthews and the Formation of the ANC Youth League,” 129.

the Natives' Representative Council.<sup>70</sup> Sensing the time was ripe for action, Mda wrote a letter to Godfrey Pitje ('41-'45), a lecturer at Fort Hare suggesting that Pitje, "get together a small nucleus and soak them in our Nationalistic outlook and indicate to them the need for youth to train for a greater leadership. This will form the core of the Movement at Fort Hare."<sup>71</sup>

Following a meeting called by Pitje of about fifty staff and students in August 1948, the Fort Hare branch was formally founded in November. Prohibited by the College authorities, it was forced to operate off-campus and became known as the Victoria East branch, with meetings held in neighboring villages. Herby Govinden ('47-'49), a student at the time says, "There were political problems in the country and we felt we should identify with that. It was the beginnings of students' involvement in politics outside the campus. ...



[With the advent of the Youth League] the student body became more and more active."<sup>72</sup>

University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

Robert Sobukwe, Joe Matthews and P.V. Mbatha were appointed researchers assigned the task of reading available literature on the South African political scene and reporting back to the group. The YL enlivened the atmosphere on campus. According to Pogrund's account, by the end of 1948, the Victoria East branch was a very "closely knit group."<sup>73</sup>

Pitje says that Sobukwe began to emerge as its leader. In 1948, he was chosen to speak at the Completer's Social on behalf of continuing students. The exact text of the speech is not available, but Siwisa recalls him saying, "[y]our starting-point in your struggle for our liberation is non-collaboration, and the boycott of dummy institutions is the first step on the ladder of non-collaboration." Siwisa calls that speech a "coming out party for

<sup>70</sup> Pogrund, *How Can Man Die Better*, 28.

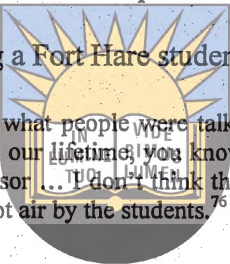
<sup>71</sup> White, "Z.K. Matthews and the Formation of the ANC Youth League," 130.

<sup>72</sup> Herby Govinden, interview by author, Durban, 17 April 1999.

<sup>73</sup> Pogrund, *How Can Man Die Better*, 29.

Sobukwe” as “an orator of no mean repute.”<sup>74</sup> He says, “[f]rom then onwards he was always called up to make speeches and no meeting—political, cultural, social or even a mass meeting of students—would be regarded as having ended until or unless Robert had spoken.”<sup>75</sup>

From the beginning, the YL had an uneasy relationship with university authorities. Fort Hare had a paternalistic heritage that led to consistent failure on the part of the authorities to see the capabilities and recognize the initiatives of black students. The majority of the staff did not understand the intricacies of the political struggle. Joe Matthews, who grew up on the campus before becoming a Fort Hare student, says,



[It was just a simple bewilderment at what people were talking about. I mean people were talking about freedom, and freedom in our lifetime, you know, an end to oppression. ... And to the average white lecturer or professor ... I don't think they even understood the forces at work ... they thought this was just ... hot air by the students.<sup>76</sup>

The authorities' failure to grasp the desires of the students was never more evident than in 1949, perhaps the most active year for the Victoria East Branch. Walter Sisulu, in his capacity as Secretary-General, made frequent visits to Fort Hare to meet with the young members of the YL.<sup>77</sup> A boycott of a segregated showing of *Hamlet* at the bioscope in Alice was organized and a few students who defied the call were attacked on their way back to campus. According to a statement by Principal Dent, “stones were thrown at them and one woman student was beaten with a stick, and at least one bed was soaked with water.”<sup>78</sup> Off campus, the Youth Leaguers were spearheading the charge for the Program of Action, which emphasized extra-parliamentary activity and non-collaboration. When the Program was up for discussion at the annual Cape provincial conference of the ANC in June 1949, and again at the national conference at Bloemfontein in December, “it was members of Fort Hare’s

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<sup>74</sup> op. cit., 29; A written record does exist of Sobukwe’s memorable 1949 Completer’s Social speech. Details of this speech follow.

<sup>75</sup> op. cit., 32.

<sup>76</sup> Matthews, interview by author.

<sup>77</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author.

Youth League who took the lead and together with Mda and the League's Transvaal leaders—Tambo, Sisulu and Mandela—most forcefully pressed for the program's adoption."<sup>79</sup> On campus, the students began to involve themselves in more overtly political activity as well. To the food strikes of the early forties, a broader, more national platform of protest was added, as student politics at Fort Hare became increasingly militant in line with the thinking of the YL.<sup>80</sup>

Banned from the campus by the university authorities, the Youth Leaguers took advantage of their Victoria East status and began spreading their gospel around the community. "We got the nurses [at Victoria Hospital] involved, politicized [them]," says Henry Makgothi.<sup>81</sup> Influenced by the Youth League, the nurses' strike during 1949 played a large role in the political development of those at Fort Hare. Expelled from their rooms, the nurses spent two weeks sleeping on the hospital lawn, holding meetings on the banks of the Tyumie River. Govinden says, "[w]e sympathized with our sisters at Victoria Hospital when they had issues. We joined them."<sup>82</sup> Fort Hare students brought blankets to the nurses and participated in their meetings. As the strike dragged on, Youth Leaguers such as Sobukwe assumed positions of leadership, with the nurses coming to them for advice and instructions.<sup>83</sup> The strike was finally settled after two months, but its impact on the students stretched far beyond that period. Dent viewed the strike as an example of his students keeping "trouble alive in a neighboring establishment," failing to understand its deeper meaning.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> C.P. Dent, Statement by Principal, Vol. 2, SRC, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>79</sup> Gerhart, *Black Power*, 128.

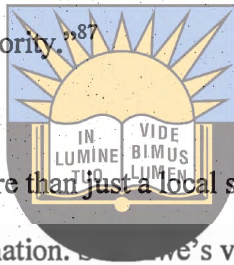
<sup>80</sup> White, "Z.K. Matthews and the Formation of the ANC Youth League", 124.

<sup>81</sup> Henry Makgothi, interview by author, Cape Town, 17 February 1999.

<sup>82</sup> Govinden, interview by author.

<sup>83</sup> Pogrund, *How Can Man Die Better*, 33.

Toward the end of the year many students boycotted a service conducted by the Chairman of the Council because he was also Chairman of the Hospital Board.<sup>85</sup> The nurses' struggle was viewed as a case of victimization on the part of hospital management. The strike "hardened attitudes" at Fort Hare towards the authorities, whom the students increasingly began to equate with the oppressors.<sup>86</sup> The Reverend E. Lynn Cragg, a long-time warden at Fort Hare, describes the evolution of the students' attitudes: "Anti-White tended to become anti-Church and anti-Christian as Christianity was looked upon as the white man's religion and the church as supporting white domination; opposition to the 'white oppressors' and white rule became opposition to all authority."<sup>87</sup>



To Sobukwe, the strike was more than just a local squabble. It was part of the broader struggle against minority domination. Sobukwe's views on the strike, which provided him with his first real taste of confrontational politics, were first made public in his memorable speech at the 1949 Completer's Social. Makgothi recounts the evolution of the speech:

University of Fort Hare  
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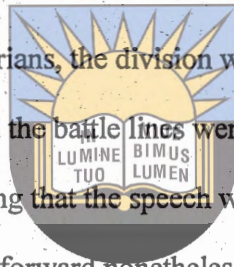
We said look, this business...of having socials...what was it? Dancing...we thought we should introduce an element of seriousness here...make people feel that they've got a mission....And we said look here, the dancing and that kind of jolliness and jollification is going to take a back seat here. We are going to put across the political line and what it really means to complete here politically.<sup>88</sup>

The usually festive end-of-year gala was transformed into a platform for the unveiling of the maturation of Sobukwe and the YL. The music was replaced by political speeches, with Ntsu Mokhehle ('47-'49) and Temba Hleli ('48-'49) joining Sobukwe at the podium. "It was a hell of a thing," says Makgothi. "People came there, oh, they're going to have a

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<sup>84</sup> Dent to Dr. M Capcan. 19 January, 1950, Temba Hleli Student File, Fort Hare Papers.  
<sup>85</sup> SRC Documents, Vol. 1, Fort Hare Papers.  
<sup>86</sup> White, "Z.K. Matthews and the Formation of the ANC Youth League", 131.  
<sup>87</sup> E. Lynn Cragg, *Fort Hare and Other Memories*, Unpublished manuscript in Rhodes University Cory Library Collection, 34.  
<sup>88</sup> Makgothi, interview by author.

nice time, and we opened up and Robbie delivered a most memorable speech.”<sup>89</sup> A complete written record of this speech does exist. Calling the nurses’ strike “part of a broad struggle” and not “an isolated incident,” Sobukwe said it was a struggle “between Africa and Europe, between a 20<sup>th</sup> century desire for self-realization and a feudal concept of authority.”<sup>90</sup> Mokhehle implored his classmates to avoid complacency, noting that as educated Africans they were “like passengers seated most comfortably in some first-class, water-tight cabins of a sinking ship.” He urged them to come out of their “intellectual luxury cabins.”<sup>91</sup>



For Sobukwe and other Fort Harians, the division was beginning to blur between missionary authority and white rule and the battle lines were drawn in the fight for the right “to call our souls our own.” Recognizing that the speech would make him unpopular with the university authorities, Sobukwe surged forward nonetheless. He strongly criticized the college, blaming it for preventing Fort Hare from becoming to the African “what Stellenbosch is to the Afrikaner” and for its failure to transform itself into a “barometer of African thought.” He understood the role that Stellenbosch played in the ideological development of apartheid and envisioned Fort Hare playing just as influential a position in eradicating it. He attacked trusteeship and any form of collaboration with the apartheid regime:

We want to build a new Africa, and only we can build it....Talks of co-operation are not new to us. Every time our people have shown signs of uniting against oppression, their ‘friends’ have come along and broken that unity. ... I am afraid these gentlemen are dealing with a new generation which cannot be bamboozled.

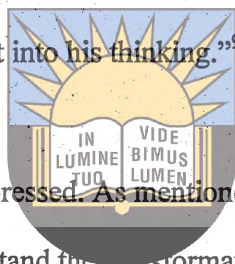
<sup>89</sup> op. cit.

<sup>90</sup> Robert Sobukwe, “Completer’s Social Speech, October 1949,” Reprinted in various places, including Pogrand, *How Can Man Die Better*, pp. 33-39.

<sup>91</sup> Ntsu Mokhehle, “A Sinking Ship,” *The Commentator*, Lesotho, July 1968, p. 15, in Gerhart, *Black Power*, pp. 110-111.

Exhorting his classmates to “Remember Africa!” Sobukwe, just two years into his political awakening, gave a speech that Siphso Makalima said, “changed attitudes very much.”<sup>92</sup>

Pogrand explains that the speech is remarkable in that at such an early stage in his development, it “contains much of what was to be Sobukwe’s later political philosophy: the rejection of any trace of white paternalism; the stress on black self-regard ... the rejection of colonialism. ...”<sup>93</sup> Herby Govinden says, “[h]e was giving some kind of picture of what was going to happen, what he was going to do when he left. So we were not surprised when he formed the PAC because we had insight into his thinking.”<sup>94</sup>



However, not everyone was impressed. As mentioned earlier, the missionary authorities did not even partially understand the transformation of student politics. Cragg’s recollection of Sobukwe’s speech shows how inept the authorities and white staff were in regards to understanding the growing sense of nationalism on campus. He charges Sobukwe with “attacking both the white staff and white rule in general. ... The white staff sat silently through it all, but from that time speeches at farewell socials were barred, and many white staff ceased to attend.”<sup>95</sup>

There was little the administration could do to punish Sobukwe and Mokhehle as the two students had already completed their studies. Temba Hleli was not as fortunate. Hleli, the speaker chosen to represent the continuing students, was expelled following the end of year farewell celebration. Dent’s response to the evening of speeches is illuminating and

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<sup>92</sup> Sobukwe, “Completer’s Social Speech,”; Makalima, interview by author.

<sup>93</sup> Pogrand, *How Can Man Die Better*, 39.

<sup>94</sup> Govinden, interview by author; Sobukwe founded the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania in 1959, but was imprisoned in 1960 for three years. After serving his sentence, he was detained for six more years on Robben Island, after which he was released and banned to his home of Kimberley, where despite facing severe restrictions, he opened a law practice.

provides a framework for understanding the unrest at Fort Hare in the first half of the 1950s. He wrote that the students were trying to turn a liberal institution “with a purely educational purpose into a recruiting ground for party factions” and that they advocated methods which “were of the Nazi pattern.”<sup>96</sup> Hleli was, according to Dent, “responsible for an impertinent and bad mannered speech in which, among other things, he described the Europeans in South Africa ‘as the scum of Europe, who had come to fill their bellies and their pockets.’”<sup>97</sup> To Dent, the evening’s speeches represented

a planned attempt to use the opportunity for a propaganda which has no proper place here [Fort Hare]. To the staff it appeared as a piece of planned impertinence. We had been treated to a show of discourtesy that evening which was a disgrace.<sup>98</sup>

Hleli’s sponsor, Dr. M. Capcan, wrote back to Dent complaining that Hleli was given a “raw and unfair deal.” He wrote, “If a Native College treats the African in the way Fort Hare has treated Hleli, then I am not surprised to find restlessness among the Africans.”<sup>99</sup> Yet Dent never considered listening to the students’ political strivings. “Many young people ... imagine that they are free to do and say just what they please,” he wrote. He viewed the students as impetuous and immature, lacking “restraint and courtesy,”<sup>100</sup> a stance that ensured his already poor relationship with the students would only worsen.

It had long been the policy of Fort Hare to avoid becoming an agency for political change. The politically charged 1949 Completer’s Social was an attempt to alter that. Recognizing what he saw as a deficiency, Sobukwe asked for the college to “express and lead African thought.”<sup>101</sup> The result was an increasingly strong call on the part of the students and particularly the YL to reject the authority of the college. The missionaries were now more

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<sup>95</sup> Cragg, “Fort Hare,” 37.

<sup>96</sup> Dent to Dr. M Capcan, 23 January 1950. Temba Hleli Student File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>97</sup> Dent to Dr. M Capcan, 19 January 1950. Temba Hleli Student File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>98</sup> Dent to Dr. M Capcan and B.C. Hleli, 13 January 1950. Temba Hleli Student File, Fort Hare Papers.

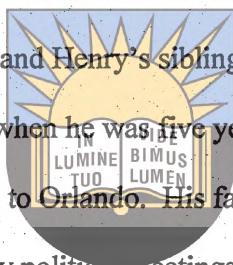
<sup>99</sup> Dr. M. Capcan to Dent, 26 February 1950. Temba Hleli Student File. Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>100</sup> Dent to Dr. M Capcan, 23 January 1950.

than ever before closely associated with the notion of trusteeship. And although there had been minor grievances against missionary paternalism in earlier years, the new philosophy articulated by Sobukwe indicated a conviction that there was little or no distinction between university and national politics.



Henry Makgothi was at Fort Hare with Sobukwe and was a founding member of the Victoria East Branch of the YL. He was born and raised in Pimville, near Johannesburg, where his father was a schoolteacher and his mother a domestic servant. Education was emphasized in the Makgothi household and Henry's siblings were all sent to boarding schools following their mother's death when he was five years old. Makgothi stayed with his father in Pimville before the two moved to Orlando. His father was politically active and Makgothi remembers him going to many political meetings. As a child, he was puzzled by the fact that his father was constantly on the move. Later he came to realize that it was due to his political activity. "He knew most of the leaders of the ANC. Sol Plaatje was a personal friend of his and he had a great admiration for him. ... He was friendly and close to people in the ANC, people like [A.P.] Mda." Makgothi recalls Mda providing him with some of his first lessons in politics: "We used to hang around ... and he would call us in the street and talk to us about political questions and encourage us to attend political meetings."<sup>102</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
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In 1939, his father joined the army and Makgothi went to live with an aunt in Sophiatown. There, he helped his aunt, who ran a clothes-washing stand, by carrying washing on his head on his way to school. Although his father had been active politically, Makgothi didn't begin to develop a keen interest in politics until high school. He enrolled at St. Peter's Secondary School in Johannesburg in 1942, where he was a classmate of Joe

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<sup>101</sup> Sobukwe, "Completer's Social Speech."

Matthews. “When I got to St. Peter’s it was a new world to me,” he says. “My father asked me, ‘which school would you like to go to?’ And I just said, ‘well I’d like to go to St. Peter’s.’” That choice turned out to be significant for Makgothi because he met Oliver Tambo at the school. Tambo, who graduated from Fort Hare in 1943, was his teacher in mathematics and science. “He was a man who liked to challenge you to think about things. Bring a problem and talk about a problem to you and get you to think. And then only later on you’d realize my God, this was related to this, that and the other,” says Makgothi. The first impression Tambo made on him was not that of a politician. “He never came to you and preached and said look, this is like this. No, no, no. He made you think about things and that is how I started learning about politics. Not in a direct fashion.”<sup>103</sup>



Makgothi became very close to Tambo, serving as his personal assistant. “I looked after his room ... I was assigned to him ... and I really enjoyed that. ... I’d go to his room, study in his room, and he taught me a lot of things. Not in a direct way, but I just watched him.” As their relationship deepened, in addition to picking up Tambo’s love for music, Makgothi immersed himself in his mentor’s enthusiasm for politics. At St. Peter’s, Makgothi also met Joe Matthews, the head of the school’s Youth League branch. Makgothi describes Matthews, the son of ANC leader Z.K. Matthews, as being “ahead of” the rest of the students in terms of political understanding. As Makgothi grew older and his thinking became more advanced, Tambo began to speak in more overtly political terms. Together with Matthews, Tambo “would now give us ... political education, tell us about the ANC and the whole struggle...interpret our history in the struggle mode,” said Makgothi.<sup>104</sup> Influenced by both Matthews and Tambo, he joined the ANC sometime around 1944, eventually becoming a Youth League committee member at St. Peter’s.

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<sup>102</sup> Makgothi, interview by author.

By the time Makgothi entered Fort Hare in 1948 he had already been formally introduced into politics. However, once at Fort Hare, his political understanding matured. “Fort Hare for us, it helped us to find ourselves, to find ourselves in a world in which we could have been swallowed up and ended up being just rubbish,” says Makgothi.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, discussion and debate permeated the campus. Rama Thumbadoo (’46-’49) says,

In the hostels ... we’d talk about the political situation. And we had debating societies. And we got the East London newspaper, the *Daily Dispatch*. We used to read that, about what was going on in the outside world. The Christian Union Hall had a radio and we used to listen to the news. In Beda Hostel, it was a regular feature to have hostel meetings. ... It was something that was looked forward to. ... We discussed matters relating to the hostel, but that is where ... we had this political thinking coming in.<sup>106</sup>



In Makgothi’s first year, he witnessed one of the results of this increasingly politically charged atmosphere. “The first thing that happened at Fort Hare is we opened a branch of the Youth League,” he says. He attributes the development of his political consciousness to being in the right place at the right time. He grew up around A.P. Mda. In high school, Tambo and Joe Matthews influenced him. And at Fort Hare, again, he was fortunate to come in contact with outstanding political figures. Rubbing shoulders with people like future Basutoland Congress Party President Ntsu Mokhehle, Sobukwe, future President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe (’50-’51), future ANC Secretary-General Duma Nokwe (’47-’50), Ntatho Motlana (’46-’48), an Africanist who was to become medical doctor to Mandela and Sobukwe, and Matthews, who moved with Makgothi from St. Peter’s to Fort Hare, his involvement deepened. He says,

<sup>103</sup> op. cit.

<sup>104</sup> op. cit.

<sup>105</sup> op. cit.

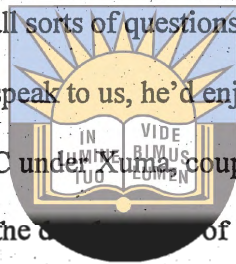
<sup>106</sup> Rama Thumbadoo, interview by author, Durban, 25 April 1999.

[l]ook, I went to Fort Hare when I was eighteen. I left Fort Hare five years later when I was 23 and a lot of my political understanding matured when I was in Fort Hare...I'm telling you we in the Youth League, we said to ourselves, look...we have a role to play out there...We are not just going to disappear in society and we thought that was the weakness of the intellectuals before us, left Fort Hare and just got swallowed up. They didn't seem to make any impact on the lives of people. So we thought we had a mission.<sup>107</sup>

### The Z.K. Factor

Makgothi's peers were not the only people who influenced his political development at Fort Hare. Although Matthews, Mokhehle and Sobukwe were all his contemporaries in the Victoria East Youth League, he also learned a great deal from Joe's father, Z.K. Matthews.

“[We had] discussions with him about all sorts of questions relating to the struggle, the organization. And he liked that. He'd speak to us, he'd enjoy, and laugh.”<sup>108</sup> As previously mentioned, the revitalization of the ANC under Xuma, coupled with the war and the National



Party victory of 1948, had an effect on the development of student political activism at Fort Hare. However, one of the more intangible and immeasurable influences on student activism was that of Z.K. Matthews. Many interviewees speak of the role Matthews played in their political development. Asked about his father's influence on the students at Fort Hare, Joe says, “without Z.K., really, what have you got?”<sup>109</sup> And while Joe is obviously biased, there is some degree of truth in what he says. In Z.K. Matthews' autobiography, Monica Wilson writes,

[f]ew people realize what an influence he was to generations of students at Fort Hare. This naturally applied more specifically to those who actually attended lectures given by him, but many to whom he did not formally lecture admired him and came under his influence.<sup>110</sup>

Born in Barkley East in 1900, Matthews went to Lovedale High School before enrolling in a matriculation class at Fort Hare in 1918. He finished his BA degree at Fort Hare, becoming the school's first graduate on 3 May 1924. After a stint as headmaster at

<sup>107</sup> Makgothi, interview by author.

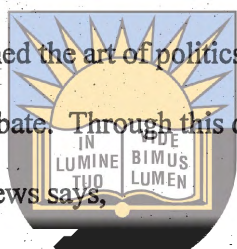
<sup>108</sup> op. cit.

<sup>109</sup> Matthews, interview by author.

<sup>110</sup> Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom For My People*, 116.

Adams College in Natal and study at Yale University in the United States where he earned an M.A., Matthews returned to Alice, accepting a lectureship in Native Law and Social Anthropology at Fort Hare in 1936. In 1944, following D.D.T. Jabavu's retirement, Matthews was promoted to professor and made head of the African Studies Department.

Although White calls Z.K. Matthews an educational "elitist" and more of a liberal than a nationalist, he acknowledges that many students became active through contact with Z.K. He writes, "students were drawn to hear the man who was able to dissect the many social problems they faced. Many learned the art of politics from Matthews."<sup>111</sup> Often, it would be in the form of argument or debate. Through this discussion, the students developed a reverence for their teacher. Joe Matthews says,



[s]tudents would argue with him. And he would say look here I'm the professor, I'm not prepared to discuss politics with you chaps, you must study your subjects. He would hoe the arguments and exchange heated arguments with students and that is why a lot of them when they leave the university would say that he was the man who inspired them. Because of what he was and what he was prepared to discuss, both in class and outside it.<sup>112</sup>

Godfrey Pitje, who was an opponent of Z.K. Matthews later in the 1940s, speaks of the professor's influence during the 1942 Beda Hall student strike: "I remember several science students discussing his influence. ... Z.K. offered to speak to the students but they turned down the suggestion on the grounds that once he had spoken, the strike would collapse."<sup>113</sup> Indeed, a type of fearful respect developed for Matthews. Although the militant youth of the Youth League thought Z.K.'s views to be accomodationist, they were nevertheless constantly in awe of his ability to win any debate by calmly dissecting and analyzing the political situation in the country or on the campus. Makgothi talks of Matthews' prowess:

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<sup>111</sup> White, "Z.K. Matthews and the Formation of the ANC Youth League," 128.  
<sup>112</sup> Matthews, interview by author.  
<sup>113</sup> Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom For My People*, 116.

So the Professor...he was a brilliant man, absolutely brilliant. We would go at him ... take up certain positions on certain issues and we'd go and clear it up with him and he'll say, sit down here and let's talk about this thing. And then when you leave you feel, no man, you've been cheated somehow [laughs].<sup>114</sup>

Intent on showing off their militancy, the students provoked a conflict with their professor and mentor. Matthews, an extremely serious man, was staunchly independent-minded and this led the more militant students to label him a conservative. He would not allow the Youth League to dictate his thoughts and actions and was therefore regarded with suspicion at times. However, Matthews was not interested in a popularity contest and would never give up his independence for political gain. Isaac Mabindisa ('59-'62) says,

[s]ome of the students thought Z.K. Matthews was a very conservative man because students wanted adventure, that you could always challenge the government and it was going to fall tomorrow. ... I remember when Mandela was first sentenced to a prison term. We were standing outside the dining hall ... and there was an [announcement] on the noticeboard that he had been sentenced to I think three years imprisonment. We thought, oh well, when he comes out, by the time he comes out, we'll be in [mysterious laughter]...I think people like Matthews knew that this was going to be a very long struggle and therefore he didn't encourage these adventures, and some students didn't like him because of that.<sup>115</sup>

University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

White points out that the clash between Matthews and the YL was inevitable. He writes, "Matthews' influence at Fort Hare was seen as being too strong and his political stance was too moderate for the likes of Mda."<sup>116</sup> Calling Matthews "most disgusting" and his views, close to those of "the European liberal," a "positive danger to African freedom," Mda, along with Pitje, generated anti-Matthews sentiment amongst the Youth League members.<sup>117</sup>

The rift between Matthews and the Youth Leaguers eventually grew so wide that Matthews and Pitje were not on speaking terms. A vote of no confidence in Matthews as the President of the Cape Congress was even passed. Makgothi explained:

At one stage when I was secretary of the Youth League we got a bit annoyed. There was a conference of the ANC coming and we thought we'll have it out, we'll say some nasty things about the Professor, that he's not supporting us [laughs]. I think we sent Sobukwe as our

<sup>114</sup> Makgothi, interview by author.

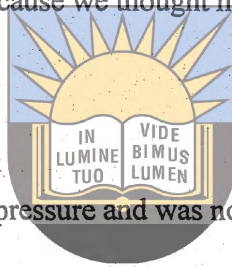
<sup>115</sup> Isaac Mabindisa, interview by author, Bisho, 18 November 1998.

<sup>116</sup> White, "Z.K. Matthews and the Formation of the ANC Youth League," 130.

<sup>117</sup> op. cit., 134.

representative to the conference to go and state our case, the difficulties we had in organizing at Fort Hare despite the fact that the Professor was there [laughs].<sup>118</sup>

Mongosuthu Buthelezi was another of the Youth Leaguers that came under Matthews' influence. He recalls that some of the YL members questioned the fact that Matthews had participated in the Native Representative Council (NRC). He remembers the students inviting Matthews to a meeting to respond to demands that he should resign his position in the ANC because the NRC was a government structure. Buthelezi says, "I remember actually with amusement that some of us who knew how competent Professor Matthews was were not overly keen that he should be invited because we thought he would just scuttle us. Because he was very, very able."<sup>119</sup>



Matthews did not give in to YL pressure and was not disturbed by it. Makgothi says, "the Professor, that didn't ruffle him. He [took] it in stride. He was a very levelheaded person."<sup>120</sup> Buthelezi recalls Matthews calmly getting the best of the students. When Ntsu Mokhehle asked the Professor if he believed in democracy, Matthews replied, "yes, Mr. Mokhehle. I do believe in democracy, although I sometimes have no confidence in the *demos*, i.e. the people. It's not so much the hands that you count when it comes to voting that matters, Mr. Mokhehle, but the heads behind them." Buthelezi adds, "[n]ow, for some of us at that age, it was just the sort of thing that we were afraid of when the suggestions was made that Professor Matthews should be invited."<sup>121</sup>

Z.K. Matthews was uninterested in responding to the superficialities of political rhetoric and intrigue and his prime concern was always the education of the African at Fort Hare. White writes, "Matthews would never have been able to sacrifice his independence for

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<sup>118</sup> Makgothi, interview by author.

<sup>119</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author.

<sup>120</sup> Makgothi, interview by author.

support based on restrictive conditions.”<sup>122</sup> Joe Matthews says that his father never gave in to pressure:

Are you going to give in just give into everything that people say because you want to be a hero and militant? Or are you going to tell them sorry, this is my policy and I don't agree with that? And that's what Z.K. did, always. He didn't shrink from saying no, I don't agree with that. And people would say well, he's a reluctant revolutionary. And I would say no, it's just his viewpoint.<sup>123</sup>

In spite of the apparent differences in philosophy, Matthews' influence on the political scene at Fort Hare was unquestionable. Students often made their way to the Matthews home in Alice for hours of discussion. Frieda Matthews feels that the depiction of the “angry young men” of the Youth League pitted against the older leaders of the ANC is not entirely accurate. In her memoir, she writes of this “misconception”: “I was often present when members of the Youth League of the ANC held discussions with older leaders in our home in Alice. These were frank and open on both sides, each treating the other with respect and admiration for their points of view.”<sup>124</sup> Indeed, although the relationship between Matthews and the youth leaguers might appear ambiguous when viewed from the outside, discussion with his students yields an image of a more positive relationship. A picture of a stern, dedicated teacher emerges from their recollections and the contact, although occasionally confrontational, seems to have been permeated with respect.

Makgothi says that although, at the time, they thought he was conservative, students could still sit down and talk with the professor. “He made you feel. He made you think,” says Makgothi.<sup>125</sup> It may have been Matthews' firm belief in the importance of study that caused the students to doubt his political militancy. Frieda Matthews writes,

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<sup>121</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author.

<sup>122</sup> White, “Z.K. Matthews and the Formation of the ANC Youth League,” 142.

<sup>123</sup> Matthews, interview by author.

<sup>124</sup> Matthews, *Remembrances*, 32.

<sup>125</sup> Makgothi, interview by author.

[t]ime and again young students would visit us to discuss with their teacher and leader the part they wished to play in our political predicament, and after listening attentively and respectfully to their proposals, my husband would quietly reply, 'The best you can do at this stage for the liberation of our people is to study and study hard and pass. We want qualified men who have learnt to think things out so as not to be pushed blindly into situations which will do no good at all and which may retard our progress.'<sup>126</sup>

One can imagine that this type of thinking would not appeal to students who were interested only in militancy. Makgothi says, "[w]e were interested in action, you know, action, 1949, we had a Programme of Action, which we wanted to see implemented. It meant certain things to us. It meant we must be militant [laughs]."<sup>127</sup>

Although he loved to debate politics with his students, Matthews was first and foremost, a university staff member. As such, he took any disrespect for college authority seriously. He was extremely careful to separate his political affiliation with the ANC from his role as Fort Hare Professor. Frieda Matthews writes,

[i]t did not matter how unhappy my husband was about a Senate decision. ... I have never known my husband to give students or his sons involved. He would stand against a move in Senate, and thus he missed what might be called popular approval from the students as a result.<sup>128</sup>

Repeatedly, Matthews would chastise the students for not concentrating on their studies.

Buthelezi recalls one such time fondly:

The Professor wasn't very happy when we were at rag and we dressed ourselves in all sort of things and we'd jive and so on. I remember one day I saw him sitting there in his black tie and so on, he was shaking his head. ... And then on Monday morning, I think we had a Roman Dutch Law class, his class, and he asked us some questions about the lessons we had done the previous week. And we were all very blank. And I remember him saying that sirs, you know he was saying sirs, he was poking fun at us, calling us sirs. Sirs, stop all these nonsensical things you do about the place. Start jiving on your books.<sup>129</sup>



Though Matthews clearly influenced a wide spectrum of students at Fort Hare, he had a particularly profound effect on his son, Joseph. In response to a question about the

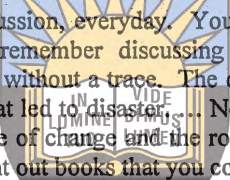
<sup>126</sup> Matthews, *Remembrances*, 37.

<sup>127</sup> Makgothi, interview by author.

<sup>128</sup> Matthews, *Remembrances*, 38.

<sup>129</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author.

influence Oliver Tambo had on him while studying at St. Peter's, Joe says, "[w]hen you are the son of Z.K., you won't be influenced by anyone. You don't need any other influences." Born in Durban on 17 June 1929, the eldest son of Z.K. and Frieda, Joe describes his family as "very political." He completed his primary education at Lovedale, before moving on to St. Peter's, where he joined the ANC Youth League. "My dad was intensely political and he was one of the leading figures in the country politically. And we had our own ... library [which] was full of political material and books." Joe remembers consistently learning from his father:



There was a lot of argument and discussion, everyday. You had discussions and sometimes they would be quite profound. I remember discussing with him the whole issue of civilizations ... that had gone virtually without a trace. The question was, what is it that each civilization did which was a change that led to disaster ... Now you don't often [see] a father and son discuss the merits or otherwise of change and the roles of civilizations, but with him you could do it. ... He would even point out books that you could read.<sup>130</sup>

Thus, when he arrived at St. Peter's, other students felt that politically speaking, he was ahead of them. He became the chairman of the YL branch at St. Peter's and earned a reputation as a die-hard. Joe entered Fort Hare in 1947 and became the secretary of the Youth League when it was founded in 1948. "I can't say I got my political consciousness from Fort Hare," says Joe, who adds, "I got it from my parents, obviously."<sup>131</sup>

### The Early Fifties

Although Buthelezi says that he learned politics from his "mother's knee," his real political education occurred at Fort Hare under the watchful eye of Matthews. Born on 27 August 1928 in Mahlabatini, Zululand, his mother was the granddaughter of King Cetshwayo and daughter of King Dinizulu. His father was the grandson of Chief Mnyamana Buthelezi, Prime Minister to King Cetshwayo. Buthelezi grew up in a traditional household, spending

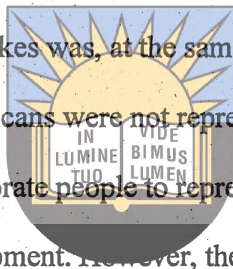
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<sup>130</sup> Matthews, interview by author.

<sup>131</sup> op. cit.

his early years as a herd-boy. As a child, his mother regaled him with tales of Zulu rebellion, particularly of the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906.<sup>132</sup> He remembers in his early childhood, the Zulu regent, Prince Mshiyeni calling a big political convention that was attended by Chief Albert Luthuli. Dr. J.L. Dube frequented the regent's quarters, along with Edgar Brookes, with whom Buthelezi came into contact at Adams College.<sup>133</sup>

Buthelezi attended Impumalanga Primary School from 1934-43 before enrolling at Adams College in Amanzimtoti in 1944. His formal political education began at Adams, where Brookes was the Principal. Brookes was, at the same time, a senator in Cape Town representing the Africans of Natal. Africans were not represented in Parliament, but they were allowed to select through an electorate people to represent them in the Senate. Brookes had an influence on Buthelezi's development. However, the principal was not the only person who had an effect on Buthelezi. "I met many graduates of Fort Hare who were my teachers. ... I think that they had an influence on me [as well]," he says.<sup>134</sup>



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After he matriculated from Adams, some members of the Buthelezi family opposed the continuation of Buthelezi's education. Led by Chief Maliyamakhanda, the regent of the family and Buthelezi's uncle, the call was made to discontinue Buthelezi's schooling. Temkin suggests this was because Maliyamakhanda saw a relationship between Buthelezi's education and his interest in politics. Once, Buthelezi had been seen in the company of radical journalist Jordan Ngubane. Family members even branded Buthelezi a communist and follower of M.B. Yengwa, a leading member of the Youth League of the ANC.<sup>135</sup> The

<sup>132</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author.

<sup>133</sup> Temkin. *Gatsha Buthelezi*, 31.

<sup>134</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author.

<sup>135</sup> Temkin, *Gatsha Buthelezi*, 31.

regent felt that Buthelezi had to steer clear of politics in order to prepare to serve his people later in life.

Afraid that Buthelezi would get caught up in the turbulent politics of the time, Maliyamakhanda refused to pay for his nephew's further education. However, Buthelezi's mother stepped in. Believing that the tribe required learned leaders, and fulfilling her dead husband's wish to educate their son, she supported Buthelezi as he entered Fort Hare in 1948.<sup>136</sup> Buthelezi's classmates at Fort Hare included Joe Matthews, Ntsu Mokhehle, Robert Sobukwe, Robert Mugabe, Duma Nokwe and Henry Makgothi. Amongst his first year roommates in an Iona rondavel were Njoroge Mungai, the former Kenyan Foreign Minister and Orton Chirwa ('48-'50), the former Minister of Justice in Malawi later kidnapped and imprisoned by the regime of Kastings Bunda. Perhaps most importantly, Buthelezi enrolled in Z.K. Matthews' classes. Matthews taught one of Buthelezi's major subjects, Bantu Administration, and two of his minor subjects, Roman Dutch Law and Criminal Law. "I regarded him not only as my teacher, but really as one of my mentors. I had great admiration for him," says Buthelezi.<sup>137</sup>

At Fort Hare in the early and active days of the Victoria East Youth League, Buthelezi could not help but become politically involved. Influenced by other students, including Joe Matthews, he joined the branch when it was first set up. He explains the decision to join as "a natural step" in that his uncle was Dr. Pixley Seme, the founder of the ANC, and he grew up in that tradition.<sup>138</sup> In 1949, Buthelezi's roommate was Temba Hleli and Buthelezi led the protest against his friend's expulsion following the Completer's Social speech. And although Hleli was never reinstated, the incident gave Buthelezi a chance to test his

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<sup>136</sup> op. cit., 30.

leadership skills for the first time.<sup>139</sup> R.A. Pillay recalls Buthelezi being constantly engaged in discussion with Joe Matthews and Abdool Karrim Essack ('50), an Indian student:

These three fellows always used to be locked in political discussions. They'd walk from Beda Hall and go right up to the dining hall, which was some half a kilometer away. These chaps would be talking from this end to that end and they'd stop twenty times in between. They had missed their lunch. But they were still carrying on. And what they'd be arguing about at the time was, Gatsha and Joe were talking about passive resistance as being the key political solution to the country. And there was this Indian, on the other hand, this fellow Esack, who was saying you fellows are talking nonsense. ... This was quite a funny thing to see [laughs]. An Indian on one side saying no passive resistance and the ANC boys on the other side saying they should go for passive resistance.<sup>140</sup>

By 1950, the Victoria East Branch had already made its mark. It was influential in pushing for the adoption of the Programme of Action, helped lead the nurses in their strike at Victoria Hospital and was the context for the political maturation of Robert Sobukwe in his Completer's Social speech. Burchell writes, "[b]y the 1950s, the impetus underlying most of the troubles on campus could be traced to a student black nationalism."<sup>141</sup> In May of 1950, the entire SRC resigned, charging the Principal with abrogating the constitution of the SRC for refusing to grant permission for a mass meeting of students to discuss the decision of a relay race judge.<sup>142</sup> However, by 1950, it was the Youth League, and not the SRC that controlled the campus and the resignation of the SRC members had little effect on political activism at Fort Hare. On 9 September 1950, the Youth Leaguers continued their move towards overtly political action when they decided to boycott the visit to campus of the Governor General, G. Brand van Zyl. Frieda Matthews wrote,

the Senate met and made feverish arrangements for this august occasion. Tea at such and such a place, lunch in the neighbouring town (for Whites only) and a meeting with the students from three to four that afternoon. The students, without the knowledge of the staff met to discuss this: How can we welcome the head of State of which we are not citizens?<sup>143</sup>

<sup>137</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author.

<sup>138</sup> op. cit.

<sup>139</sup> Temkin, *Gatsha Buthelezi*, 36.

<sup>140</sup> R.A. Pillay, interview by author, Durban, 29 April 1999.

<sup>141</sup> Burchell, "The Emergence and Growth of Student Militancy," 154.

<sup>142</sup> Minutes of Senate Meeting, 14 June 1950, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>143</sup> Matthews, *Remembrances*, 38.

Upset over the showing of a segregated film at Beacon Bioscope in Alice, the student meeting Frieda referred to was actually called to discuss boycotting the cinema.<sup>144</sup> R.A.

Pillay ('50-'53) says,

[Dewey] brought a picture called "Unfaithful". ... And when we went to go ... he said no, we can't come in there. This picture's banned for the non-whites. So we got really angry. We came back to the university and had a big meeting there outside the dining hall and say look this chappy is insulting us. He depends on our custom, now he embarrasses us by bringing pictures like this. ... So we'll boycott this Dewey fellow, we won't go to the films anymore.<sup>145</sup>

It was at this meeting outside the dining hall, just two days before the Governor-General's arrival, that the idea of staying away from his visit to campus came up. Pillay continues, "[o]ne up-start called Dennis Merkel ('50) ... jumped up there and said let's boycott the Governor General. ... He's a symbol of our oppression in this country. Now why must we go there and listen to him. So that's all he had to say and it was decided we're boycotting this fellow."<sup>146</sup> Calling the Governor General an "embodiment of British imperialism," the Youth Leaguers led the move against attending the meeting he was to address.<sup>147</sup> In the principal's report on the incident, Dent wrote, "[t]his was not a case of a few students deciding to absent themselves from an official Function; it was an organised boycott, and was therefore a serious matter." The effort was indeed organized. When Saturday afternoon came, more than two-thirds of the student body stayed away from the mandatory meeting. Dent continued, "By 3 p.m. it was apparent that a large proportion of the students were boycotting the meeting."<sup>148</sup>

Principal Dent had made attendance at the assembly compulsory and the students' open defiance was taken seriously. In the Matthews home, Joe and his cousin Peter felt the

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<sup>144</sup> Beacon Bioscope was located in Alice and run by a Mr. Dewey. Fort Hare students and staff frequented the bioscope, as it was one of the few sources of entertainment in Alice. From time to time, segregated films were shown and over the years, the bioscope was a consistent target of student protest.

<sup>145</sup> Pillay, interview by author.

<sup>146</sup> op. cit.

<sup>147</sup> Buthelezi, Letter to C.P. Dent, 18 October 1950, Buthelezi File, Fort Hare Papers.

wrath of Z.K. The Professor had been away during the Governor General's visit and was shocked to learn that his son and nephew did not participate in the festivities. Frieda

Matthews recalls:

He asked, well, how did the Governor-General's reception go off? Silence. After what seemed like an eternity, but must have been only a second or so, Joe said, 'We did not go.' 'You did not what?' 'We did not go because the students decided to boycott the meeting and after all, we are right, this man stands for all that we are fighting against.'<sup>149</sup>

Joe says, "[m]y father was very, very angry. You see he was now in a difficulty. The authorities had to take action against the students and both my cousin and I had been in the boycott."<sup>150</sup> Buthelezi recalls that the boys were "not even allowed to sleep at home that night."<sup>151</sup>



Outside the Matthews home, Senate meetings were called and long discussions were held on how to deal with mass disobedience. The Senate affirmed its right to require students to attend functions arranged by the college and absence from the assembly was considered an act of insubordination. Students were forced to sign a declaration acknowledging their disobedience and pledging to honor all college rules.<sup>152</sup> Only the clemency of the Governor General prevented the Senate from taking strong action against the students. Communicating with Principal Dent, van Zyl made it known that he would rather have the incident swept under the carpet.<sup>153</sup> Yet the Governor General's good will did not close the incident. As was becoming customary at Fort Hare, those who chose not to participate in the boycott paid for their cooperation with the authorities at the hand of campus vigilantes. Dent wrote,

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<sup>148</sup> Dent Report, Vol. 2 SRC, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>149</sup> Frieda Matthews, *Remembrances*, 38.

<sup>150</sup> Matthews, interview by author.

<sup>151</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author.

<sup>152</sup> Minutes of Senate Meetings, 11 and 12 September 1950, Fort Hare Papers.

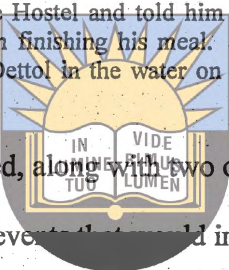
<sup>153</sup> Minutes of Senate Meeting, 13 September 1950, Fort Hare Papers.

[s]ome students assume the right to enforce the boycott by secret persecution called 'lynching' of students who do not obey the instructions of the 'caucus.' This lynching has in the past taken various forms: attack in the dark, or soaking a students' bed with water.<sup>154</sup>

Following a lengthy but unscientific investigation, Buthelezi was implicated in the wetting of W.M. Chirwa's bed and was expelled from Fort Hare shortly before he was due to graduate.<sup>155</sup> The evidence against Buthelezi, from a student deposition, is as follows:

Muhoya ('45-'50) washed in a bucket of water, in which he had put some Dettol, in the bathroom. F. Simon ('50-'53) and Buthelezi were washing there at the same time. When Muhoya had finished washing, Buthelezi asked if he might have the bucket of water, and took it away, leaving the other two men still in the bathroom. When Muhoya went from the bathroom to his room he found Chirwa's bed soaked with water. Leaving to go to breakfast, he met Chirwa in the courtyard of the Hostel and told him about it. At breakfast, Muhoya noticed that Buthelezi also was late in finishing his meal. Soon after ... both Chirwa and Muhoya claim that they could smell Dettol in the water on Chirwa's bed and Mrs. Rodgers confirms this.<sup>156</sup>

On these grounds, Buthelezi was expelled, along with two other students, including Rosette Ndziba ('48-'50), setting off a string of events that would involve some of the nation's more well known political figures.



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As Buthelezi was the successor to a chief, his expulsion had implications outside Fort Hare. Letters from people like the Secretary for Native Affairs arrived at Fort Hare inquiring about the incident. A telegram asking Dent to reconsider arrived from Councilor W. Champion saying that Buthelezi may have "been influenced badly."<sup>157</sup> Buthelezi himself appealed to Dent on 27 September 1950 to allow him to write his exams outside Fort Hare. However, he refused to admit his guilt in the incident and it was only after his uncle, Cyprian Buthelezi, another uncle, South African Native National Congress founder Pixley Seme, and Senator Edgar Brookes interceded on his behalf that Dent agreed to allow Buthelezi to write his exams in Durban.

<sup>154</sup> Dent, Letter to Native Commissioner, 18 October 1950, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>155</sup> W.M. Chirwa later became a representative in the Legislative Assembly of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

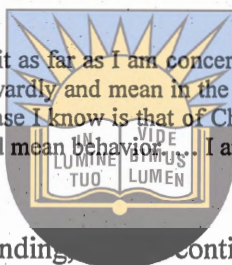
<sup>156</sup> Student deposition, Vol. 1 SRC, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>157</sup> W. Champion, Telegram to Dent, November 1950, Buthelezi File, Fort Hare Papers.

Once granted permission to take his exams, Buthelezi finally came clean, but he refused to apologize. In a lengthy letter written to Principal Dent, Buthelezi outlined the circumstances that led to the “lynching” of Chirwa. Buthelezi describes how Chirwa advocated the boycott of the Governor General’s meeting, pretended to stay away from the meeting and then “turned right around and went to the CU Hall to give the official welcome to the Governor General against which he had advised quite a number of students.”<sup>158</sup>

Buthelezi continues,

[t]here is nothing to be ashamed of in it as far as I am concerned. I felt and still feel that Mr. W.M. Chirwa’s behavior was very cowardly and mean in the extreme. ... I was not a member of any ‘pressure group.’ ... The only case I know is that of Chirwa and the reasons are those I have stated above, i.e. his cowardly and mean behavior. ... I am not apologizing for this.<sup>159</sup>



Buthelezi’s expulsion notwithstanding, continued to enliven the atmosphere at Fort Hare in the early 1950s. Nationalists dominated the student agenda in 1952, an especially busy year. When the Report of the Commission on Bantu Education was published, the students totally rejected it. And when Dent gave a speech expressing his approval of some parts of it, the students abandoned lectures and staged a sit-down protest in front of Stewart Hall.<sup>160</sup> It was not unheard of for a visiting preacher whose sermon did not meet the students’ approval to “later [find] that their tires have been deflated under cover of darkness.”<sup>161</sup>

Yet despite an increasing disenchantment with the parochialism of Dent and the missionary atmosphere on campus, Fort Harian discontent with the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) dominated discussion. There was a growing sentiment on campus

<sup>158</sup> Buthelezi, Letter to Dent, 18 October 1950.

<sup>159</sup> op. cit.

<sup>160</sup> Cragg, “Fort Hare,” 37.

<sup>161</sup> Beale, *Apartheid and University Education*, 57.

against what were perceived as the patronizing and unreliable approaches of liberal whites that eventually resulted in the withdrawal of the student body from NUSAS. The swelling disillusionment with NUSAS indicated a continuing movement towards the ideas of black nationalism and anti-trusteeship that Sobukwe had first articulated three years earlier. Frank Mdlalose ('50-'53) says,

[w]e got into the groove of saying the liberals, like the missionaries, are people that cannot be trusted because they will talk fine and smoothly to us but they won't act properly. So let's have a clear-cut difference between us and them. Cut them off completely. NUSAS is one of them. Cut them off from our action.<sup>162</sup>

In June of 1952, NUSAS President Patricia Arnett came to Fort Hare with a small delegation to convince the students not to pull out of NUSAS. She met with SRC members. According to Mdlalose, Arnett had no chance of convincing them. "I was on the SRC. We were all against it and said, 'forget about it, we're pulling out.'" Mdlalose recalls it as a time when "we were revolting against liberals."<sup>163</sup> The students believed that the stance assumed by NUSAS did not fit in with the African nationalism they felt was required to gain political equality.

After being rebuffed by the SRC, Arnett wanted to talk to the students. Mdlalose explained what happened next: "We didn't want Patricia Arnett to bamboozle the students, to fall for her and NUSAS. So we had to organize." Mdlalose and others devised a scheme whereby it would be impossible for Arnett to sway the student meeting in her favor. He describes how they strategically positioned detractors of NUSAS in the crowd:

We put Galera in the gallery. He was a powerful man, to argue against NUSAS. We put so and so there, we put so and so there. But our most powerful man, a gallery man only. When Chirwa [SRC President W. Chirwa] asked for speakers, everyone raised their hands. I was up there with Chirwa [calling on people to speak]. That's the hand I see. That's the hand. Then at that time, all the time I'm working up to it, Galera is getting restless, stomping the ground. So I say, let's have someone from the gallery. It was in the CU Hall. Then Galera came up

<sup>162</sup> Mdlalose, interview by author.

<sup>163</sup> op. cit.

and blasted the whole issue of NUSAS. And I could see the fingers of Patricia Arnett trembling.<sup>164</sup>

Having gained the upper hand, Mdlalose relates how he orchestrated the defeat of NUSAS:

At that stage, everyone wanted me to talk. So I said, Mr. Chairman, I want to make an appeal to you. We've heard a powerful argument against NUSAS, but you know we are democratic. We must hear the opposite view. ... Those that are for NUSAS put up your hands. Then of course few are brave enough to put up their hands after Galera's powerful argument. And I know who is a great debater. I wasn't going to point at the great debater. I point at the weakest man among the lot. He came up and couldn't express himself, until it ultimately became clear that we wouldn't lose.<sup>165</sup>

It is likely that the rejection of NUSAS would have taken place without Mdlalose's plot as "it had become apparent that the commitment of the national organization [NUSAS] to building a new dispensation was rather half-hearted.<sup>166</sup> When in her visit to campus Arnett reiterated that her organization had, since its foundation, pursued an avowedly non-political role and that politics did not fall into its activities, it was clear the rift between NUSAS and Fort Hare students was wide. There was also some sensitivity on the part of Fort Harians to alleged racial slights, especially during conferences, and further dismay when, in 1950, NUSAS pulled out of the International Union of Students (IUS) because it claimed that IUS had become communistic.<sup>167</sup> Following the chicanery of Mdlalose and his compatriots, a vote was taken and withdrawal from NUSAS was approved by a count of 147 to 67. The statement presented to the Fort Hare administration reads,

[t]hat in view of the fact that the policy and activities of NUSAS fail to satisfy the Non-Europeans on the whole, and as this body has openly and unequivocally refused to recognize even the principle of political equality and, seeing that it is of no positive benefit to us we resolve that Fort Hare students as a Body secede from it.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>164</sup> op. cit.

<sup>165</sup> op. cit.

<sup>166</sup> Burchell, "The Emergence and Growth of Student Militancy," 157.

<sup>167</sup> "Is Fort Hare Anti-White," *The Fort Harian*, 1956, 9. Quoted in Burchell, *The Emergence and Growth of Student Militancy*, 157.

<sup>168</sup> Mass Meeting Resolution, 31 May 1952, Vol. 2 SRC, Fort Hare Papers.

According to Mdlalose, the administration did not take kindly to the students' secession from NUSAS. Dent identified himself with the liberals and took the students' revolt personally. He and his brothers had dedicated their lives to the education of Africans. Dent was hurt by the students' rejection of both the liberals and missionaries and could never quite come to terms with their disapproval.<sup>169</sup>

The growth of anti-NUSAS sentiment at Fort Hare coincided with the onset of the nationwide Defiance Campaign.<sup>170</sup> And, as had become customary, Fort Harians were in the middle of the action. With Z.K. Matthews in the United States, Dr. James Njongwe took over as acting president of the ANC in the Cape and interacted frequently with the Fort Hare students. He sent the likes of A.P. Mda, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and Moses Kotane to educate the students and prepare them for the Defiance Campaign. Mdlalose says,



### University of Fort Hare

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These are the people we interacted with in 1952, before the Defiance Campaign. And they put us into the mold of it. Njongwe particularly as the President in the Cape interacted with us a great deal. We were learning freedom songs in Ntselemanzi ... ANC Youth League was alive in Ntselemanzi. We talked to people in the surrounding areas, Upper Gqumashe, Lower Gqumashe, Fort Beaufort. ... We got so involved that we did not even go to classes.<sup>171</sup>

It is safe to say that if Matthews had not left for the United States, such academic delinquency would not have been tolerated. However Njongwe did not intend students to miss classes and he eventually put his foot down. As the Defiance Campaign took off, the Fort Hare group pressed to be involved. The SRC passed a resolution commending the

<sup>169</sup> Mdlalose, interview by author.

<sup>170</sup> The Defiance Campaign was a civil disobedience campaign waged by the ANC and the South African Indian Congress in June 1952 that sought to bring about changes in government policy relating to pass laws, Bantu Authorities, Group Areas, separate representation of voters, and the suppression of communism. For a few months, the protesters disobeyed regulations such as curfew and pass laws, inviting arrest. They were successful in clogging prisons and courts and wreaking havoc in the administration of the apartheid regime. The government responded by introducing the Public Safety and Criminal Law Amendment Acts, putting an end to the protest. By the time the campaign petered out in November, 8,326 people had been arrested. The main achievement of the Defiance Campaign was to swell the ranks of the ANC to 100,000 people.

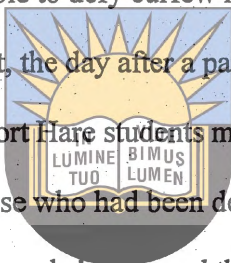
<sup>171</sup> Mdlalose, interview by author.

Defiance Campaign, saying that the students, “take pride in its [Campaign’s] heroes.”<sup>172</sup>

However the students were not content to remain on the sidelines. Mdlalose says,

We wrote to Njongwe saying now, we are going to defy. I don’t know how to transmit to you, we were all so powerfully strong, wanting to go to jail. Virtually 90% of the students at Fort Hare were behind us. Ready to go to jail. Njongwe sent a telegram back saying you have done very well so far. Your work over the Eastern Province is well known. Now the next duty you have is to go to the classroom and pass. I had to read that notice before the students. It was a most painful thing on our part. ... We were told not to defy. We couldn’t go against the leader. We were crying, but we were to obey.<sup>173</sup>

Although the students themselves did not defy, they were active in organizing the protest in Alice. They arranged for people to defy curfew laws and to sit on benches reserved for whites in the train station. In August, the day after a particularly large group of volunteers had been arrested in Alice, Fort Hare students marched into town and rallied in front of the courthouse in support of those who had been detained. Mdlalose says, “We’d organize the whole of Fort Hare to come and sing around the courthouse to disrupt things.”



University of Fort Hare

*Together in Excellence*

The peaceful protest of the students soon turned violent as police were called in. Mdlalose says,

[t]hey brought police from King Williams’ Town, from Fort Beaufort, from all over, a big group. We as the students, we just sang. Then we got the baton charge. That’s when I saw the ferocity of the police hitting us. We ran. I could never forget that the policeman who was the strongest in attacking us had a label, had a number, E331. I’m talking of 1952 and I want to tell you that I can never forget that number to my grave. Today I still see it clearly, E331. Hitting us, jumping over us, you fall down he stands over you, you run away, he pushes you.<sup>174</sup>

The police baton charge marked the last Defiance Campaign activity for the Fort Hare students. Following the incident in Alice, they took up legal action against the police. Many of the students had seen E331. However, their case was futile from the start. Mdlalose explains: “When they brought over the people to identify who had done this, that and the

<sup>172</sup> SRC resolution, 17 Aug 1952, Vol. 2 SRC, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>173</sup> Mdlalose, interview by author.

<sup>174</sup> op. cit.

other and we saw the man with E331, pushing his chest out to show that he was E331, of course we all booted that, that's not E331, the real man was not there."<sup>175</sup>



Following the Defiance Campaign, Mdlalose was elected President of the Victoria East Branch of the Youth League, a remarkable achievement for a student who had only become interested in politics two years earlier. Mdlalose was born on 29 November 1931 in Nqutu, a rural area in KwaZulu Natal. The last of five children, all boys, his father owned a small business and his mother was a teacher. "My father was very poor until he began a small business of his own," says Mdlalose. "Then we got better and better, as my brothers got out of school and me remaining alone." He attended a local primary school in Nqutu up to Standard Four before moving on to the Polela Institution, a "semi-high school." Mdlalose did his Standard Five and Six at Polela, in what he describes as two rather uneventful years. The only disturbance was a strike of students during 1944 protesting against the expulsion of some black teachers. The instructors had assaulted white students who had insulted them. This incident provided Mdlalose with one of his first glimpses of what he calls the "racial clash" in the country.<sup>176</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Mdlalose left Polela to do Standard Seven at St. Francis High School, Marianhill where he studied until he matriculated in 1949. Marianhill was a Roman Catholic School and Mdlalose was taught by Roman Catholic Sisters and some black teachers. Marianhill was a conservative school where "there were no politics," according to Mdlalose. "It was uneventful in terms of clashes between the races, but it was very good in terms of English, maths, botany." In 1950, Mdlalose entered Fort Hare, uninitiated politically. "When I got in there, I'd heard nothing about politics," he says. However, the YL was at the height of its

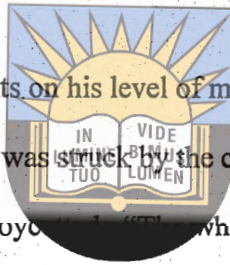
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<sup>175</sup> op. cit.

powers and Mdlalose's interest would soon be drawn. His older brother Edward was also at Fort Hare and was a member of the YL. "But he thought I was too young to join politics. He wasn't interested in telling me much about that," says Mdlalose. It was Mangosuthu Buthelezi, doing his third and final year, who got the younger Mdlalose brother involved.

Mdlalose says,

I met him on a Saturday and he told me there was a meeting of the Youth League over at Ntselemanzi. 'Have I heard about that?' 'No, I haven't heard about that.' 'Didn't your brother tell you?' 'No. Come, let's go.' So I went to Ntselemanzi. To my surprise, my brother was one of the speakers at Ntselemanzi. And so I got interested in this Youth League and I became a member.<sup>177</sup>



Disregarding his brother's thoughts on his level of maturity, Mdlalose became increasingly involved in YL activity. He was struck by the controversial nature of politics when the Governor General's visit was boycotted. The whole college became alive with events like that. It was black/White clashes at the social and political level in the country with resultant activity at the college," he says. As a younger member of the YL, Mdlalose was educated by the group's more senior radicals. "We got into ... groups, or cells," he said. "We had groups that were given lectures on politics. Fifty, Fifty-one, there was a lot of that."

Joe Matthews was a powerful influence on Mdlalose:

He was informed. He read African newspapers. He told us about Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. We did this in small groups because the Youth League was banned at Fort Hare. Our bible was *Time Longer than Rope* by Edward Roux. Then of course we also studied the *Communist Manifesto* and the introduction by Harold Laski.<sup>178</sup>

"You must have heard about this," Mdlalose says, readying himself to relate one of his favorite stories. "I did not touch her," he says. He proceeds to recount the tale of Frieda Matthews' graduation from Fort Hare in 1951, an event that influenced his political

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<sup>176</sup> op. cit.

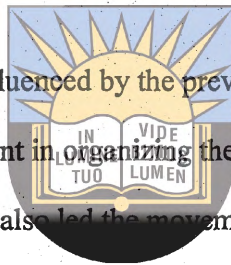
<sup>177</sup> op. cit.

<sup>178</sup> op. cit.

development a great deal. Mdlalose tells of one of the incidents that made him aware of the extent and absurdity of racial strife in South Africa:

Dr. A.J. Van Ryan who was vice-chancellor [chancellor] to Fort Hare had capped Mrs. Frieda Matthews. ... And then the parliament and the NP were taunting him saying we saw you in the pictures with Mrs. Matthews. And he said, 'but I didn't touch her.' Now that was put in the newspapers, the *Daily Dispatch*. ... And then it touched me that here is the wife of Professor Matthews who we respect so much, the vice-principal of Fort Hare, she is the librarian. And she's doing private studies and being capped. This one said, 'I did not touch her.' That infuriated us.<sup>179</sup>

Buthelezi recalls the incident as well, saying, "We have never forgotten that, that he was boasting that he didn't touch her, as if she was a leper."<sup>180</sup>



Mdlalose was of course, also influenced by the previously mentioned events of 1952 at Fort Hare. He was an active participant in organizing the Defiance Campaign, even receiving a beating from the police. He also led the movement for secession from NUSAS.

Mdlalose's incipient African nationalism is already evident in this reaction to NUSAS.

Despite reading Edward Roux and the *Communist Manifesto* at Fort Hare, Mdlalose says that his

political thinking at the time was completely against communism. ... When I read about communism, it was hard to understand it. The more I understood it and the more I read about what was happening in Russia, the more I disliked communism. ... I found myself going more and more towards Africanism.

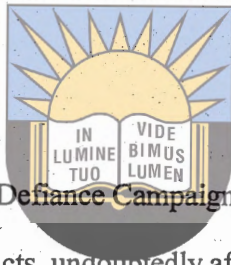
In 1955, while in Medical School, Mdlalose spoke out against the Freedom Charter, which he felt was evidence of "the communist element, which we had seen creeping into the ANC, gaining the upper hand."<sup>181</sup> When the PAC was formed, Mdlalose was invited to join, but he decided to remain with the ANC and try to reform it from within. The political nationalist in him, first visible in the 1952 battle opposing NUSAS, would remain a strong element of Mdlalose's political ideology throughout his career.

<sup>179</sup> op. cit.

<sup>180</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author.

<sup>181</sup> Mdlalose, interview by author.

A nationwide crackdown on opposition groups following the Defiance Campaign made 1953 a difficult year at Fort Hare for Mdlalose and the Youth Leaguers. At the end of July 1952, Nelson Mandela was arrested and charged with a violation of the Suppression of Communism Act, which had been passed in 1950. Along with 20 others, including Walter Sisulu, Mandela stood trial in Johannesburg in September. On 2 December, all 21 were found guilty of “statutory communism” and sentenced to nine months’ imprisonment. The sentence was suspended for two years, but the government onslaught continued. Fifty-two leaders around the country were served with six-month bans from attending any meetings or gatherings.<sup>182</sup>



The government response to the Defiance Campaign, which included the new Public Safety and Criminal Law Amendment Acts, undoubtedly affected life at Fort Hare. Government banning orders now restricted many of the YL leaders that frequented campus earlier in the decade. As chairman of the YL, Mdlalose and fellow Youth Leaguer Z.B. Molete ('51-'53) wanted to continue teaching YL principles in the cell system, as Joe Matthews had done a few years earlier. Yet post-Defiance Campaign South Africa provided new obstacles to organization. In addition to new nationwide government oppression, “spies were put into Fort Hare as students, but they were not students. We could see there was a man of thirty who was supposed to be studying,” says Mdlalose.<sup>183</sup> Logan Naidoo says, “[t]here were [informers] funded by the government and planted there to feed back information. So there was a climate of suspicion. You couldn’t talk as we did, even with your friends because anyone could be a spy.”<sup>184</sup> Activism at Fort Hare was dealt a serious

<sup>182</sup> Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 125.

<sup>183</sup> Mdlalose, interview by author.

<sup>184</sup> Logan Naidoo, interview by author, Durban, 28 April 1999.

blow by the infiltration. Mdlalose says, “[f]ifty-three was a difficult year and ANC work went down throughout the country because of the infiltration of the government.”<sup>185</sup>

### Fort Hare ‘High School’

With extra-parliamentary activity hampered nationwide by the government crackdown, the next two years witnessed a decrease in national political activity at Fort Hare and a return to the earlier, more domestic targets of protest which nonetheless cloaked deeper grievances: missionary authority, food and stringent rules and regulations. The activism of the first few years of the decade was replaced by suspicion, “suspicion of the college authorities, suspicion of (not all) Europeans, suspicion of one another.”<sup>186</sup> Cragg notes that “the growth of apartheid and African passive resistance movements of the 1950s ... intensified political feeling and one never knew what small incident might spark off trouble.”<sup>187</sup> The tenure of Principal Dent, which began in 1948 when Alexander Kerr retired, and had been somewhat overshadowed by militant YL activity, now became the focus of student attention. Dent had spent his entire professional career at Fort Hare, beginning in 1922, when he came to teach physics and chemistry.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Burchell writes that authoritarianism and repression increased at Fort Hare under Dent. Calling his attitudes on political and campus issues “dictatorial,” Burchell charges that he alienated both staff and students.<sup>188</sup> Logan Naidoo, a student from 1954-57 says that Dent was “a missionary who felt everybody must behave, read the bible at night and go to sleep.” His lasting image of Dent was of the principal prowling the streets for students

<sup>185</sup> Mdlalose, interview by author.

<sup>186</sup> Beale, *Apartheid and University Education*, 58.

<sup>187</sup> Cragg, *Fort Hare*, 34.

<sup>188</sup> Burchell, “The Pursuit of Relevance,” 62.

exceeding the college curfew. Naidoo tells how Dent, whose first initials were C.P. earned the nickname “College Private Detective” amongst the students:

The Tyumie River was virtually the boundary as far as Dent was concerned. If you got into Alice and were there after eight o'clock you were out of bounds. So he would stand on the bridge with a big trench coat and find out who came and who didn't. And if he got you, you were in for a lathering the next day. But he never got us. We would run and he couldn't run.<sup>189</sup>

Others, including Frank Mdlalose, preferred to call him “College Public Disgrace.” Buthelezi says Dent was “authoritarian by nature” and Mdlalose describes Dent's reign as a bumbling one where the Professor “lost his fiber, lost his respect. ... He made impromptu criticisms, wrong decisions and then Professor Matthews had to come and protect him, smooth things over.”<sup>190</sup>



Although Cragg describes Dent as “... and hard-working,” the Principal was never able to gain the complete trust and esteem of the students.<sup>191</sup> Kerr's disciplinary legacy seeped into Dent's management of the college and resulted in a growing tension between Dent and the students over domestic issues. Cragg notes that college and hostel rules often caused clashes, with the students ultimately ignoring regulations on hours of study, out-of-bounds and lights-out.<sup>192</sup> Compulsory daily morning services, a mandatory Sunday service and Wednesday night sermons often rankled with the students. A declaration by the SRC shows that the object of the students' ire was less the religion than the compulsion, as many of them came from at least somewhat religious families: as the SRC resolution put it, “[r]oll-signing in morning assembly is childish and responsibility for daily attendance should be left up to the student.”<sup>193</sup> The Principal and wardens often went around the hostels during the Sunday service to look for absentees. Yet many students

<sup>189</sup> Naidoo, interview by author.

<sup>190</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author; Mdlalose, interview by author.

<sup>191</sup> Cragg, *Fort Hare*, 33.

<sup>192</sup> *op. cit.*, 35.

<sup>193</sup> Vol. 2 SRC, 31 May 1952, Fort Hare Papers.

devised clever ways to avoid the proceedings without being caught and agitation against this service caused the authorities to make it optional after 1952.

During the first half of 1955, trouble began at Iona and also at Wesley House, which the students had taken to calling “Wesley High School.”<sup>194</sup> At a mass meeting, members of Iona drew up a resolution expressing their “grave dissatisfaction with their warden.” They declared, “a permanent struggle against [the warden’s] despotism,” and demanded, “THE IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION OF THE WARDEN OF THIS HOSTEL.”<sup>195</sup> Notices appeared on campus bulletin boards attacking the warden, James Rodgers, and other staff members. At the same time, the authorities issued new rules governing the visits by male students to the women’s hostel, Eluk. Logan Naidoo says, “[t]he high school attitude really became bad when they closed the women’s hostel.” When the students asked Dent to convene a mass meeting to discuss the new rules, he refused. Subsequent mass meetings, unauthorized by the authorities, were held on Sandile’s Kop, where the SRC decided to resign and the students resolved to boycott hostel prayers, meals, inter-institution sports and graduation, crowd the women’s hostel with visitors and mix men and women in seating at morning assemblies.

The boycott of graduation brought matters to a head late in April 1955. The students felt they were provoked into this action by Dent. Although the impetus for the boycott was the implementation of the new visiting hours, Andrew Masondo ('55-'57, '59), who arrived at Fort Hare three months before the strike, explains that the issue was much larger:

When we went on strike, many people, I think some of our parents thought, what were we doing? Why do we want to sleep in *mzana*?<sup>197</sup> But you see there was a principle that was

<sup>194</sup> Cragg, *Fort Hare*, 35.

<sup>195</sup> Vol. 2 SRC, May 1952, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>196</sup> Naidoo, interview by author.

<sup>197</sup> Women’s residences at Fort Hare are popularly called *mzana*.

involved. And the principle was that the senate had taken that decision to prohibit people going to *mzana* without consultation with the SRC.<sup>198</sup>

Naidoo agrees that the factors underlying the strike were never acknowledged by the authorities. “The real motive was suppression that was applied to us,” he says.<sup>199</sup>

Fort Hare officials reacted strongly and swiftly to the students’ boycott. Dent was offended by their action, panicked, and began to lose control of the college. The Senate viewed the boycott as the culmination of a “long process of defiance” and felt that strong action had to be taken.<sup>200</sup> Senate meetings were held, Dr. Thomas Alty, the Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University, was consulted, and the Council executive met. It was decided to close the college temporarily and send all students home. Preparations were made in secrecy for the closure and the railway agreed to provide a special train to take students home. At a college assembly on the Wednesday morning following the graduation boycott, Dent directed the students to campus bulletin boards where they were to receive instructions. Afraid of their reaction to the closure, he let notices posted on these boards do the talking. Most students were to leave on a train at noon.<sup>201</sup> The police were called in to see that the proceedings went smoothly. Naidoo recalls, “[p]olice surrounded Fort Hare and we were marched out of there. The first time we saw police armored vehicles was when they entered Fort Hare. Guys with guns came in. They accompanied the train right up to Durban.”<sup>202</sup>

As had been the case with Sobukwe’s speech at the 1949 Completer’s Social, the college authorities, particularly Dent, failed to comprehend the complexity of the events of 1955. Beard notes, the “inability of most staff to comprehend the very meaning of the

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<sup>198</sup> Andrew Masondo, interview by author, Pretoria, 25 May 1999.

<sup>199</sup> Naidoo, interview by author.

<sup>200</sup> Cragg, *Fort Hare*, 39.

<sup>201</sup> *op. cit.*, 40

<sup>202</sup> Naidoo, interview by author.

political struggle,” with only two members of the Senate voting against the proposal.<sup>203</sup>

Externally, the college concentrated on the alleged existence of a secret ring of students whose orders were followed by classmates, often through fear of physical violence and other forms of intimidation, at the expense of the constituted authorities.<sup>204</sup> As Dent put it in a memorandum,

[t]here has developed unmistakable evidence of the existence within the student body of a secret authority, sometimes referred to as the caucus, whose instructions are obeyed by the students. ... The result has been that, under the influence of the caucus, the students have resorted to irregular methods, such as boycotts, threats and even violence.<sup>205</sup>

Senate meetings continued in the wake of the closure. Letters were drafted and sent to parents, informing them of the reasons behind the closing of the college. As a precondition for re-admission, all students had to say whether they had attended the graduation ceremony and make available whatever information they had regarding ringleaders of the boycott movement. When the college reopened at the end of June, 14 students allegedly the force behind the protest, were refused readmission. Five of the 14 appeared before the disciplinary committee and were readmitted on varying terms.<sup>206</sup> A commission was established comprised of Dr. J.P. Duminy (Principal of Pretoria Technical College), Dr. Edgar Brookes and Professor M.C. Botha (former director of Education in the Cape) to look into the disturbance and recommend the changes necessary to prevent the repetition of such an occurrence.

The Duminy Commission, as it was called, met with the students, wardens, and the principal, and inspected hostels. Yet in making its final report, the commission, like most of the college staff, failed to grasp the forces behind the student grievances. The main thrust of

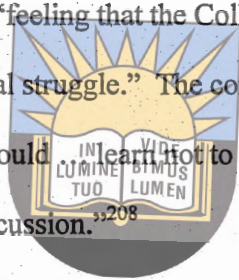
<sup>203</sup> Beard, “Background to Student Activities,” 165.

<sup>204</sup> “Closed Down: Police Force Stands By,” *Natal Daily News*, 5 May 1955.

<sup>205</sup> Minutes, Executive Committee of Council, 3 May 1955, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>206</sup> Report of Governing Council, 31 December 1955, Fort Hare Papers.

the report was that Fort Hare should work to temper its “missionary high school” atmosphere and strive to become a university comparable to Rhodes. The commission believed that all new hostels should be under college and not church control and that attendance at religious functions be optional.<sup>207</sup> Yet instead of trying to understand the students’ political strivings, the commission dismissed their action as testimony to “the exaggerated sense of self-importance of the students.” At no time were the students portrayed as adults capable of making their own judgements. Duminy and his colleagues gave no credence to their political concerns, condemning the students for “feeling that the College must be looked on as being in the vanguard of the political and racial struggle.” The commission recommended that, “those who claim freedom of speech should learn not to obtrude political and racial speeches into any and every kind of discussion.”<sup>208</sup>



## University of Fort Hare

While calling for a loosening of missionary control, the commission made the same mistake as the missionaries in failing to recognize the capabilities and initiative of black students. At its worst, student activism was not taken seriously, and was viewed by the authorities as the machinations and mischief of a select few comprising the “caucus.” Beard suggests that this seemingly paternalistic attitude resulted at least partially from an inability to understand the meaning of the political struggle.<sup>209</sup> Calling on the YL and the SOYA to temper their activity, the commission noted, “One could not ask the organizations not to stand for their principles, but they could be asked to direct their members at Fort Hare not to confuse the political struggle outside the college with resistance to discipline and authority inside it.”<sup>210</sup> Yet the students were not confusing anything. Speaking of the events leading to the graduation boycott, Masondo says, “It was clear that it was political. The university

<sup>207</sup> Cragg, *Fort Hare*, 41.

<sup>208</sup> Report of Fort Hare Commission, 1955, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>209</sup> Beard, “Background to Student Activities,” 165.

<sup>210</sup> The Duminy Report, 1955. Quoted in Beard, “Background to Student Activities,” 166.

attacked the SRC. They were not prepared to recognize the SRC as an important aspect of the college.”<sup>211</sup> Reflecting upon the events of the fifties in his memoir, Cragg acknowledges the root of the disturbances:

Underlying all, and the cause of most of our troubles, was the strong African nationalism and opposition to apartheid and white domination. This had been present before 1948 but was intensified by the victory of the Nationalist Party.<sup>212</sup>

The students equated their disenfranchisement within the college to that of their people outside of campus. The consistent failure of the authorities to note the relationship between national and student politics served as a springboard for student activism and more than any student “caucus” caused activism to simmer on campus.



Masondo was one of the many misunderstood by the authorities. A new student at the time of the strike, he was not a ringleader. However, examination of his background shows just how far off the university was in thinking that the students were blindly following a so-called “caucus.” Masondo was born on 27 October 1936 in Sophiatown. His father was a barber and his mother worked for various doctors as a receptionist. Masondo began his education at the Albert Street Methodist School, where he did kindergarten up to sub-B. In 1946, he left for the St. Agnes School, a Swedish mission boarding school, where he completed his Standard Six in 1949. Andrew, whose father Eloise, was “strictly apolitical,” credits his mother, Elsie, with introducing him to politics. He says that she was “an admirer of Communists” and “a very fanatical member of the ANC.” It was during vacations from St. Agnes that his political education began:

She taught me politics when I was about 13 years [old]. She made me read papers. Every time when I was away she would stack the papers of the Communist Party of South Africa and when I come back I would read those things. Whatever material was to do with liberation, she tried [to get me to read]. She bought me books, political books ... She was a very inspiring person.<sup>213</sup>

<sup>211</sup> Masondo, interview by author.

<sup>212</sup> Cragg, *Fort Hare*, 34.

On the advice of Father Trevor Huddleston, who was friendly with the Masondo family, Andrew entered St. Peter's School in Rosettenville in 1950.<sup>214</sup> His appetite whetted by the books his mother gave him, Masondo delved further into politics when he entered St. Peter's and came into regular contact with Father Huddleston, the school's superintendent:

I think because it was an Anglican school, at least during my time, we had people who were in that school who could inspire you. ... Father Trevor Huddleston, a man, politically who was a giant ... [showed us] politics in a different way, from a Christian point of view.

In 1953, the Bantu Education Act was passed and Masondo witnessed the response from the leaders of St. Peter's. "It was a missionary [school]. And the Anglican Church was proud of its institutions and particularly proud of St. Peter's. So when Bantu Education took over schools, they could not accept that...So that started to give you some political background."<sup>215</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

At St. Peter's, Masondo was an excellent student of history, despite the fact that he did not enjoy it. "I thought the history we were taught was biased. You know I couldn't understand how people who came here and didn't have cattle suddenly talked about other people stealing their cattle." Masondo also began to sharpen his leadership skills, leading revolts against the schools' prefect system and poor quality food and earning himself the label of malcontent. Although there were no formal political organizations at the school, Masondo first came into contact with the ANC Youth League at St. Peter's when Joe Molefe, a former St. Peter's student, came to mobilize the students. He brought them to hear Youth Leaguers talk. Masondo recalls listening to Alfred Hutchinson recount tales of his travels in Czechoslovakia:

And then he described socialism for me, for us ... the way it works, why it is, what is the aim, what it is doing. And I must say, I was attracted, very much attracted. Because ... I couldn't

<sup>213</sup> Masondo, interview by author.

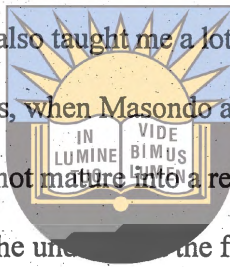
<sup>214</sup> Huddleston, who died in 1998, was a Johannesburg-based Anglican priest who wrote of the forced removal of people from Sophiatown in *Naught for Your Comfort* (1956). He was eventually banned from South Africa and moved to London, where he served as president of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement.

<sup>215</sup> Masondo, interview by author.

understand the vast differences between the impossibly rich and the diabolically poor. And I thought the system he described was a good one.

Complementing the lectures were his mother's books: "I think when I was about fifteen, I read the biography of Stalin. And I kept reading."<sup>216</sup>

Masondo steeped his mind in Marxist literature before he arrived at Fort Hare. His mother was a friend of Mac Shope, who was the General Secretary of the South African Congress of Trade Unions and a member of the Communist Party. He supplemented the readings provided by Elsie. "And Mac also taught me a lot about trade unionism. I would visit him and he would tell me."<sup>217</sup> Thus, when Masondo arrived at Fort Hare, he was politically aware. And although he did not mature into a real position of leadership until he became a lecturer at Fort Hare in 1960, he understood the forces at play in the 1955 boycott.



## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

The Duminy Commission Report marked the end of the line for Dent. Although the official reason given for his resignation was the "unsatisfactory state of his health," it was clear that Dent had worn out his welcome.<sup>218</sup> He finally realized and accepted that he had no support amongst the students. When he took charge of Fort Hare at the end of 1948, he was publicly told, "This is no sinecure to which you have been called, but one of the heaviest tasks in the Union." Indeed, Dent's term turned out to be stormy. The years of his principalship coincided with the increasing racial tension in South Africa and the subsequent transformation of Fort Hare into a "storm center" of activism.<sup>219</sup> The growing conflict,

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<sup>216</sup> op. cit.

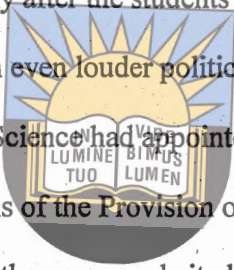
<sup>217</sup> op. cit.

<sup>218</sup> Report of the Governing Council, 31 December 1955, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>219</sup> Minutes, Governing Council, 30 August 1955, Fort Hare Papers.

“greatly affected the life of Fort Hare” and Dent was never able to operate in this atmosphere.<sup>220</sup>

In addition to the resignation of Dent in the wake of the report, James Rogers, the Iona Warden, also left Fort Hare. Yet these were the only major changes that came about. There was much discussion of the report at Fort Hare, but few of the recommendations were adopted as Fort Hare suddenly had new problems, more severe than a student boycott of graduation, about which to worry. Shortly after the students absented themselves from the 29 April ceremony, the government made an even louder political statement. It was announced that the Minister of Education, Arts and Science had appointed an Inter-Departmental Commission on the Financial Implications of the Provision of Separate University Facilities for Non-Europeans. The proclamation in the press made it clear that the government was intent on introducing apartheid into Universities.<sup>221</sup>



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Dent's departure marked the end of an era at Fort Hare. The mission atmosphere that dominated the college from its inception was somewhat tempered when Z.K. Matthews was made Acting Principal. Although religious services were still a part of college life, compulsory attendance was not. "The question was whether the staff and students could get the College back on track during 1956," wrote Matthews.<sup>222</sup> At least temporarily, the answer was 'yes,' as Z.K. was able to create a calm atmosphere on campus. According to Monica Wilson, "minutes of the SRC reflect a striking difference in tone between meetings with the acting principal during 1956 and earlier meetings with the Principal."<sup>223</sup>

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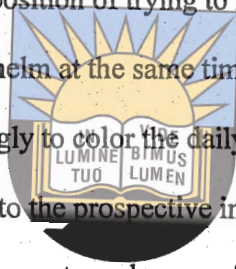
<sup>220</sup> op. cit.

<sup>221</sup> "New Move For Student Apartheid," *Cape Times*, 7 November 1955.

<sup>222</sup> Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for my People*, 190.

<sup>223</sup> op. cit., 191.

So, with Matthews in charge, there was the possibility of a new beginning of sorts. Under The 1951 Rhodes University (Private) Act, Fort Hare had been affiliated with Rhodes, with the eventual goal of assuming the independent status recommended in the 1947 Government University Report. The 1955 Universities Act No. 61, which provided for the inclusion of Fort Hare amongst the universities of the country, made it eligible for full government funding. An initial enrollment of 16 students in 1916 had swelled to 368 by 1956.<sup>224</sup> However, Matthews was not the principal of Fort Hare under ordinary circumstances. Thrust into the difficult position of trying to repair relations between the students and the authorities, he took the helm at the same time that the prospect of government interference began increasingly to color the daily experience at Fort Hare for both staff and students. And, in addition to the prospective implementation of university apartheid, Matthews had to deal with his arrest on charges of treason in December of 1956. Improvements to both the physical plant and educational life of Fort Hare were put on hold as the university's perilous position took center stage.



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<sup>224</sup> Student Statistics, 1956, Fort Hare Papers.

### A 'Diversity': Multi-Racial Life and 'Possibility' at Fort Hare Before 1960

*Fort Hare has striven to show during the last forty years that it is possible for people of different racial backgrounds, different cultural backgrounds, different political affiliations, and different faiths, to live together in amity. ... I think due credit will [one day] be given to Fort Hare for having pioneered the way and been among those who have shown that it is actually possible for this thing to happen.*

**-Z.K. Matthews<sup>1</sup>**

#### A 'Colourless Lot'

During a debate in the House of Assembly on the Fort Hare Transfer Bill, Minister G.P. van den Berg made clear that one of the real reasons the government wanted to assume control of Fort Hare was the recognition of the danger the college posed to the policy of apartheid. Saying that it was essential to put "a stop to the continued existence of Fort Hare in its present form," van den Berg called the college "a colourless lot of people, a university without a character of its own." In reality, it was not the absence of character, but the presence of a colorful cross-section of the multi-racial South African population that angered the government. For Fort Hare showed that the races of South Africa could live, work and play together. To Isaac Mabindisa, a student at Fort Hare in the late 1950s, the college's multi-racial nature was its biggest asset:

Fort Hare was a place where young people ... Indians, Africans, coloureds, could meet on an equal footing and form friendships and belong to the same organisations, play together. And of course this was anathema to a government which believed in racial segregation and ethnic segregation.<sup>2</sup>

At the last official college function prior to the takeover by the Government in 1960, Mrs. G.M.H. Darrol, an English lecturer, said that Fort Hare was not a

<sup>1</sup> Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for my People*, 197.

university, but a “diversity.”<sup>3</sup> Beard calls pre-1960 Fort Hare a “microcosm of a non-racial society in the heart of apartheid South Africa.”<sup>4</sup> With the National Party elected to power on their apartheid platform, to have a place where Indians, coloureds, and Blacks mixed freely and happily powerfully showed, as Matsepe-Casaburri suggests, “what was possible.”<sup>5</sup> Yet this possibility was precisely what the government wanted to break down. In 1955, word reached Fort Hare that the government intended to assume control of African university education. The announcement of the government commission to look into the feasibility of separate university facilities for non-Europeans hit Fort Hare hard and signaled the beginning of the end of its multi-racial days.



Yet up until the takeover, diversity within a larger unity was the cornerstone of an extremely vibrant student life on campus. The official policy of the Council was that there be no racial or ethnic discrimination on campus. Beard writes that the “university community comprised to a significant degree a racially integrated society within, and largely protected from, the white, racially dominated society which surrounded it.”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, while it lasted, multi-racial Fort Hare was unique, a place that, to a certain extent, defied apartheid.

### **The Melting Pot**

Though Clause 1 of its original constitution indicated that Fort Hare was founded to provide for the education of Africans, coloureds and Indians contributed greatly to campus life before 1960. By 1955, 80 Indian and coloured students

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<sup>2</sup> Mabindisa, interview by author.

<sup>3</sup> Herby Govinden, “Tribute to Fort Hare at 80,” in author’s possession.

<sup>4</sup> Beard, “Background to Student Activities,” 157.

<sup>5</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

accounted for 22 percent of the student population at Fort Hare.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Fort Hare was the first tertiary institution in South Africa to open its doors to Indians and coloureds whilst residences at the universities of Cape Town, Natal and the Witwatersrand were reserved for whites.<sup>8</sup>

Correspondence between A.D. Lazarus and Alexander Kerr in 1925 indicates that although Indians were a vital part of campus life, the authorities were consistently sensitive to the desire of the founders to maintain the African nature of the college. There was also a scarcity of housing at Fort Hare and because the churches provided the accommodation and were primarily invested in educating blacks, a limit to the Indian and coloured population was deemed necessary. However, while recognising Fort Hare's commitment to African education, Kerr did not want this to mean that students of other backgrounds were left out. In a letter to Kerr, George Singh ('30-'33), an Indian, spoke of a "spirit of fraternisation" at Fort Hare "which should continue to exist among the non-European groups in South Africa." Singh continued, "[e]ven if Indians and coloureds have to live in tents ... the spirit of fraternisation should not be brought to an end."<sup>9</sup> In response, Kerr wrote, "[t]he presence of different groups in the college has made for interest and widening of outlook, and we should be the last to exclude any person except on the absolute grounds of want of accommodation."<sup>10</sup>

In 1940, the Senate recommended to Council that "in admitting students preference shall be given to qualified Bantu applicants and that the proportion of other

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<sup>6</sup> Beard, "Background to Student Activities," 157.

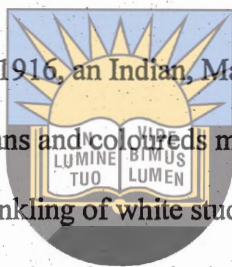
<sup>7</sup> Student Statistics, 1955, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>8</sup> "Fort Hare Decisive Role," *The Leader*, 25 October 1991.

<sup>9</sup> George Singh to Alexander Kerr, 11 June 1945, George Singh Student File, Fort Hare Papers.

racess admitted shall not exceed 25 percent of the total.” It was further recommended that at least 15 percent and a minimum of 12 percent should be reserved for Indian and coloured students.<sup>11</sup> In 1946, Rama Thumbadoo, an Indian, was denied admission because the cap on Indian students had already been reached. His application was rejected and stamped, “stereotyped refusal.” Thumbadoo gained admission the following year.<sup>12</sup> And despite the limits on Indian and coloured enrollment, the multi-racial atmosphere at Fort Hare flourished.

When the college opened in 1916, an Indian, Maurice Peters, was amongst the first students. Two years later, Indians and coloureds made up 18 percent of the student body.<sup>13</sup> Occasionally, a sprinkling of white students, mostly the children of staff members, filtered in. Fort Hare played a particularly powerful role in opening Indians up to a wider world. Unlike many of the black students who studied at mission boarding schools before proceeding to Fort Hare, for many of the Indians, Fort Hare marked the first time they had left home. The road to Fort Hare was determined by necessity and not choice. There was very little opportunity for Indians to pursue science or medicine elsewhere in South Africa. The medical school in Durban did not open until 1952 and prior to that, students interested in science had to go to expensive Wits or Cape Town where they were not allowed to reside on campus. Devi Bughwan says that the university residences at these schools were reserved for whites: “[Indians] were only allowed to attend the lectures and do the work and back they went to their own homes.”<sup>14</sup>



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<sup>10</sup> Alexander Kerr to George Singh, 18 June 1945, George Singh File, Fort Hare Papers.

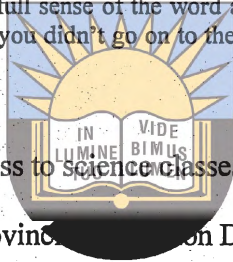
<sup>11</sup> Senate Minutes, 1928-45 folder, 15 March, 1940, Fort Hare Papers

<sup>12</sup> Rama Thumbadoo Student File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>13</sup> Student Statistics, 1918. Fort Hare Papers.

In a letter to Alexander Kerr, the High Commissioner for India wrote of “a number of instances of Indian students experiencing difficulty in securing entry into the law and medical faculties of South African universities.”<sup>15</sup> Bughwan attributes the increasingly attraction of teaching to Indians to the difficulties, both financial and logistical, they faced on the path towards medicine. Others, who did not want to give up the dream of a medical career, went to Fort Hare to complete their first year science course. Bughwan says,

Fort Hare was attractive to Indian students ... It was one of the few places where you could go and be a student in the full sense of the word and do a science degree and become a science teacher even if you didn't go on to the study of pure science or go on to medical studies.<sup>16</sup>



In addition to providing access to science classes, Fort Hare offered Indians an affordable education. The Natal Province Education Department gave bursaries to Indians to encourage them to attend Fort Hare science teachers. The Indian schools were short of science teachers and the few people who came out of Fort Hare with B.Sc.s. found employment easily. Though some Indians at Fort Hare came from the Cape and paid their own way, most originated from Natal, as the scholarship from the Education Department financed their schooling. Eventually about 90 percent of the science teachers in Natal were trained at Fort Hare.<sup>17</sup> Rama Thumbadoo says, “[w]hen I studied at Sastri College, many of the teachers were ex-Fort Harians.”<sup>18</sup>




R.A. Pillay was one of the Indian students who followed that route to Fort Hare and beyond. One of eight children, Pillay’s father was a mine laborer in Natal

<sup>14</sup> Bughwan, interview by author.

<sup>15</sup> High Commissioner of India letter to Kerr, 10 March 1944, The High Commissioner for India 1942-1954 File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>16</sup> Bughwan, interview by author.

and he describes his background as “very poor.” Upon matriculating, Pillay had aspirations of becoming a doctor. However these were thwarted by lack of money and opportunity. “I always wanted to do medicine,” he says, “but if you had to do medicine it was either Wits or Cape Town ... It was too expensive for a fellow of my background.” With no other choice, Pillay decided to postpone his medical dreams temporarily and pursue teaching with the hope of saving up enough money to do medicine later. He received a bursary of about fifty pounds a year from the Natal Education Department and entered Fort Hare in 1950 to study for a B.Sc. degree. Pillay says that the funds from the Education Department were enough to cover tuition, accommodation and laundry. “You needed a little just for pocket money,” he says. Pillay looked at studying at Fort Hare as “a stepping stone. ... I’ll take that at least and then I will have a chance to get a degree and then probably [teach] for a while and save money and be able to do medicine afterwards.”<sup>17</sup>



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Though Pillay initially viewed his journey to Fort Hare as a temporary diversion on the road towards medical school, his years in Alice did more than prepare him for a career in medicine. While Fort Hare provided him with a strong science background and he did eventually succeed in becoming a doctor, Pillay learned more than just chemistry and physics while at the college. As was the case for many of his Indian colleagues, the college provided Pillay with his first opportunity to interact with Africans on an equal footing:

When you came to ... Fort Hare, for us, for the first time, you were exposed ... for the first time seeing African students. Now for us, the type of exposure we had in Durban, an African was a chap who was doing gardening or that kind of menial job. You never even saw any African who was educated, a degree or anything of that sort. So it was quite a revelation the first time we went to Fort Hare.

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<sup>17</sup> Pillay, interview by author.

<sup>18</sup> Thumbadoo, interview by author.

<sup>19</sup> Pillay, interview by author.

Although, generally speaking, Indians did not become as politically active as the African students, they did become politically conscious. “You started thinking politically too. ... I don’t know, they were doing a bad job, if they wanted to keep politics down, herding all the fellows together there.” Pillay describes study and discussion groups awakening his political consciousness. “We were just green fellows at the time, still very young with politics [upon arriving at Fort Hare].”<sup>20</sup>



Like Pillay, Goolam Suleman Tootla came into contact with black students for the first time at Fort Hare. Upon his arrival, Tootla came face to face with a new, unfamiliar world. “I was put into a dormitory with fourteen students, thirteen black students and I was the only Indian student. It came as a cultural shock to me,” says Tootla. Nowhere else in South Africa were youngsters being thrust into such ‘uncomfortable’ positions. However, the initial discomfort provided a tremendous learning experience. “For the first six months I wanted to go back home,” says Tootla:

The environment, not having been exposed to the kind of interaction with other groups. ... You had a perception about you being the only people around. ... Blacks were basically to us ... there to serve your needs, to work for you and so forth. The perception that the white government had created, that they’re hewers of wood and carriers of water.<sup>21</sup>

The son of a laborer turned small businessman, Tootla grew up in The Bluff, a conservative, white area in Durban. He first became aware of the racial situation in South Africa at the age of eleven when he was called a “coolie” and thrown out of a moving bus. “But the issue of living together in an environment, that we had never experienced. I don’t think anybody experienced that before getting to Fort Hare.”

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<sup>20</sup> op. cit.

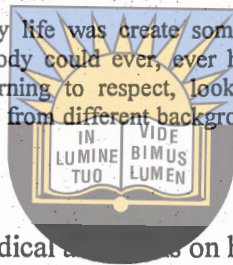
<sup>21</sup> G.S. Tootla, interview by author, Durban, 29 April 1999.

Tootla credits Fort Hare with breaking down the mental barriers that apartheid had thrust in his face:

For me to get into a room with thirteen blacks and they're chatting away and I say what the hell is going on here, I need to sleep. Then six months later I'm chatting away with them past midnight. It's a question of coming to understand people's cultural beliefs.

After a difficult first few months, Tootla's comfort level at Fort Hare increased as his perceptions of the other students, now based on experience and not government dictate, changed:

What Fort Hare did to me in my life was create something in terms of human relationships. I don't think anybody could ever, ever have done that to any one single individual in terms of learning to respect, looking at different lifestyles, knowing the difficulties of students from different backgrounds. It was a tremendous kind of educational process.<sup>22</sup>



Tootla, like Pillay, put his medical studies on hold to attend Fort Hare.

Unable to secure a place at Natal University to do medicine, he enrolled at Fort Hare to study for the B.Sc. degree. After completing, he went to study dentistry at the University of the Witswatersrand, an experience he describes as “the most traumatic” of his life. “I was the first black student to be admitted to the dental faculty. ... That was a nightmare,” Tootla says. Contrary to the inclusive atmosphere at Fort Hare, Tootla was forced to reside off campus at Wits. His attitude “completely redeveloped” from his experience at Fort Hare, Tootla was stunned to be thrust into a “lily white” atmosphere.<sup>23</sup>



Devi Bughwan's Fort Hare experience mirrored that of Tootla and Pillay.

Bright from an early age, Bughwan started school at the age of five, doing her primary education at a church mission school in Durban. She did Standard Five and

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<sup>22</sup> op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> op. cit.

Six in one year before moving on to Darknel Crescent, which was the girls' high school in Durban. Bughwan entered Fort Hare at the age of fifteen, much younger than the other students, in 1942 after what she describes as a "sheltered" childhood.

Due to her age, she was afforded special treatment upon arrival at the college:

Mrs. Kerr [the Principal's wife] realised there was a child of 15 at this college. Because of that, my roommate and I got an invitation to come over and have supper with them [the Kerrs]. We were honored, went along and had this special meal. He [Principal Kerr] asked me a thousand questions about where I came from, my community in Durban and so on.

She says, "It was the first time I'd ever been away from home or thrown together with people from different cultures." As in the case of many of the Indians who studied at Fort Hare, life at the college helped to break down stereotypes that had been ingrained in them by both their families and the government.



It did, as sheltered Indian students ... I found to have this exposure. One tended to be very insular. There was very little mixing in your day to day life in your homes. And I think a lot of Indian students went back to their homes and educated their families. They educated their families in what I mean, in a country like South Africa. Because we tended to think the world began and ended with ourselves. That was the policy of the government, to keep us apart. But a lot of Indians didn't even need encouraging in that respect. Prejudices are inbred in all societies. And so often we're accused of having come from a very caste conscious society. It's true. I think Fort Hare was a salutary experience for ... me.<sup>24</sup>

The atmosphere at Fort Hare stimulated Bughwan: "We didn't go there as Indian students just to study. We did have a very good university life. ... It was such a dynamic place to be. People got together simply to talk, to exchange notes, to read together, to be together." Bughwan became politically aware for the first time at Fort Hare as she came into contact with new people and concepts:

There were many political meetings. I recall the meetings at which people like Oliver Tambo, I mean Oliver Tambo was sitting there as a grown man as president of the SRC when I was a 15-year-old. I do remember him and what dynamism he had even then. He was there in my first year. ... I can still recall him at the main table, President of the SRC. They held meetings ranging from complaining about the dreadful food to much more weighty matters. You learned an awful lot. And you realised that we'd been sheltered and unaware. I think we became politicised at Fort Hare.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Bughwan, interview by author.

<sup>25</sup> op. cit.

Fort Hare did not only open the eyes of Indian students. For many Africans, arrival at Fort Hare also meant coming into contact with other cultures for the first time. Multi-racial Fort Hare expanded the horizons of all involved. Matsepe-Casaburri says,

I remember people exchanging stories about some people who had never seen Indians and then having to experience Indians. It's quite a cultural shock. How do they eat? What do they do? The myths that you have to then get over. And Fort Hare was able to do that.

The “diversity” of Fort Hare also worked to break down ethnic barriers within the African community. Z.K. Matthews wrote,

[t]he supposed stupidity of the Zulu, the so-called stinginess of the Sotho, the alleged treachery of the Fingo, the Xhosa distaste for modesty in matters of dress—all these fallacious theories are being exploded by the rising generation in their common life at a place like Fort Hare where tribal affiliations of a student is of no account whatever.<sup>26</sup>

With a government intent on separating the population, Fort Hare was consolidating it. Matsepe-Casaburri says,

you didn't hear about fights between Indians and coloureds and Africans. It wasn't there. And for me it was a good thing that, as a person who eventually ended up studying sociology, to say that these things are possible if the atmosphere is created for people to live.<sup>27</sup>



“What Fort Hare did,” says V.R. Govender ('56-'58),

it did not only give young ladies and men an education of a first class nature. It transformed our thinking as well, not [all] into people who rebelled against the entire country, although some did become leaders of the rebellion, but the vast majority rebelled against the way people were treated. ... Many of us who came out of Fort Hare tried to change people's thinking.

Govender was born in a small country town in Natal called Mooi River and grew up on his father's dairy farm. As there was no Indian school in Mooi River, he did his primary education at a Zulu school, where he developed an affinity for the Zulu

<sup>26</sup> Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for my People*, 126.

language. Although he describes his father as conservative, Govender says his upbringing on the farm and in the Zulu school, where he interacted with blacks on a daily basis, prepared him for arrival at Fort Hare. “[Growing up] I lived among black people. ... I used to sleep with the herd boys,” says Govender, who integrated himself into the life of the college shortly after he arrived on campus. “I think I’m correct in saying that I was the first Indian second-year student to be selected for the SRC,” he adds.

Though his home environment was less sheltered than Bughwan’s, Govender did not become interested in politics until he got to Fort Hare and joined the SRC. “I went into Fort Hare not knowing the ABCs of politics,” he said. “But in my dorm there were people who spoke of the Unity Movement. They took me to secret meetings.” Govender was recruited into the youth wing of the Unity Movement by friends in his dormitory, who invited him to speak at a meeting on the banks of the Tyumie River. Although he eventually joined SOYA, the then head of the ANC Youth League at Fort Hare, Ambrose Makiwane, also influenced Govender.<sup>28</sup>

### **Student Life**

While Govender fondly recalls his political involvement at Fort Hare, he is most enthusiastic when talking about the vibrant student life at Fort Hare. Mary Dick, a staff member at Fort Hare during the 1930s, writes of Indian students “mixing well with the African students and having proved themselves an asset both in academic

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<sup>27</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.


<sup>28</sup> V.R. Govender, interview by author, Durban, 26 April 1999.

work and sporting activities, as well as having the more general cultural influence.”<sup>29</sup>

Burchell quotes the Reverend C.F. Andrews of India, who after visiting Fort Hare wrote, “[t]here is an absolute liberation from all sense of the inhumanity of racial prejudice. Here at last there is perfect equality reigning throughout. To live here is to be free.”<sup>30</sup> Logan Naidoo at one point lived with three Zambians, an Indian and a Xhosa and says,

[w]e never saw race. My pals were the guys I stayed with in the same room, or were in the same course with me, or sat at the same table in the dining room. It didn't matter what ethnic or race group they came from. ... We were all in the melting pot, one nation in the true sense of the word.<sup>31</sup>

The mixing of the races could be seen on the cricket team, where Rama Thumbadoo, an Indian, played with Dennis Brutus, a coloured student. Thumbadoo says that the members of the “completely integrated team” got along very well. “The soccer team had two Indian players, three coloured students and the rest blacks,” he says.<sup>32</sup>



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Upon reflection, four or more decades removed from their college experience, many Fort Harians realise that multi-racial Fort Hare was indeed special. The experiment that defied apartheid was successful on a daily basis. However, in talking with the students, it was the more normal, everyday aspects of college life that stood out at the time. The college gave students of color the chance to live and act just like their white counterparts at Wits, UCT and Rhodes. As the African students were, in general, more politically active than the other students, it is the student life that most Indian students recall fondly. Even though there were constant grievances with missionary authority, life at Fort Hare was a complete one. Compulsive daily

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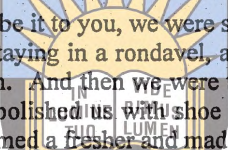
<sup>29</sup> Mary Dick, *The Higher Education of a Minority Group as Exemplified by the Group at the South African Native College, Fort Hare*. B.Ed., University of Cape Town, 1934. Quoted in Burchell, “The Pursuit of Relevance,” 56

<sup>30</sup> C.F. Andrews, “Fort Hare and the Future, *Indian Opinion*, 1 April 1927. Quoted in Burchell, “The Pursuit of Relevance,” 54.

<sup>31</sup> Naidoo, interview by author.

assemblies, highlighted by a special Sunday College service, while irritating, did not stop the students from enjoying themselves. Some students even took advantage of the assemblies to raid the lockers of other students.<sup>33</sup>

V.R. Govender describes with glee the treatment given to first year students, dubbed “freshers” by their older colleagues: “Initiation was great. Making fellows sweep the floor with their toothbrush.”<sup>34</sup> Ismail Dada (‘59-’61) was on the receiving end:



All of us were initiated. If I describe it to you, we were stripped naked and we had to take out our toothbrushes, I was staying in a rondavel, and they made me sweep the entire rondavel with my toothbrush. And then we were taken to hall and all freshers were standing on tables and they polished us with shoe polish. They took us to the river. Always a senior student claimed a fresher and made him do his chores.<sup>35</sup>

Rama Thumbadoo relates how, in his time, senior students would borrow a scale from the college nurse, have the warden impersonate a doctor, line up the freshers, and give them makeshift physical exams. The older students would get great pleasure out of watching the newcomers squirm when told they were afflicted with various maladies.<sup>36</sup>

Despite rules governing male and female contact, intermingling of the sexes was common.<sup>37</sup> Thelma Appavoo (‘43-’45) says, “we used to have at the women’s hostel, a social. You invited your men friends down. But other than that men were not allowed in the women’s hostel. And neither were the women allowed in the

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<sup>32</sup> Thumbadoo, interview by author.

<sup>33</sup> Pillay, interview by author.

<sup>34</sup> Govender, interview by author.

<sup>35</sup> Ismail Dada, interview by author, Durban, 26 April 1999.

<sup>36</sup> Naidoo, interview by author.

<sup>37</sup> Rules regarding pregnancy were particularly strict. In 1948, Dennis Siwisa was expelled after he impregnated a fellow student (Siwisa, Student File, Fort Hare Papers). By contrast, at the ANC’s Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania, if a young woman became pregnant, she was moved to a center for pregnant girls and the young man was dropped as a student and had to go to work to help support her.

men's hostel." The students managed to get around the regulations. "There was a term they used to use if a chap walked you from the dining room to the hostel. They'd float you down," says Appavoo. For those male students who couldn't find girlfriends amongst the small number of female students at the college, the nurses, dubbed "blue bottles," of nearby Lovedale Hospital, which earned the nickname "City Lights," provided a welcome respite. Appavoo says, "the boys of course, they, boys are boys. They knew how to duck and dive. And there are stepping stones that cross the river on the road where Davidson Stadium is. And the chaps used to go across those stones on their dates to the city lights."



Dating was common on campus and original customs developed. Appavoo says, "If someone dated you and took you to the cinema, when you got home to go down for supper, they'd give you a geranium and ask you in the presence of everyone to take that geranium and take it to your date."<sup>38</sup> V.R. Govender describes what would happen if a student was rebuffed in their quest for a date: "Early in the morning when you go for breakfast ... you see a big chart [on the notice-board saying], V.R. Govender was hoofed. It means kicked, not successful the night before."<sup>39</sup>

Govender says, "[w]hen you've gone to a place like Fort Hare, the entire experience becomes a part of you." Though they attended college under far from normal circumstances, the college stories Fort Hare students tell could be those of any college student in any country. Govender recalls, "[a]t Beda, you had to hand in your laundry and write your name. But sometimes the ink didn't work well and you lost your clothing. So once a month, all laundry was auctioned and one time I had to buy

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<sup>38</sup> Appavoo, interview by author.

back my own underpants.” Campus dances, held in the dining hall, were favorite events. “We couldn’t dance, most of us,” says Govender. “We used to only go in for the fast numbers where nobody could see you making a mistake.”<sup>40</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri remembers rag days, when the students created a “court of injustice,” and took great joy in dishing out penalties to those who were charged with offenses.<sup>41</sup>

Food played a big part in the socialisation and interaction of the students.

Nelson Mandela wrote, “The students unanimously felt that the diet at Fort Hare was unsatisfactory.”<sup>42</sup> Logan Naidoo says that food was “a major problem,” especially for Indians who didn’t eat beef. Students spanning decades enthusiastically relate their daily diet. For Naidoo, “breakfast was porridge. Lunch alternating every other day, one day was beans boiled, one day was a chunk of beef in stew. Supper was a bit of beef soup, jam, bread (about six slices) and a cup of milk.”<sup>43</sup> R.A. Pillay jokes,



University of Fort Hare

Together in Excellence

I always thought I could never get the recipe of the soup they had, some gelatinous, gooey stuff with no taste at all. ... Hindus didn’t eat beef ... but fellows who used to eat their beef couldn’t eat the one that was prepared there. ... One year they decided to fortify the mealie meal porridge and they put this oil in the damn thing. I couldn’t even eat that. The only thing that kept us going there I think was milk.<sup>44</sup>

Ismail Dada says,

going to the dining hall, the smell used to make me feel nauseous. When it came to supper, you are really hungry. Four slices of stale brown bread. We used to have fresh bread in the morning. I don’t know where the stale bread came from. A mug or a cup of neither water, nor milk, in between, not hot, not cold, no sugar. And they gave a glob of something they called jam and we called something else. That was our supper for three years.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Govender, interview by author.

<sup>40</sup> op. cit.

<sup>41</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

<sup>42</sup> Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 44.

<sup>43</sup> Naidoo, interview by author.

<sup>44</sup> Pillay, interview by author.

<sup>45</sup> Dada, interview by author.

For V.R. Govender, the food memories entailed porridge that was stored unhygienically: “Believe me, without a word of exaggeration... We always just pushed the worms aside and carried on with the porridge.” Govender also remembers meat that “couldn’t be cut with a knife.” Over the years, the culinary offerings in the dining hall sparked a great deal of protest by the students. Govender remembers these revolts, saying “[w]e took pots and pans, boom, boom, boom... And that’s how songs came about.” He jokes that Mr. Magilicuddy, the dining room chef, should “be given a knighthood,” as the poor food he prepared brought out “the latent potentialities of the future leaders of South Africa.”<sup>46</sup>



Though former students recall the Fort Hare food with humor, it was often a serious matter during their student days. Strikes frequently erupted over its poor quality. The action that resulted in Nelson Mandela’s exit from the university began with student complaints about food. Wycliffe Tsotsi says that the students often felt that the poor quality of food was due to the fact that they were black.<sup>47</sup> Jonathan Hyslop writes that the issue of food in mission schools often emerged “as one which embodied the unjust relations, the authority, power and politics of a racist society: a universal focus of consistent discontent which could unite students motivated by disparate grievances.” He writes that food often served as a metaphor for issues of power and authority in the mission schools. He notes that although the students had legitimate complaints due to inadequate food, the inferior diets “became a symbol of, and a matter of protest against, the social domination they experienced in their daily lives.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Govender, interview by author.

At Fort Hare during Logan Naidoo's days, the students went on a hunger strike and Z.K. Matthews' wife, Frieda, was forced to take up utensils in the kitchen in an effort to improve the food. Naidoo says,

[e]very day when it came eating time, we came to the CU Hall and had a meeting there. No food to eat. The third day ... they said, well, we've improved things tremendously in the dining hall so they're bringing the food to sample. So they brought six or eight plates of boiled cabbage. As it came there, we couldn't see much of the difference. But the guys when they saw the food and the smelled the food, they saw all of the improvement. They had to eat.<sup>49</sup>

Little groups called syndicates were formed, mostly by Indian students who missed the curries of their home kitchens, to supplement the paltry Fort Hare diet. Wednesday and Saturday afternoons were holidays and the students took advantage of the free time to do a little cooking. Rama Thumbadoo also says, "this thing was determined by whether you received money. If you didn't, you couldn't participate."<sup>50</sup> With cooking known by the slang term "functioning," the syndicates provided many of the African students with their first tastes of curry. "We invited the other students to join us," says Herby Govinden. "I had a very good friend from Uganda who joined us because he couldn't take it either."<sup>51</sup> R.A. Pillay says, "[s]ome of them hadn't touched the things before. ... In fact, if you ask Frank Mdlalose, he'll say hey, he misses that curry."<sup>52</sup> For Matsepe-Casaburri, who belonged to a syndicate at Eluk, Fort Hare food never became a problem: "I had a lot of Indian friends so I shared whatever food they ate," she says.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the deficiency in the dining hall was transformed into a cross-cultural learning experience, a lesson that could only have taken place at multi-racial Fort Hare.

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<sup>47</sup> Tsotsi, interview by author.

<sup>48</sup> Hyslop, *The Classroom Struggle*, 16.

<sup>49</sup> Naidoo, interview by author.

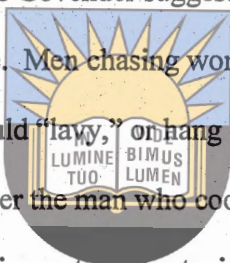
<sup>50</sup> Thumbadoo, interview by author.

<sup>51</sup> Govinden, interview by author.

<sup>52</sup> Pillay, interview by author.

<sup>53</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

Inspired only partly by the syndicates, the Fort Hare student community developed into an extremely close group. “You knew nearly everyone there, including the female students,” says Pillay.<sup>54</sup> Part of the togetherness of the student body was due to the college’s size, but it can also be attributed to the physical location and the residential nature of the school. Logan Naidoo says, “[a]ll you had was Fort Hare. ... So the lifestyle was very insular. The outside influences were limited.”<sup>55</sup> Forced to turn inward, the students, as Govender suggests, developed their own customs and even their own language. Men chasing women were after “jaguars,” Beda students with time to waste would “flavy,” or hang out, and the awful food in the dining hall was dubbed, “magile,” after the man who cooked it, Mr. Magilicuddy. Residents of Iona were called Porcupines; students staying in Beda were Philistines; and Wesley dwellers were nicknamed Barbarians.<sup>56</sup> Pillay says “[t]here was nothing else to do except find all the fun with yourselves... You didn’t have a town to run away to. So everybody was involved... ballroom championships... science societies... sporting life... Lots of things went on.”<sup>57</sup> Isaac Mabindisa says, “[t]here was a vibrant social life at Fort Hare. Love of ballroom dancing by some people. We were a small community, in many ways close knit.”<sup>58</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
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<sup>54</sup> Pillay, interview by author.

<sup>55</sup> Naidoo, interview by author.

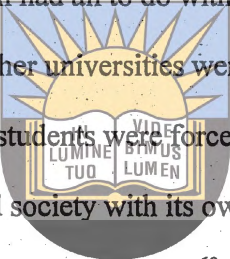
<sup>56</sup> See for example Govender, interview by author.

<sup>57</sup> Pillay, interview by author.

<sup>58</sup> Mabindisa, interview by author; Govan Mbeki enjoyed ballroom dancing while at Fort Hare. “I used to be very fond of dancing. I used to go to Ntselemanzi and I would dance there,” he says. He also talks of how he passed the time in prison practicing his dance steps. On Robben Island, one of the activities for the prisoners was ballroom dancing, possibly originating from ex- Fort Hare students.

## Extra-curricular politics

This same environment gave birth to a lot of the student politics. Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri says, “as something that was part of the social engineering of the time, to have all these black students there, created the atmosphere. They created that atmosphere.” She attributes the growth of student politics at Fort Hare to the circumstances under which the students, all members of oppressed racial groups in South Africa, lived: “You lived in a close community, in a small town, it was a university town, activities of the town had all to do with Fort Hare. ... So Fort Hare simply gave an opportunity which other universities were not able to do.”<sup>59</sup> With little on the outside to entertain them, the students were forced to turn inwards, resulting in what Beard calls “a highly integrated society with its own *mores*, its own mutually recognised identity, and a cherished *esprit de corps*.”<sup>60</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Though students were well rounded and busied themselves with a variety of endeavors, Herby Govinden says that politics was the main extra-curricular activity on campus. Many of the students belonged to African youth organisations, with the majority of the students members of the ANC Youth League, the Society of Young Africans or when it was founded in 1959, the Pan Africanist Congress. “I never fell in love with any women,” says Govan Mbeki of his student days. “I didn’t have the time. I was all up to here in politics.”<sup>61</sup> Cragg notes that politics could be dragged into everything, even “a mathematical lecture.”<sup>62</sup> And Beard writes, “[p]olitics was

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<sup>59</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

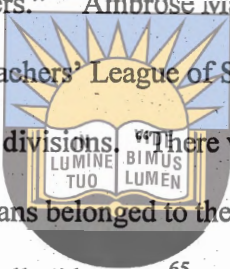
<sup>60</sup> op. cit. 159.

<sup>61</sup> Mbeki, interview by author.

<sup>62</sup> Cragg, *Fort Hare*, 34

the main topic of conversation at Fort Hare even when it was only peripherally relevant, and sometimes when it was not relevant at all.”<sup>63</sup>

Fort Harians describing their student days say that the peaceful, non-racial campus erupted when it came to politics. The only squabbles within the student body were due to the friendly, but fiery nature of politics, and not race. “You never heard of a racial incident,” says Thumbadoo, while Matsepe-Casaburri adds that politics at Fort Hare existed “across racial barriers.”<sup>64</sup> Ambrose Makiwane says that although some coloured students joined the Teachers’ League of South Africa (TLSA), the students’ politics did not create racial divisions. “There was no coloured organisation. They belonged to the ANC. The Indians belonged to the ANC, some to the Unity Movement. We interacted very cordially,” he says.<sup>65</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

From around the time Eddie Roux first arrived on campus, discussion and debates permeated daily life. In Tsotsi’s days in the mid-thirties, the forum for discussion was the Historical Association, which he founded. In 1935, the All-African Convention was formed and though Professor Jabavu himself didn’t engage in political discussion with the students, the founding of the organisation was a cause of much discussion.<sup>66</sup> Devi Bughwan remembers trips to Rhodes University as a member of the college’s debating team.<sup>67</sup> Yet argumentative discussion wasn’t always through formal, inter-institutional debates. The Christian Union Hall (CU Hall) was

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<sup>63</sup> Beard, “Background to Student Activities,” 162.

<sup>64</sup> Thumbadoo, interview by author; Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

<sup>65</sup> Ambrose Makiwane, interview by author, Cala, 4 March 1999.

<sup>66</sup> Tsotsi, interview by author.

<sup>67</sup> Bughwan, interview by author; Though Fort Hare and Rhodes did not formalise their institutional ties until 1951, there was prior contact between the two institutions on cultural and social levels from the 1930s. Separated by about 100 kilometers, Bughwan remembers a “dusty, bumpy drive. They had a driver take us to Rhodes. The roads weren’t like they are today.”

often the site of meetings that generated impromptu discussion. Mabindisa says, “The CU and the life of the CU was part of the daily life of the university. You had student meetings and ... lively debates.” He adds, “[t]hat’s where people cut their teeth in debates. ... Some of them were howlers. They liked heckling. ... We used to enjoy ourselves.”<sup>68</sup> But students didn’t need an occasion or a special venue to lure each other into heated conversation. As mentioned in chapter one, Joe Matthews could often be seen walking to the dining hall, locked in discussion with Esack and Buthelezi.



Many students took advantage of Z.K. Matthews’ hospitality, spending hours at a time engaged in debate at his home in Alice. Matthews’ lectures were known to result in political discussion in the classroom as well. Logan Naidoo points out that the hostels were also a favorite place to debate. “There were little groupings that met in dormitories. ANC and SOYA and APDUSA. Quite a lot of little groupings met.”<sup>69</sup> Both Naidoo and V.R. Govender were first drawn into politics at Fort Hare through discussions within their hostels. Pillay recalls study groups meeting frequently, “making you aware of what was going on.”<sup>70</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri says that Fort Hare was “a hive of political activity and debate,” that “catapulted one to take one’s social experiences and begin to look at them in a slightly different context ... not only asking questions, but seeking answers.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Mabindisa, interview by author.

<sup>69</sup> Naidoo, interview by author.

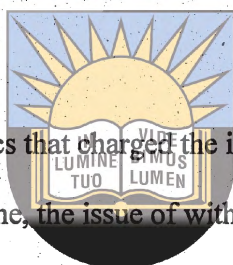
<sup>70</sup> Pillay, interview by author.

<sup>71</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

Non-collaboration, highlighted by Robert Sobukwe in his 1949 speech, dominated discussion at Fort Hare in the late nineteen-forties. Frieda Matthews recalled the passion of campus debate saying,

[t]here can be no doubt that political consciousness grew among most students during their period of study. ... There was hot debate on how far and in what way government institutions should be boycotted and in what way members of the ANC should co-operate with those of other racial groups.<sup>72</sup>

At times, the ire of the students fell on her husband, Professor Z.K. Matthews, who participated in the Native Representative Council that the militant students despised so much.



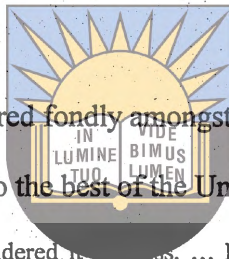
The 1950s brought new topics that charged the intellectual atmosphere on campus. As mentioned in chapter one, the issue of withdrawal from NUSAS was paramount in 1952. However, throughout the decade, the most heated debates were between the ANC Youth League and the Society of Young Africans. Over the years, both organisations were popular amongst the students. SOYA controlled the campus before the Victoria East Branch of the Youth League was founded in 1948 and gained the upper hand, and regained control in the period following the Defiance Campaign when the ANC was hampered by bannings and infiltration. In the later fifties, the YL reasserted itself under the strong leadership of Ambrose Makiwane, who led the resistance to university apartheid. “When I arrived ... the Youth League ... was rather weak. It seemed to me when I got there that it was dominated more or less by the Unity Movement,” says Makiwane.<sup>73</sup>

Yet, no matter which group had majority support at a particular time, the interaction between SOYA and the YL dominated campus debate, particularly in the

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<sup>72</sup> Matthews, *Remembrances*, 126.

1950s. Matsepe-Casaburri says that both SOYA and the YL “articulated themselves very, very well.”<sup>74</sup> Makiwane says, “[w]hen we had the meetings, we were quite strong against the Unity Movement and they were also of course most vociferous.” The friendly, but intense rivalry generated debate that politicised many students. “We organised students, new students, into the Youth League,” says Makiwane. “I suppose the Unity Movement was doing likewise.”<sup>75</sup> Even the non-leadership was forced to choose sides. “It was ANC and the Unity Movement,” says Govender. “I fell into the Unity Movement because of ... a few friends in my dorm.”<sup>76</sup>



The fiery rivalry is remembered fondly amongst students of the fifties.

Makiwane says the YL eventually got the best of the Unity Movement:

We finally crashed it. ... We rendered it a mess. ... But there was no animosity. We were just political opponents. We were friends. You'd find that even a man from the Unity Movement, we were calling each other names and so on and still living there at the hostels.<sup>77</sup>

*Together in Excellence*

The Unity Movement members were particularly susceptible to name-calling.

Mabindisa, a Youth Leaguer, says, “[w]e used to call people who belonged to SOYA ‘beans’ [laughs] because you know, the acronym referred to it.” SOYA members responded by dubbing the Youth Leaguers “Stalinists.” Always prepared to fire back, the Youth Leaguers would seek to have the last word, calling the Unity Movement youngsters “Trotskyites.”<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Makiwane, interview by author.

<sup>74</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

<sup>75</sup> Makiwane, interview by author.

<sup>76</sup> Govender, interview by author.

<sup>77</sup> Makiwane, interview by author.

<sup>78</sup> Mabindisa, interview by author.

The SOYA and ANC groupings held their own meetings, getting together only to discuss issues that affected the college as a whole. Frank Mdlalose describes how, as a leader of the Youth League, he kept abreast of SOYA's discussions:

In our politics, taking politics so seriously, I felt I must know what all the other political organisations are thinking and I must...be informed. So I planted a new student in SOYA. I planted him there. The Unity Movement, they used to meet behind Beda Hall in the bush. I had to send somebody to give me information and he had to behave like he didn't know me. He had to report to me ... as a spy ... on Sunday nights, room number 75, Ferguson Davie ... an eye in the other movement. ... Not for the sake of killing or assaulting, but just for the sake of being part of the thought process.<sup>79</sup>

Mabindisa recalls the debate on campus surrounding the 1959 potato boycott as clearly delineating the difference between the YL and SOYA. He describes the divergent philosophies of the two movements in his account of the events, saying, “[t]here were these potato farmers in the Transvaal who actually were getting laborers from the prisons. ... This was a form of slave labor. ... Some of the people who were working there were killed in the farms.” The ANC called a boycott of potatoes to protest against the unfair labor practices of the farmers. Mabindisa describes how the Youth Leaguers supported the call by their parent organisation: “The ANC Youth Leaguers felt that we shouldn't eat potatoes [in the dining hall]. We used to take potatoes and throw them out.” SOYA did not approve of the Youth Leaguers' methods. Mabindisa says,

[t]he people who belonged to the Unity Movement, the beans, thought that we were childish. They were waiting for the peasants to start their revolt and we were doing all these silly things, boycotts. ... They were always harping on the fact that you have to prepare peasants for a revolution and its only the peasants who can lead this revolution.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Mdlalose, interview by author.

<sup>80</sup> Mabindisa, interview by author.

Beard notes that SOYA members “tended to be theoreticians rather than activists, and their approach to ‘theory’ more often than not was of a scholastic kind, involving the debating of the logomachies of political doctrine.”<sup>81</sup>



Discussion permeated the university and like many students, Matsepe-Casaburri was propelled into politics by the debates between the ANC and the Unity Movement at Fort Hare. Born in Kroonstad on 18 September 1937, the daughter of teachers, she was aware of the racial hostilities in South Africa from an early age. Though her parents were not members of any political organisations and they did not encourage their daughter’s involvement in politics, the environment in which she grew up awakened Matsepe-Casaburri’s social consciousness. Some memories from her childhood are revealing. She says, “I remember as a young girl, old [Z.R.] Mahabane, who was once the ANC president, used to be a minister in Kroonstad and active in his politics there.” She recalls her sensibilities being roused by the vicious pass laws:

[My] own principal was marched off by police for having not carried his pass on him. And this was a respectable citizen, the most educated person in the community. And that made a real mark on many children, that something is wrong with a system that would denigrate someone who has such a high standing in the community.

Many of the forced removals of the fifties also touched Matsepe-Casaburri. Twice, her family was driven out of their home by the government. The second forced removal occurred immediately before she left for Fort Hare.<sup>82</sup> Thus, when she arrived in Alice, she was well aware of the racial strife in the country.

She was, however, unprepared for the level of activity that would greet her. Though politically aware, Matsepe-Casaburri was not active before she got to Fort

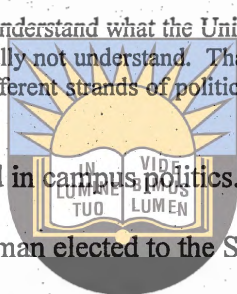
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<sup>81</sup> Beard, “Background to Student Activities,” 168.

Hare. Her earliest Fort Hare memory is of participating in the fresher versus freshette debate. “I was one of those that was chosen [for the debate],” says Matsepe-Casaburri. She remembers the subject of the debate being William Shakespeare. “I’m glad there were no tapes at the time,” she says. “But that was one of my first learning experiences [at Fort Hare].” Her arrival, in 1959, coincided with a peak of activity surrounding the implementation of government apartheid. Though mostly an observer, she picked up a great deal:

It’s only then that I got to really understand what the Unity Movement was all about. I just used to hear about it and really not understand. That’s when one began to pick up the differences between the different strands of politics. ... And there was quite a great deal of passion about it.<sup>83</sup>

Eventually, she did become involved in campus politics. In her second year, Matsepe-Casaburri was the only woman elected to the SRC.



## University of Fort Hare

The questioning, intellectual atmosphere at Fort Hare: Matsepe-Casaburri: “You had really impressive people in terms of political understanding, the readings that they did, knowledge they had.” She describes ANC student leaders Ambrose Makiwane and Billy Modise as looming large in her memory:

They were people who could debate politically in a manner that you had never really heard people engage in debates. ... Fort Hare was the first place where one was thrown into the real world of adult people that seemed to be so knowledgeable and so educated about certain kinds of things.

As someone who arrived at Fort Hare uninitiated, for the most part, into politics, Matsepe-Casaburri attributes the dawn of her interest in politics to constant campus political activity. Though she did not become active in the ANC until she graduated and went into exile, she still describes her Fort Hare days as politically formative:

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<sup>82</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

As one's experience began to shape, you made your connections with the roots that had been formed at Fort Hare. Then once you got into those politics, your commitment was not ambivalent at all. The groundwork had been done for you... You came to a position where you now said I may have come here later, but I have come with convictions that clearly say, backwards I cannot go.<sup>84</sup>

Student life at Fort Hare, however, did take a huge step back following the 1960 government takeover. G.S. Tootla and Marumo Moerane ('59-'61) were both at Fort Hare during the takeover and stayed on to witness the after-effects. "The whole basic structure of Fort Hare was destroyed," says Tootla, bemoaning the end of Fort Hare's open, multi-racial days. "Everything was breaking up. This was the beginning of the destruction of Fort Hare, what it believed in."<sup>85</sup> Marumo Moerane says that following the takeover, "there was hardly any student life," and Siphon Makalima, a long time observer of Fort Hare says, "It went down in spirit, down in everything. It was terrible."<sup>86</sup> This was a far cry from the Fort Hare that Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri loved so much. She says, *Together in Excellence*

[y]ou had a core of a cross-section of the population. ... And you all had to live together, eat together, dance together, play together. ... And what I have dreaded most about the loss of Fort Hare was that microcosm of South Africa that was not allowed to bloom and be able to reproduce itself.

Matsepe-Casaburri, who knew only the multi-racial Fort Hare, says,

[Years later] some people had even forgotten how integrated a community Fort Hare was. I found students not knowing this. 'By the way, you mean to tell me you lived as Indians, coloureds and everybody?' Because in their experience it was a Xhosa university. And that for me was just absolutely shocking, that that can be the memory of any Fort Harian about Fort Hare.<sup>87</sup>

Yet with the takeover, this was the reality. Fort Hare had become an institution exclusively for Xhosas, stripping it of its multi-racial character and wiping the shining example of what was possible from existence.

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<sup>83</sup> op. cit.

<sup>84</sup> op. cit.

<sup>85</sup> Tootla, interview by author.

<sup>86</sup> Marumo Moerane, interview by author, Durban, 28 April 1999; Makalima, interview by author.

<sup>87</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

## The Road to Takeover

*There are worse things that can happen to a person than the loss of his "bread." Ones' soul is much more important.*  
*-Z.K. Matthews*

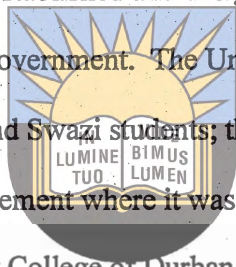
### Taking Control

In 1959, eleven years after coming to power, the National Party (NP) secured passage of the Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act, which recognised eight distinct homelands on ethnic grounds and provided the machinery for these areas to be led to self-government.<sup>1</sup> Unable to quell the tide of African political activism, the government increasingly turned to the manipulation of ethnicity to entrench their power. That same year, the government brought university education in line with their ethnically defined goals. Speaking in June of 1959, W.A. Maree, the Minister of Bantu Education said that the provision of separate universities had, "[a] very close connection with all the other legislation of this government which deals with the development of the Bantu as separate national groups [Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, the Bantu Authorities Act and the Bantu Education Act]."<sup>2</sup> With the passage in Parliament of the Extension of University Education Act and the Fort Hare Transfer Act, university apartheid became an integral component of a government strategy to defuse political opposition through the Bantustan Policy.

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Saunders and Nicholas Southey, *A Dictionary of South African History* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1998), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Beale *University Apartheid*, 146.

The Extension of University Education Act called for the “establishment, management and control of university colleges for non-white persons; for the admission of students to and their instruction at university colleges; for the limitation of the admission of non-white students to certain university institutions.”<sup>3</sup> Under the new law, the so-called “open universities” (namely Witswatersrand, UCT and Natal), were reserved for whites only. While the correspondence University of South Africa (UNISA) and the Medical School of the University of Natal remained open to blacks, four new University Colleges were established and designated to distinct population groups as defined by the apartheid government. The University College of Zululand (called Ngoye) was to be for Zulu and Swazi students; the University College of the North (called Turfloop after the settlement where it was situated) was for North Sotho and Tswana students; the University College of Durban-Westville was for Indian students; and the University College of the Western Cape was for coloured students. Under the Fort Hare Transfer Act, Fort Hare was seized by the government, with registration of non-Xhosa students (with a few exceptions) no longer permitted.



University of Fort Hare  
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### **University Apartheid: The birth of a government idea**

In her study of the development of University Apartheid, Beale writes that the NP came to power in 1948 without a blueprint university education. Indeed, prior to 1955, little thought was given within the NP to how university policy would be incorporated into apartheid planning. She notes that racism was the only concept agreed upon throughout the party, writing that it, “was the common starting point for members of the NP.”<sup>4</sup> The only conclusion reached by the government before 1955

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<sup>3</sup> Extension of University Education Bill, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>4</sup> Beale *University Apartheid*, 19.

was that white students should study in institutions separate from blacks. Beale writes,

In the early 1950s the direction taken by the new apartheid government was a source of controversy within the NP. At every level, including the cabinet, the NP combined a range of people and interests, who worked together because they shared a general commitment to Afrikaner nationalism and to the vaguely-defined idea of apartheid.<sup>5</sup>

Ideas about the shape and scope of university apartheid were in flux until the Department of Native Affairs (NAD) and Suid Afrikaanse Buro vir Rasse Aangeleentede (SABRA) took control of policy in 1955.<sup>6</sup> Previously, university education fell under the jurisdiction of the Department of Arts, Science and Culture. Spurred on by African political opposition exhibited in actions like the Defiance Campaign and the Congress of the People, and the rise of Afrikaners in power within the NP, senior members of the NAD increasingly took charge of university policy, shaping it into the form it took in 1959.



Beale writes that as the Department of Native Affairs and SABRA assumed control from the Department of Education, the government's university education policy became more clearly defined. Political concerns were now paramount and educational policy for the new institutions was left unresolved:

Since ethnic self-segregation at university level had helped to foster a separate Afrikaner identity, educational planners in the National Party expected that tribally-based universities would provide similar psychological underpinnings for the future 'independent' African homelands. Segregation of Indians and Coloureds would minimize tendencies for the subject races to identify with one another. ....<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> op. cit. 2

<sup>6</sup> SABRA was a pro-separate development think tank.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Karis and Gail Gerhart, eds., *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 5, p. 90.

With the passage of the two acts, politics and university education were brought together as the primary function of the University Colleges was to contribute to the success of the government's Bantustan policy.

The road to the passage of the two acts began in 1953, when Minister of Arts, Education and Science, J.H. Viljoen, addressed a memorandum to the cabinet entitled "Apartheid at Universities." He said that the government had been brought under increasing public scrutiny to "provide separate educational facilities for non-whites at universities."<sup>8</sup> In December 1953 a commission was appointed chaired by Dr. J.E. Holloway to look into the financial feasibility of providing separate university facilities for non-Europeans. Supporters of educational segregation, including the University of South Africa, the University of Pretoria, Potchefstroom University, SABRA and the Native Affairs Department presented their cases. Werner Eiselen, the father of Bantu Education, who had been appointed Secretary for Native Affairs in 1951, gave the most dramatic testimony. He envisioned three separate "Bantu university institutions," divided along ethnic lines and under the control of UNISA as "an ultimate ideal."<sup>9</sup> With the presentation by Eiselen and others to the Holloway Commission, the notion of university education along ethnic lines was given credence for the first time.

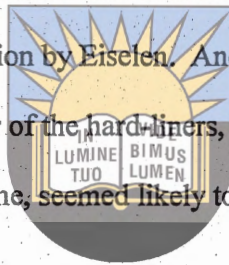
In making his report in February 1955, Holloway shunned the call to build new, separate institutions, saying it was neither practical nor financially wise. Yet Beale writes that "the balance of power in the cabinet changed from moderate to hard-line support for apartheid" in the months before the report was released. And

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<sup>8</sup> Beale, *University Apartheid*, 96.

Minister of Native Affairs Hendrik Verwoerd rejected the Holloway report, telling the cabinet, “where the Bantu are concerned I find the whole approach of the Commission is wrong and as a consequence I cannot identify myself with its recommendations.”<sup>10</sup>

In November 1955, ignoring the recommendations of the Holloway Commission, the government announced the formation of a committee to look into the application of apartheid at the universities.<sup>11</sup> It became increasingly obvious that the government viewed separate universities as vehicles of social control and as such, would fight to make sure they were established. Verwoerd recommended a system similar to that presented to the Holloway Commission by Eiselen. And, as Beale writes, due to the shift in power within the NP in favor of the hard-liners, when articulated by Verwoerd, the policy, for the first time, seemed likely to be implemented.<sup>12</sup>



## University of Fort Hare

Indeed, in March 1957, Viljoen introduced into Parliament the first draft of what was then termed the “Separate University Education Bill.” It called for the

establishment of university colleges for black students and the transfer of Fort Hare and Natal Medical School to the government, and declared the open universities (in most cases) off limits to blacks. Fort Harians and other opponents of the bill were granted a brief reprieve when Professor Dennis Cowan of the University of Cape Town discovered a constitutional flaw in the bill. As it dealt with matters of public policy and private interests the bill was declared “hybrid” and the NP was forced to withdraw it. However, the technicality did not delay matters for long as the bill was quickly replaced with another, which omitted reference to Fort Hare and the non-

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<sup>9</sup> op. cit. 100.

<sup>10</sup> op. cit. 105

<sup>11</sup> “New Move For Student Apartheid,” *Cape Times*. 7 November 1955.

<sup>12</sup> Beale, *University Apartheid*, 107.

European Medical School. A second, separate, bill dealing with Fort Hare that proceeded through Parliament independently was also drawn up.

In May 1957, the Bill was placed before a Select Committee in Parliament. The committee recommended 119 changes to the bill, the most significant of which was to establish separate, segregated, advisory councils and senates. The name of the bill was also changed to the Extension of University Education Bill. At Fort Hare, the Council and Senate consisting of both Africans and Europeans had always operated successfully. Yet the government paid no attention to Fort Hare's history. It saw itself as trustee to Africans in the bantustan, assuming control of their life until the day when they were "civilised" enough to control it themselves. Referring to the "present state of immaturity of the non-European groups," which rendered them "unable to finance, staff, and control a university college of their own," the commission sought to bring the senates and councils in line with the new roles outlined by the separate development of Bantu Authorities.<sup>13</sup>

The government's justification for the establishment of separate universities illuminates its reasons for ignoring Holloway's conviction that establishing the facilities was not economically feasible. Introducing the revised, non-hybrid, bill in the House of Assembly, Viljoen outlined the context of the government's university policy, voicing concern over the growing African political opposition, particularly, "the numerous defiance campaigns ... amongst the non-white population groups."<sup>14</sup> Beale writes that in the late 1950s, "the failure of the government to dispel the threat

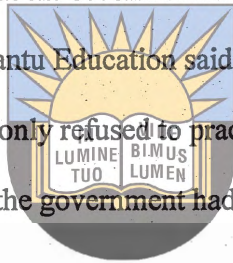
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<sup>13</sup> op. cit. 134.

<sup>14</sup> op. cit. 114.

of African political mobilisation, and the exacerbation of the conditions that fed that mobilisation led increasingly to political manipulation of the ideas of ethnicity.”<sup>15</sup>

Fort Hare in particular was viewed as a threat to government policy. The Minister of Bantu Education felt that the students were being indoctrinated, and the government felt the students were “being turned into agitators.”<sup>16</sup> It therefore sought to curb what they called the “smoldering and undesirable ideological elements” emanating from Alice.<sup>17</sup> Speaking at the second reading of the Fort Hare Transfer Bill in Parliament, the Minister of Bantu Education said that the government had to control Fort Hare because it had not only refused to practice apartheid, but directly opposed it and destroyed the means the government had created to apply it.<sup>18</sup>



## University of Fort Hare

Abolishing the open universities was also a key component of the  
*Together in Excellence*

government’s plan. Verwoerd said, “[w]e do not want non-white students in the same university as the young European students of today who are the leaders of tomorrow. We do not want Europeans to become so accustomed to the Native that they feel there is no difference between them and the Natives.”<sup>19</sup> The Commission on the Separate University Bill wrote, “[t]he existing open universities will give the students a background which does not fit in with their national character and will give them an alien and contemptuous attitude towards their own culture.” In making their case

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<sup>15</sup> op. cit. 142.

<sup>16</sup> Council Minutes, 1959. Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>17</sup> Mary Beale, “The Task of Fort Hare in terms of the Transkei and Ciskei: Educational Policy at Fort Hare in the 1960s,” in *Perspectives in Education*, 12.1 (1990): 42.

<sup>18</sup> John Shingler, “Crack Heard Round the World: Leave Fort Hare Alone—Away with Indoctrination,” *Student: The International Student Magazine* (1959). Cory Library Alexander Kerr Collection, PR 4228, 18.

<sup>19</sup> op. cit. 18

against the open universities, the government spoke of their danger to the bantustan policy:

The majority of non-Europeans who received their university education at the European universities have not been prepared to use their talents in the service and development of their own people. They have, on the contrary, sought a livelihood in European-oriented communities.

Indeed it was fully acknowledged by the commission that the main purpose of the university colleges was to provide for the growth of the bantustans: "Without their own university colleges the development of the Bantu areas and indeed of the whole project of Bantu development ... would be an impossible task."<sup>20</sup>



In its final form, the Extension of University Education Bill provided the Minister of Bantu Education in the Native Affairs Department with immense powers over Fort Hare and the other proposed ethnic colleges. In addition to appointing Senate, Council and advisory body members, the staff of the new institutions were to be civil servants under his control. The lecturing staff were regarded as state officials to be dealt with at the discretion of the Minister. The State was given the power to conduct inquiries into the political leanings of students and staff in order to "protect the developing ethnic groups against irresponsible political agitation."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, in an attempt to lessen the threat of African political organisation in urban areas, the new campuses were to be situated in the "native reserves," physically removing some of the more highly educated people from the cities.<sup>22</sup>

Most importantly, as Beale writes, "putting African university education directly under the control of the Department of Bantu Education increased the

<sup>20</sup> Extracts from Report of the Commission on the Separate University Education Bill, Fort Hare Papers, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Extension of University Education Bill Memorandum, 25 August, 1958, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>22</sup> Beale *University Apartheid*, 100.

opportunities available to the government for the manipulation of the political cultures of the university colleges.”<sup>23</sup> From 15 May to 12 June 1959, the Fort Hare Transfer Bill was debated before a Select Committee of Parliament and pronouncements by Government members of Parliament during the proceedings outline the role envisioned for the new colleges. One minister said, “the colleges must prevent a spirit of equality arising.” Another said they “will destruct [sic] the disastrous influences of liberalism which is using the university as a breeding place.” It was also proclaimed that the colleges were necessary to “prevent evil influences infiltrating” and that students of the colleges must “develop along healthy lines from the bottom up.”<sup>24</sup> Z.K. Matthews wrote that the proposed structure of the colleges was “frightening,” in that



all members of council will have to be pro-Government and Senate will be subject to a discipline code which will convert them into automatons. Do what you are told, eat sleep and be merry! will be the obvious motto for such a staff.

University of Fort Hare

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### Reaction at Fort Hare: The Official Response

“So the bombshell has fallen,” wrote Z.K. Matthews on 14 March 1957. In Johannesburg facing treason charges, Matthews kept abreast of the news surrounding university apartheid and the subject dominated letters to his wife, Frieda, in Alice. Upon reading the terms of the University Apartheid Bill, he wrote, “Verwoerd seems determined to get everything African under him.” Three days later, he wrote to his wife, “I feel that the Bill is even worse than we had anticipated. Every single freedom usually associated with Universities will be gone.” Yet Matthews was not paralysed by the shocking nature of the bill. As soon as he was he made aware of its contents, he began to formulate opposition, telling Frieda, “I feel that a special council meeting

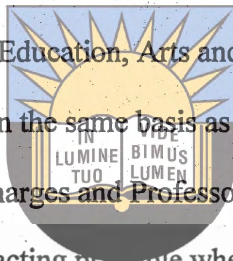
<sup>23</sup> op. cit. 146.

<sup>24</sup> Burrows and Matthews, *A Short Pictorial History of the University College of Fort Hare*, 42.

<sup>25</sup> Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, 122.

ought to be convened and that a strong deputation should be sent to Cape Town to put the case of Fort Hare before the Minister of Education.”<sup>26</sup>

In fact, separate universities was the topic at numerous Senate meetings even before the terms of the bill were announced. Z.K. Matthews writes that “the question of the future of Fort Hare was exercising the minds of members of the academic staff” beginning in 1955.<sup>27</sup> On 11 June 1956, the Senate issued a resolution saying, “[t]he best interests of the College would be served by the retention of its present relationship with the Department of Education, Arts and Science and that the college should continue to accept students on the same basis as before.”<sup>28</sup> Shortly thereafter, Matthews was arrested on treason charges and Professor M.H. Giffen, head of the botany department, was designated acting principle whenever Z.K. was unavailable due to the trial.<sup>29</sup> Yet despite the perilous position of Matthews, the official response to the bill at Fort Hare was swift, strong and sustained.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Shortly after the provisions of the initial Separate University Education Bill were announced, the Executive Committee of the Governing Council met and outlined their responses. “The executive committee ... has read with dismay the proposals for [Fort Hare’s] future development. The college is in fact to be reduced from the status of an autonomous university institution to a branch of the civil service.”<sup>30</sup> While the other ethnic universities were to be created, Fort Hare, as it had been known was to be destroyed. Throughout their opposition to the bill, the Fort

<sup>26</sup> op. cit. 121, 122

<sup>27</sup> Z.K. Matthews, “The University College of Fort Hare,” in *South African Outlook*. 1 April, 1957, 61.

<sup>28</sup> op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> Following the adoption of the Freedom Charter at the Congress of the People held at Kliptown in 1955, the police arrested 155 people and charged them with treason. The trial dragged on and finally ended in 1961 with the acquittal of all accused due to lack of evidence of revolutionary intent.

Hare administration emphasised this point. They pointed to the 1947 Brookes Commission Report that had said that the future of Fort Hare should be that of an independent institution, viewing the bill as an attack on Fort Hare's progress:

Fort Hare has forty years of experience and development behind it. During that long period it has progressed from High School to full university college and has gained many of the rights and privileges of self government proper to a university. Under the proposed bill all these rights and privileges are to be abrogated, the traditions of the college lost, and its future made entirely dependent on the will of the Minister.<sup>31</sup>

On 16 October 1957, written evidence was presented to the government by the Council and Senate of Fort Hare charging that "[t]he first necessity for any satisfactory functioning of any institution which claims to be a university is autonomy, the power to work out its own salvation free of political pressures."<sup>32</sup> From the outset of debate over the bill, the prospect of government interference in educational decisions upset the authorities at Fort Hare. Council and Senate felt the bill gave excessive and unparalleled powers to the minister and that there were no academic or logical grounds for changing control of the college. They saw a danger in the unchecked authority of the minister, writing "[a] principal answerable only to the Minister may at times be tempted to soft-pedal academic interests in favour of current political policies."<sup>33</sup>

In 1958, Professor Burrows was named Principal. Opposition to the university apartheid bills increased during his tenure. The Senate submitted a memorandum to the commission on the Separate University Education Bill and was later invited to present oral evidence. The memorandum attacked state control of the proposed university colleges, questioning whether the government's stated intention to

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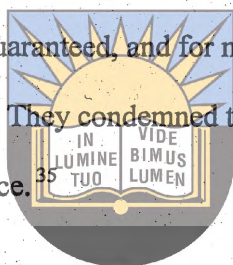
<sup>30</sup> Minutes of Executive Committee of Governing Council, 26 March, 1957, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>31</sup> op. cit.

<sup>32</sup> Additional Evidence by Fort Hare to the Commission, Fort Hare Papers, 8 January, 1958.

<sup>33</sup> op. cit.

eventually turn management of the colleges over to the non-European community was genuine. "From top to bottom the government of the College is not to be in the hands of the non-European community," states the memorandum.<sup>34</sup> On 10 January 1958 Burrows, Matthews and Professor de Villiers presented oral evidence to the Separate Universities Commission. The Fort Hare Lecturer's Association also stated their case, saying that for a university to function properly it must, "have the power to decide upon its own policies and organise its own affairs. In particular, a university must be free from external party political pressures." The Lecturer's Association called for academic freedom to be guaranteed, and for no changes in the manner of appointment of Council and Senate. They condemned the proposal to introduce differential salary scales based on race.<sup>35</sup>



On 25 July 1958, the College sent a memorandum to both the Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences and the Minister of Native Affairs requesting that they receive a delegation from Fort Hare. The government replied that it regretted that it could not do any good to discuss the situation as Fort Hare had already voiced its objections before the commission.<sup>36</sup> This was the government's normal reaction. It paid little attention to the protest against their proposed bills, and demonstrations, even those including Fort Hare staff, were largely ignored. Siphon Makalima says that the government response to the opposition was negligible: "They allowed the change from no comma to have a comma in ... their arguments."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Memorandum on Extension of University Education Bill, 25 August, 1958, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>35</sup> Summary of Evidence Before Commission by Fort Hare Lecturer's Association, April 1956-November 1957, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>36</sup> Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial History*, 35.

<sup>37</sup> Makalima, interview by author.

## Reaction at Fort Hare: The Student Response

On 27 October 1956, at an emergency mass meeting of students, the following proposal lost by 26 votes to 100: "That this mass meeting of the students of Fort Hare moves that an All-In-Conference of University Students, irrespective of race, colour, or creed, be called to consider the implications of University Apartheid."<sup>38</sup> Rather, it was decided by the house "that a conference of all students be called at which would be decided various ways and means of opposing segregation in Universities. Such a Conference must be called by Fort Hare with no collaboration with NUSAS."<sup>39</sup>



Yet just over a year later, in March of 1957, the Fort Hare students voted unanimously to rejoin NUSAS so that the university apartheid bills could be fought from a united standpoint. The anti-liberal sentiment of the early fifties was put on hold as the students recognised they would need all the help they could get in fighting against the government's proposed policy. In a press statement SRC President Ambrose Makiwane said that the situation had changed since 1952 and that the Separate Universities Bill had shown the need for cooperation between all bodies sincerely opposed to university apartheid.<sup>40</sup> Re-affiliation to NUSAS was seen as a political move, enlisting the support of white students against university apartheid. Makiwane says, "[w]e discussed it thoroughly as a student body and then at the same time, we linked up with the other forward looking universities like Rhodes, Wits and Cape Town. And we campaigned against this coming act."<sup>41</sup> Throughout the late fifties, opposition to the university apartheid bills dominated SRC activity and led to frequent mass meetings of students.

<sup>38</sup> Emergency Mass Meeting, SRC and Other Committees, 23 October, 1956, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>39</sup> Letter to Senate, 30 October, 1956, Fort Hare Papers.

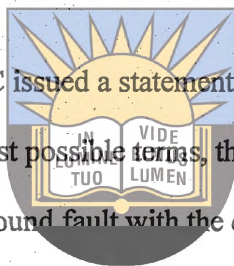
<sup>40</sup> "Fort Hare Decides To Rejoin NUSAS." *Natal Mercury*. 25 March, 1957.

<sup>41</sup> Makiwane, interview by author.

Makiwane led Fort Hare student opposition to university apartheid, representing the college on a delegation to Parliament and authoring many of the memorandums issued by the SRC against the legislation. In a statement on the findings of the Separate University Bill Commission, Makiwane wrote,

[t]he commission's so-called conviction 'that the placing of the Bantu University Colleges under the control of the Native Affairs Department will make for better and more rapid development' is unacceptable because it makes for better and more rapid development towards the degradation, mental regimentation, and slavery, and aims at making the student mind mere pulp that can be manipulated to suit the whims and fancies of a fatal ideology.<sup>42</sup>

On 14 October 1958 the SRC issued a statement on behalf of the Fort Hare students condemning "in the strongest possible terms, the Separate University Education Bill." They particularly found fault with the divisive nature of the proposed colleges:



## University of Fort Hare

Why, we ask, can Fort Hare ~~Together in Excellence~~ in a time of the stability we should have in the country without a coerced system of regimented existence? Anyone who pays a visit to the College ... cannot escape the fact that University life at Fort Hare is a complete negation of the commission's allegations and misrepresentations about the potentialities of the non-European people as members of a multi-racial South Africa.

Makiwane and his colleagues proclaimed the government was overlooking that fact that

the non-European students do not regulate their student relationships on ethnical considerations. On the contrary, they gain considerably in the ultimate field of human relations by having a common student life, with common aspirations, in an atmosphere where they benefit mutually from the variety of their different, but not antagonistic, backgrounds.

The statement refers to a campus visit by the Separate University Bill Commission in which the commissioners were "impressed by the harmonious relations between staff

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<sup>42</sup> Ambrose Makiwane, "SRC Statement re: Findings of Commission of Enquiry, 21 Aug. 1958, SRC and Other Committees, Fort Hare Papers.

members of all races, between the students of various backgrounds, and between staff and students.”<sup>43</sup>

Ironically, it was the government onslaught that brought the students and college authorities closer together. From Johannesburg, Z.K. Matthews wrote, “I am pleased that Ambrose Makiwane and company are going to Cape Town and will probably come up here later. The SRC seems to be doing very well this year.”<sup>44</sup> The Principal complementing the President of the SRC would have seemed impossible just a few years earlier. And praise by the SRC for the administration would have been even more unlikely. Makiwane says, “Professor Z.K. ... he was very helpful. ... We were using his car and petrol ... sometimes when we wanted the car, we had no money. We’d tell [Frieda] we want the car and the fuel [laughs].”<sup>45</sup> Indeed, in the face of the government onslaught, the administration appreciated the SRC’s militancy and even supported its activities.

For the first time in the college’s history, both students and staff protested in unison as solidarity against a common enemy replaced the anger towards the authorities of earlier in the decade. The government took note of the improved relations between students and staff. In March of 1957, plainclothes policemen offered students up to ten pounds for information on whether staff or student leaders had attempted to incite resistance to the Separate Education Bill.<sup>46</sup> In 1958, despite the police interference, Makiwane led a group of approximately three hundred students and staff through the streets of Alice to protest against the acts. Isaac

<sup>43</sup> Memorandum, 14 October, 1958. Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>44</sup> Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, 136.

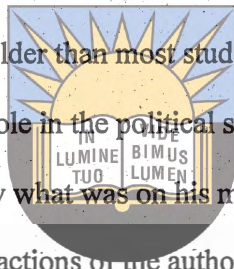
<sup>45</sup> Makiwane, interview by author.

<sup>46</sup> “Police Interference At Fort Hare Alleged,” *The Star*. 19 March, 1957.

Mabindisa recalls the march as being dignified, with staff in academic dress walking at the front of the procession.<sup>47</sup>



Andrew Masondo calls Makiwane a charismatic leader but adds, “I also had the feeling that he was a bully. He’s the type of leader you’d want if you are fighting. You wouldn’t want him to be your leader when you are strategising.”<sup>48</sup> As President of the SRC during the fight against university apartheid, Makiwane had to do a bit of both. He was an interesting person to lead the student struggle. Makiwane arrived at Fort Hare in 1955 at the age of 34, older than most students, full of life experience, and primed to assume a leadership role in the political struggle on campus. Beard wrote, “[n]ever did he hesitate to say what was on his mind, and he made a habit of criticising university policy and the actions of the authorities whenever they did not come up to his expectations.”<sup>49</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Born on 29 November 1921 in the rural Transkei, both of Makiwane’s parents were teachers and his father also worked as a peasant farmer. While his father was not politically active, Makiwane’s mother became one of the rural area organisers for the ANC shortly after it was founded in 1912. Makiwane remembers becoming politically aware through his mother’s involvement. His home was a frequent meeting place of the provincial ANC and Makiwane recalls, as a child, earning a kind of informal membership in the organisation “before I even enrolled because I used to be sent on errands for the movement.” He says, “I became aware through the meetings there at home. I began to know that something was wrong. And I got interested.”<sup>50</sup>

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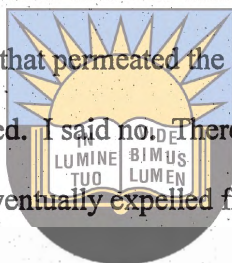
<sup>47</sup> Mabindisa, interview by author.

<sup>48</sup> Masondo, interview by author.

<sup>49</sup> Beard, “Background to Student Activities,” 168.

<sup>50</sup> Makiwane, interview by author.

Makiwane's first political activity was at Clarkebury, a mission school in the Ncobo district of the Transkei. Beginning at Clarkebury and continuing through his time at Fort Hare and beyond, Makiwane made politics a part of his everyday life. "When I went to school, I knew already about these injustices and I used to react accordingly when anything reactionary was done by authorities," he says. Makiwane led a variety of protests against the missionary authority of the school. "We resented them ... opening our letters ... they would discover that some are in love," he says. He also rebelled against the religion that permeated the school. "You had to make confessions," he says. "And I refused. I said no. There are no gods. I can't confess my sins to them." Makiwane was eventually expelled from Clarkebury over protests against poorly prepared food:



### University of Fort Hare

We had a committee that organised the strike. And one of us ratted and told the authorities, gave all of our names. ... So when we were charged for that offense, which we regarded as not an offense, I refused to be punished, rejected corporal punishment outright. And they expelled me.<sup>51</sup>

Following his expulsion in 1939, Makiwane moved to Johannesburg, where his involvement in political activity heightened. There, he joined the ANC Youth League, which was founded in 1944. At some point, he also joined the South African Communist Party. Unable to afford continued schooling, Makiwane did matriculation studies privately while working to save for his continued education. "I was secretary of the Laundry Workers' Union as well as the Rope and Canvas Workers' Union. I was also an organiser for the South African Clothing Workers' Union. ... I was involved in strikes there," he says. Makiwane also became

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<sup>51</sup> op. cit.

increasingly involved with the ANC as a member of the Orlando and then the Pimville Branch.<sup>52</sup>

In 1951, he moved on to Adam's College in Natal, where he did a teaching course. After finishing at Adam's, Makiwane worked as a teacher during the onset of Bantu Education. Once again, politics took center stage. He says,

[w]e started campaigning against Bantu Education before it was even enacted. Bantu Education as well as the Bantu Authorities Act. We were involved. ... And we were expelled because of that. Many teachers were involved, particularly those that belonged to the Unity Movement here in the Cape.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, when Makiwane finally arrived in Alice at the age of 34 in 1955, his political outlook had long been formed and it was assumed that he would take up a leadership position. The influence of Makiwane on the campus in the late fifties is unquestionable. In 1958, he exhibited the organising skills he developed in Johannesburg, leading a nurses' strike at Lovedale Hospital in protest against the dismissal of an African nurse. As Beard notes, "no move was made by the nurses without prior consultation with the [Fort Hare] SRC executive committee [led by Makiwane]."<sup>54</sup> The YL was also active in 1959, organising a boycott of potatoes in the dining hall in solidarity with the ANC's nationwide campaign against prison labor practices on potato farms.

Govender speaks of the "ANC of Makiwane" and says that Makiwane, called "Gumbo" by the students after his clan name, was an "outstanding figure during this

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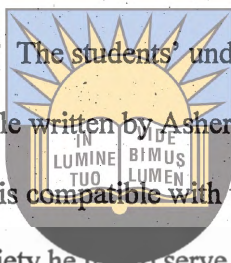
<sup>52</sup> op. cit.

<sup>53</sup> op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> Beard, "Background to Student Activities," 169; The strike eventually lost its edge as the nurses' solidarity began to fade. The SRC responded by banning all nurses from the campus, leading to disputes among the students. For a gender analysis of this strike, see Anne Kelk Mager, *Gender and the Making of a South African Bantustan: A Social History of the Ciskei 1945-1959* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999).

time.” He describes Gumbo as a “tall, bearded man” with “his own style.”<sup>55</sup>

Matsepe-Casaburri says that Makiwane’s debating prowess “stands out ... in a manner that you had never really heard people engage in debates.”<sup>56</sup> Makiwane says that it was easy to get people involved in the protests against university apartheid because “the student body was moved.”<sup>57</sup> Opposition dominated the pages of *The Fort Harian* student publication. Calling the proposed new Fort Hare a “Bantu College tied to the apron strings of the Minister of Native Affairs,” M. Swana wrote, “[t]hese bush colleges are definitely to be established to produce intellectual yes men and to impede the pursuit of truth.”<sup>58</sup> The students’ understanding of the issues at play is evident in a *Fort Harian* article written by Asher L. Ntanga. He wrote, “[t]he principle underlying the segregation is compatible with the aim of Bantu Education; to prepare the non-White for the society he has to serve, that is, the tribal society.”<sup>59</sup>



## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

It was not only the Fort Hare campus that was in revolt. Lovedale had fought its own battle against Bantu Education in the mid-1950s and got involved in the struggle at Fort Hare as well. Isaac Mabindisa says that Makiwane’s influence spread beyond Fort Hare, to the neighboring high school. A student at Lovedale High School from 1956-58, Mabindisa says, “when we were at Lovedale there was a strong connection between Lovedale and Fort Hare.” Thus, although Mabindisa arrived at Fort Hare for academic study in 1959, through Makiwane he had become a part of the school’s political culture three years earlier.

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<sup>55</sup> Govender, interview by author.

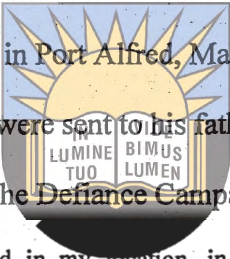
<sup>56</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

<sup>57</sup> Makiwane, interview by author.

<sup>58</sup> M. Swana, *Fort Harian*, 1959, Howard Pim Library, 29.

<sup>59</sup> Asher L. Ntanga, *Fort Harian*, 1959, Howard Pim Library, 30.

Mabindisa was born in Healdtown in 1940 and grew up in Port Alfred, where both of his parents were teachers. Although his parents sympathised with the ANC, neither of them was politically active. "My father ... participated in local politics ... on advisory boards ... more than anything else ... but because he was a civil servant [he] was not allowed to participate openly in politics." Mabindisa's mother was a leader in the South African Women's League, but he says this group was more a welfare organisation than a political one. Mabindisa was educated in Port Alfred up to Standard Six before being sent to St. Matthew's College, a mission school near Keiskammahoek. While growing up in Port Alfred, Mabindisa remembers reading, with interest, copies of Hansard that were sent to his father detailing the Parliamentary debates. He was also influenced by the Defiance Campaign:



There were many people arrested in my location, in my hometown, who were defying these segregation laws. There used to be rallies ... and every Sunday we used to listen to these political speeches and the experiences of people who had come out of jail. So my education in politics began that way.<sup>60</sup>

In 1955, the government took over St. Matthew's and Mabindisa received another political lesson. With St. Matthew's declared a girls' school, he was forced to move to Lovedale, which was reserved for boys in the government's new scheme. He says, "[o]ne of the things that the government wanted to do was to dismantle missionary education because they felt the type of education we got at [these schools] was preparing us to join the elite of the country and would make us envious of the European life."<sup>61</sup> At Lovedale, Mabindisa began reading *New Age* and *Torch* and, influenced by Makiwane, he joined the ANC Youth League. The leaders at Fort Hare, including Makiwane and Billy Modise, could often be seen initiating Lovedale youngsters into politics. Makiwane says, "[t]here was a lot of contact. They were

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<sup>60</sup> Mabindisa, interview by author.

<sup>61</sup> op. cit.

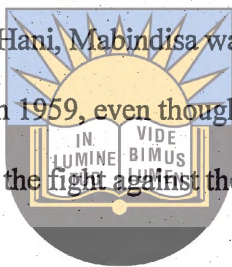
members of the Victoria Branch. ... Most of the [issues], we used to discuss together with them. They would leave Lovedale, come to the campus.”<sup>62</sup>

Sigqibo Dwane (’63-’64), a student at Lovedale from 1955-59 says that Makiwane’s role as an educator was powerful:

We did not have meetings at Lovedale but we went across to Fort Hare to meetings with ... Ambrose Makiwane who was our teacher. We sat at his feet. Thabo [Mbeki] was in the group. And we would go to his room and be lectured to by Ambrose. And then on other occasions, we would go to public meetings, which were held under a twisted African tree and listen to [him], discussing and learning from [him].<sup>63</sup>

Along with Thabo Mbeki and Chris Hani, Mabindisa was party to these sessions.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, when he arrived at Fort Hare in 1959, even though Makiwane had graduated, Mabindisa was well prepared to join the fight against the separate university bills.



Mabindisa describes the late 1950s as quite a dramatic time for everybody, but an exciting time because there were demonstrations against the government bills.”

He recalls that when the newly-appointed government rector, Johannes Jurgens Ross, the new registrar, H.J. Du Preez and the head of UNISA, Professor Pauw, came to address the students, “they had a terrible time.”<sup>65</sup> Upon their arrival at the college, the government representatives were greeted by angry students with banners bearing the slogans, “WE DON’T WANT FASCISTS HERE,” “LEAVE FORT HARE ALONE—AWAY WITH INDOCTRINATION,” and “ROSS VERWAG MOFILKHEID” (ROSS EXPECT TROUBLE).<sup>66</sup> The attacks on the new administrators did not stop with words. G.C. Oosthuizen says, “I shall never forget

<sup>62</sup> Makiwane, interview by author.

<sup>63</sup> Sigqibo Dwane, interview by author, Cape Town, 20 April 1999.

<sup>64</sup> While Thabo Mbeki was a student at Lovedale, he went into exile and did not attend Fort Hare.

<sup>65</sup> Mabindisa, interview by author.

<sup>66</sup> Shingler. “Crack Heard Round the World,” 18.

how the students attacked [Professor Pauw's] car and put stuff on his tires."<sup>67</sup>

Mabindisa says the three were "actually pelted by the students ... with eggs tomatoes, all sorts of things." Herby Govinden, a young lecturer at the time, adds, "We gave them a pretty rough time. So they got a taste of what they were coming into."<sup>68</sup> G.S. Tootla says, "Oh God! ... Du Preez got a hiding from us. He was messed up from head to toe."<sup>69</sup>

The harsh treatment was not reserved solely for those three visitors. In 1958, Adam Small was appointed senior lecturer. Small later became a well-known Afrikaans writer and philosopher who opposed apartheid, but at the time, the students were suspicious of him. "He came there as a protégé of the Afrikaners. When he spoke Afrikaans, even the Afrikaners had to listen. But he was coloured. He was placed there as a token from the whites," says Govinden. "Things got so bad the students were after him," says Govinden.<sup>70</sup> At one stage, Small "had to be rescued from the students," according to Tootla who adds, "we almost lynched him because we thought he was a government agent."<sup>71</sup>



Marumo Moerane was a member of the student body affected by the events surrounding the government takeover. He arrived at Fort Hare in 1959 at the age of 17, politically conscious, but not active. Moerane, the son of M.T. Moerane, the ANC leader, was aware of the tumultuous racial situation in South Africa from an early age. "1949 ... was a terrible year because there were anti-Indian riots in Durban. I remember that very clearly. My father used to speak very strongly against that. I was

<sup>67</sup> G.C. Oosthuizen, interview by author, Durban, 30 April 1999.

<sup>68</sup> Govinden, interview by author.

<sup>69</sup> Tootla, interview by author.

<sup>70</sup> Govinden, interview by author.

only seven then, but I have a vivid memory of that time.” Having grown up in an intensely political family, Moerane, at the age of ten, was prepared to participate actively in the Defiance Campaign. “I’m told by my mother and father that I wanted to go and join [laughs] the campaign and present myself for arrest, go and sit on a park bench reserved for Europeans as they were then called, go to playgrounds and use the swings reserved for white kids.”<sup>72</sup>

In 1955, Moerane entered St. Joseph’s College, a Roman Catholic Mission High School in Natal, to do his Junior Certificate. He says that St. Joseph’s was a place “where there were no political meetings. We were very good boys and girls who did things by the rules. It was a very regimented society ... perfect silence in the evenings, study rooms where you are monitored. There were no political organisations or forums for political discussion so despite his political inclination, Moerane didn’t become active while at St. Joseph’s. He says, “[f]rom [study hall] you go to your rooms and sleep until the bell rings. ... So there was no time to engage in any political discussion. There were no youth leagues or anything of the sort.”<sup>73</sup>

That would all change when Moerane arrived at Fort Hare in 1959, a year of heightened political activity on campus. “Fifty-nine is when the PAC was born. ... That’s when the government took over Fort Hare from the old regime. ... The changes were dramatic,” he says. Moerane recalls being intrigued by the level of fervor in the debate and discussion on campus. “[Seretse Choabi] used to speak and introduce every speech of his with the phrase ‘according to Karl Marx.’ ... He used to speak until he frothed at the mouth.” Moerane, like many of the other students, was

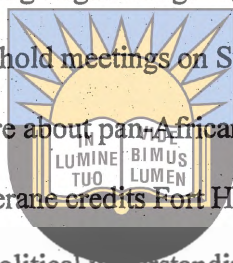
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<sup>71</sup> Tootla, interview by author.

drawn into active campus politics by the heated atmosphere on campus. "When I got to [Fort Hare] it was really the first time in my life that I attended political meetings," he says. Influenced by some friends in his hostel, Moerane joined the PAC branch at Fort Hare. He says that he was also influenced to join the PAC by his father:

Within the ANC you had a nationalist faction, an Africanist faction and a Marxist faction. My father was not a Marxist. He was an African Nationalist. He influenced me. So when there was a question of making a choice between what I viewed as Marxist-Leninist ideology and pan-Africanist ideology, I opted for the pan-Africanist ideology.<sup>74</sup>

Moerane describes participating in gatherings of the Fort Hare PAC branch as educational. He says, "[w]e used to hold meetings on Sundays in the bush. ... It was really a question of studying literature about pan-Africanism, holding discussion groups. No qualitative action." Moerane credits Fort Hare with playing a large role in the development of his personal political understanding. "My first real exposure to political activity, group discussions, was at Fort Hare. It was an eye-opener. I was politically conscious before, but not in an organised sense."<sup>75</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
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### **The Response Outside Fort Hare**

Opposition to university apartheid came from the entire English-speaking university community in South Africa. Both individually through university Student Representative Councils and collectively through NUSAS, students all over South Africa fought against separate universities. Opposition to the proposed policy dominated NUSAS activity in the 1950s, with Presidents E.M. Wentzel and then John Shingler instrumental in leading the opposition. In 1957, Wentzel said that the

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<sup>72</sup> Moerane, interview by author.

<sup>73</sup> op. cit.

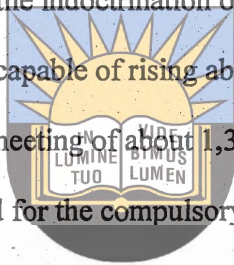
<sup>74</sup> op. cit.

<sup>75</sup> op. cit.

proposed institutions were “unworthy of the name university.”<sup>76</sup> In 1959, Shingler wrote to the Minister of External Affairs saying,

The purpose of these acts is to establish a pattern of education which, if they desire any education at all, Africans will be compelled to follow. The pattern is ... according to Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, to provide African children with such knowledge that they will not be able to fulfill any position above a certain level of society.<sup>77</sup>

The SRCs at UCT and Wits organised processions, that incorporated academic staff, to protest against the acts. In a statement, the SRC at UCT said that the government “was not establishing new university colleges for non-Europeans. Rather it was setting up institutions to be used for the indoctrination of non-European students in order to produce men and women incapable of rising above a predetermined level in society.”<sup>78</sup> In September 1956 at a meeting of about 1,300 students at the University of the Witwatersrand, only 51 voted for the compulsory introduction of apartheid. At UCT in October, a similar meeting produced a vote of 1,114 to 15 in favor of full university autonomy.<sup>79</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Authorities at institutions like UCT, Rhodes and Wits also protested. As previously noted, they participated in marches to protest against the bills. The Chancellor of UCT said that the bill, “flouted the principles of true university education.” Dr. Alty, the principal of Rhodes, organised a protest at the Grahamstown campus. In his speech at the rally he said that the protest was not political and that universities are specialised institutions with the privilege of freedom from external control. He said that they should never be dragged into political battles. The principal from Wits made a similar statement, provoking this response from Z.K. Matthews:

<sup>76</sup> *Daily Dispatch*, 15 March, 1957.

<sup>77</sup> Shingler to Louw, 4 January, 1959. NUSAS File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>78</sup> *Daily Dispatch*, 15 March, 1957.

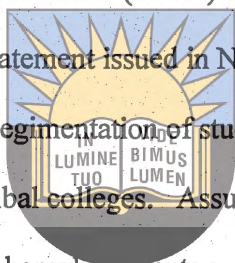
<sup>79</sup> *Eastern Province Herald*, 28 November 1956, Quoted in Beale, *University Apartheid*, 121.

The great joke is that when the principal addressed the crowd he stressed the point that the demonstration was entirely 'non-political.' So afraid people are of the word 'political' that even when they are demonstrating against a political measure they have to say they are non-political.<sup>80</sup>

Indeed, Alty could not help but speak in political terms, despite his best efforts. He called proposals for the new colleges completely unsatisfactory:

We find ourselves in a unique position in which it is proposed to force through Parliament measures which are apparently not actively desired by any university, which are opposed by responsible opinion in all the universities concerned, and which are condemned in no uncertain terms by the whole university world of the West.<sup>81</sup>

The Teacher's League of South Africa (TLSA) took a more overtly political stance against the legislation. In a statement issued in November 1959 the TLSA characterised the "rigid control and regimentation of students and teaching staff" as the worst features of the proposed tribal colleges. Assuming an avowedly political position, the TLSA said that any teacher who accepts an appointment in the new colleges "will do so in the full knowledge of the nefarious part they will have to play in the indoctrination of the Non-white students." Calling on teachers to refuse appointments to these tribal colleges, the TLSA compared the schools to the "co-ordinated universities of the Nazi regime of Hitler's Germany."<sup>82</sup> Other organisations that spoke out against separate universities included the Natal Indian Congress, the Anglican Bishop and Catholic Archbishop of Pretoria, and the South African Institute of Race Relations.<sup>83</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

<sup>80</sup> Frieda Matthews, *Remembrances*, 142.

<sup>81</sup> Dr. Thomas Alty: Address to meeting of protest against University Bills, 4 April 1959, Cory Library Alexander Kerr Collection, PR4123.

<sup>82</sup> Teacher's League of South Africa Statement on University Apartheid, 20 November 1959, Cory Library Alexander Kerr Collection, PR4204.

<sup>83</sup> Beale, *University Apartheid*, 120.

## Impending Doom

Despite the combined efforts of the opposition forces, time and again, their words fell upon deaf government ears. University apartheid was an integral part of Verwoerd's bantustan policy and as such, the government intended to gain control of Fort Hare regardless of the level of resistance. Frieda Matthews wrote, "[t]here were protests, demonstrations, and deputations to interview ministers, all to no avail as has become usual in South African politics. Absolutely no notice was taken of the protests by the legislators."<sup>84</sup> Though protest continued until the very end, by 1959, there was little hope within the opposition that their action would have any effect. "We did whatever we possibly could. We used all the avenues possible to protest," says Tootla. "But at that time, the government was in control."<sup>85</sup> An air of imminent disaster permeated the Fort Hare campus, even as the students were pelting their new administrators with eggs and tomatoes. "In the rooms where lectures met, there was talk of impending doom, there was talk of what was going to happen," says Herby Govinden.<sup>86</sup>

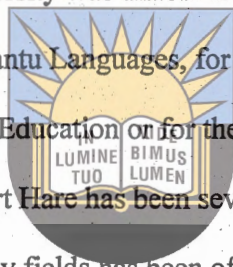
The government did not assume control of Fort Hare until 1 January 1960, but the effects of the forthcoming takeover began to affect the college well before that time. Perhaps most importantly, a great deal of energy was put into the battle against university apartheid by everyone involved with Fort Hare. For three years, opposition to the government and not university education was the focus of the entire community. Discussion of the forthcoming takeover dominated Council, Senate and SRC meetings as the energies and emotions of the staff and students were

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<sup>84</sup> Frieda Matthews, *Remembrances*, 63.

concentrated on saving the college. Though classes continued without overt interruption, college life was affected in other ways.

In 1956, Z.K. Matthews, as Acting Principal, petitioned the Department of Education for a government grant to fund new departments, faculty and buildings. The government responded that the application was to be put on hold and would stand for consideration by the Department of Native Affairs. This was new climate within which Fort Hare operated. The university was unable to obtain funds for the establishment of a Department of Bantu Languages, for pharmacy courses, for improvements to the Department of Education or for the construction of buildings. In 1959, Principal Burrows wrote, "Fort Hare has been severely handicapped during the last few years. Development in many fields has been officially checked 'owing to impending changes.'"<sup>87</sup> In 1955, by way of Universities Act No. 61 Fort Hare was included among the universities of South Africa, placing it in a position of equality with other institutions with respect to government grants. But the threat of government intervention usurped Fort Hare's newfound status, leading to a state of uncertainty that severely hindered college life.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

The selection of Matthews as Acting Principal was the first sign that Fort Hare could no longer operate as an independent entity. Matthews was appointed only in an acting capacity despite the fact that he was the best person available for the job. V.R. Govender says the students felt he should have been permanently put in charge of the institution. He had been the college's first graduate in 1924 and had served on staff and Senate since 1936. Yet in an era of heated debate over separate universities,

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<sup>85</sup> Tootla, interview by author.

Matthews obviously had one qualification that was not viewed as a positive. Professor N.P Olivier of Stellenbosch, a government nominee on the Council explains:

Matthews served in a temporary capacity as Acting Principal to the complete satisfaction of the Council, but it was made clear to the Council or Council acted on the assumption, that the appointment of a Black Principal at Fort Hare would not carry the approval of the Government. Fort Hare was already under heavy fire and some were afraid lest it be closed down by the Government. To appoint as Principal Z.K., who was known to be persona-non-grata with the Government, was perhaps felt by some members of Council to be provocative.

Govender, a first year student in 1956, watched as Matthews was sidelined.

“Here is a great man, loved by his people. Immaculate in manners. Unimpeachable in terms of his thinking. ... Burrows was brought in, a man who couldn't match his stature or experience.”<sup>88</sup> Yet even the new Principal was forced to spend his entire tenure preoccupied with parliamentary debate and not the educational life of Fort Hare. Burrows writes, “A good deal of my time has been spent in defence of our college as a University Institution.”<sup>89</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

The spirit that led to the sidelining of Matthews was evident again in 1958.

Govan Mbeki wrote, “[a]nd now the English-speaking teachers whom the nationalists suspect of being opposed to the debasement of education are thrown out of work to starve or surrender.”<sup>90</sup> At the end of 1958, a memorandum was sent to each member of staff explaining that a Bill would be introduced to transfer Fort Hare to the government. Each was asked to cross out whichever of three choices was not applicable—that he favored the Bill, was opposed to it or was noncommittal—and return their answers to the Department of Bantu Education. Some ten months later the

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<sup>86</sup> Govinden, interview by author.

<sup>87</sup> H.R. Burrows, “Fort Hare History,” Cory Library Alexander Kerr Collection, PR4215.

<sup>88</sup> Govender, interview by author.

<sup>89</sup> *Fort Harian*, 1959, 40.

<sup>90</sup> Govan Mbeki, writing in *Fort Harian*, 1959, 17.

first stage of the purification campaign was begun when eight leading members of the College staff were dismissed.<sup>91</sup>

Frieda Matthews writes that government officials came to campus to issue the dismissals: "The atmosphere was tense as one by one the staff filed into the room which represented the Nationalist's guillotine for the week."<sup>92</sup> Eight staff members had their services terminated from 31 December 1959 without reasons given. They were Registrar Sir Fulque Agnew, his wife, geography lecturer Swanzie Agnew, botany lecturer G.F. Isrealstrom, English Professor F.H. Rand, history professor Donovan Williams, law professor Leslie Blackwell, philosophy and politics lecturer T.V.R. Beard and Chief Librarian J. Hutton. Tootla says that the purge was clearly political: "They were very wise at that stage, the nationalist government. They took away the people they thought would be a problem and those were the people teaching us. It's like digging out the roots. The plant won't survive."<sup>93</sup>

Blackwell wrote, "the council invited me to remain as a Professor of Law for the year 1960 and I would have been glad to do so. But the government...has decided otherwise; and I will not be remaining."<sup>94</sup> Frieda Matthews wrote that the Agnews were fired because they were vocal critics of government policy and frequently entertained Africans in their home.<sup>95</sup> Explaining the mass dismissals, the Minister of Bantu Education said, "I will not permit a penny of any funds of which I have control

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<sup>91</sup> Shingler, "Crack Heard Round the World," 18; for more on the 1950s at Fort Hare and specifically for information on staff dismissals in the wake of the government takeover, see Donovan Williams's forthcoming work based on his experiences, and the personal papers he accumulated, while on the staff at Fort Hare.

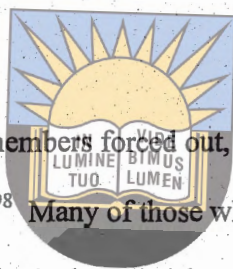
<sup>92</sup> Frieda Matthews, *Remembrances*, 71.

<sup>93</sup> Tootla, interview by author..

<sup>94</sup> Leslie Blackwell, writing in *Souvenir Fort Harian*, 1959, 11.

<sup>95</sup> Frieda Matthews, *Remembrances*, 70.

to be paid to any persons in those institutions who are known to be sabotaging the Government's policy of apartheid."<sup>96</sup> The Senate of Fort Hare issued a statement recording "its extreme regret at the action of the Minister of Bantu Education in disregarding normal university procedure by arbitrarily terminating the services of eight members of the academic and administrative staff." The Governing Council said that the dismissals came without any prior notification and that it wished to dissociate itself "entirely from this very unusual academic procedure on the part of the government."<sup>97</sup>



In addition to the eight staff members forced out, Burrows was informed that his "services would not be retained."<sup>98</sup> Many of those whose jobs were spared by the minister chose to resign and others who had applied for posts withdrew their applications. Some successful applicants for vacant posts refused to take up their appointments when they learned of Fort Hare's perilous future. From 1957 through to June of 1959, 23 staff members left Fort Hare. By the end of June, there were 14 vacancies on a permanent staff of 44.<sup>99</sup> In July, there was only one staff member remaining to teach 147 students three different science courses.<sup>100</sup> Blackwell said that the complete government control caused the uneasiness that led to the mass resignations. He wrote, "If one of its Professors were to say or do one-tenth of what his colleagues in a European University may freely say or do—but possibly in the wrong direction—then a three months notice of dismissal, signed by an official, may be the result."<sup>101</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Shingler, "Crack Heard Round the World," 18.

<sup>97</sup> Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial History*, 45.

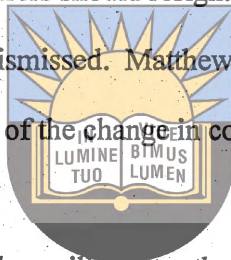
<sup>98</sup> Shingler, "Crack Heard Round the World," 18.

<sup>99</sup> *Cape Times*, 23 June 1959, Cory Library, PR4095.

<sup>100</sup> Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial History*, 44.

<sup>101</sup> Leslie Blackwell. "Alice Where Art Thou?" Cory Library Alexander Kerr Collection, PR4128, 4.

By 23 September, all members of staff were informed whether or not they would be retained after 31 December. None of the African staff members were dismissed, but many resigned on their own accord, including education Professor D.G.S. Mtinkulu, Bantu languages Professor C.L.S. Nyembezi, and Z.K. Matthews. Marumo Moerane says that there was a great deal of debate on campus as to whether the African members of staff should resign. "That was the burning issue in 1959," he says "The student body felt the lecturers should resign."<sup>102</sup> During 1959 75 percent of the staff either resigned or were dismissed. Matthews writes that 25 members of staff remained to "reduce the effects of the change in control."<sup>103</sup>



The resignation of Z.K. Matthews illustrates the ruthless nature of the government takeover. The National Party promised that those who were dismissed would receive all their pension benefits. And indeed, the eight European members of staff that were let go by 23 September got all of their benefits plus a bonus for the inconvenience caused.<sup>104</sup> Yet their African colleagues were not as lucky. "The pension issue was very cleverly and diabolically manipulated" by the National Party, wrote Frieda Matthews. "Everyone on the staff knew that Enemy Number One of the Nationalist government was my husband and expected that he would be the only one ... to be told to leave."<sup>105</sup> Fully expecting to be fired, Z.K. Matthews made plans to take his benefits and move to Bechuanaland to open a legal practice. He walked into his interview in what Frieda Matthews called the National Party's 'guillotine' room certain of his fate:

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<sup>102</sup> Moerane, interview by author.

<sup>103</sup> Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial History*, 46

<sup>104</sup> Frieda Matthews, *Remembrances*, 71.

<sup>105</sup> *op. cit.* 70.

It was the longest interview as he was given in no uncertain terms the conditions for his re-appointment. ... Amongst these were that he would be expected to resign from the ANC and take no part in political activity. He would have to cooperate fully with all that was embodied in the new Tribal University Legislation. He was in fact to become an ordinary civil servant, ready to do his master's bidding at all times. ... To say we were shocked is to put it mildly ... so sure were we of dismissal.<sup>106</sup>

The National Party government knew that Matthews would not agree to their terms. They were fully aware that refusing to fire him would hurt Matthews more than a dismissal. Matthews was mindful of the financial loss associated with leaving Fort Hare, but there was never any doubt as to whether or not he would depart.

However, he was not going to give up his pension without a fight. On 26 October, Matthews wrote to Principal Burrows saying that the passage of the Fort Hare Transfer Act had "so radically altered" the terms and conditions of his employment that if he was to resign this could not "be regarded as voluntary resignation."

He asked Burrows to do anything possible to help him avoid "serious financial loss."<sup>107</sup> Burrows forwarded Matthews' request to the Executive Committee of the Governing Council, who recommended that members of staff who, "for reasons of conscience, resign ... should be paid pension benefits on the same basis as those members of staff whose services were terminated by the Minister of Bantu Education."<sup>108</sup> Yet the Minister of Bantu Education did not accept the Governing Council's recommendation and there was nothing else Burrows could do. On 30 October 1959 Matthews submitted his resignation to the Secretary of Bantu Education, forfeiting his entire pension:

After giving this offer of continued employment very careful consideration I regret to say that I find myself unable to accept the offer and have therefore decided to notify you of my resignation ... with effect as from December 31, 1959.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup> op. cit. 71.

<sup>107</sup> Z.K. Matthews letter to H.R. Burrows, 26 October, 1959, Z.K. Matthews File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>108</sup> Minutes of Governing Council Executive Committee, 20 November 1959, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>109</sup> Z.K. Matthews letter to Secretary of Bantu Education, 30 October, 1959, Z.K. Matthews File, Fort Hare Papers.

He wrote to Fulque Agnew, the registrar, saying, "I shall always treasure the happy memories I have of my association for many years with the Governing Council, the Senate, the Staff and the students of Fort Hare."<sup>110</sup>

Thus, Matthews broke ties with the institution he had known since he arrived as a matriculation student in 1919.<sup>111</sup> He became the school's first graduate in 1924 and joined its staff in 1936, serving as lecturer, professor, head of department and Acting Principal. Yet in spite of Matthews' long association with Fort Hare, Joe Matthews says that the decision to leave the college did not affect his father emotionally. "There were no such things as emotional this and that in his make up. He was an intensely intellectual person who always thought why he did something," says Joe. Thus, despite losing his pension on leaving the institution he was associated with for 25 years, Z.K. Matthews left Fort Hare with peace of mind. "He just decided to resign, to make it quite clear," says Joe. He says his father's decision inspired others:

A lot of people followed his example in the teaching profession. They said look here if he can do it, then we who are younger, we can do it. So a lot of Fort Hare graduates all over the country really decided to pull out of Bantu Education schools after his example.<sup>112</sup>

When Matthews left Fort Hare, the government tried to paint his resignation as an ANC decision. Yet, as shown in chapter two, Matthews never allowed anyone to dictate his thoughts or actions. He was fiercely independent-minded. Matthews wrote, "during the period when I had to make this decision, which I knew would cost me my pension rights when I was within two years of retirement, not a single one of

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<sup>110</sup> Z.K. Matthews letter to Registrar Fulque Agnew, 11 Nov, 1959, Z.K. Matthews File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>111</sup> In 1979, Frieda Matthews wrote to the then rector of Fort Hare J.M. de Wet saying that she was no longer able to work and asking for him to see if he could reinstate her husband's pension. De Wet replied that the issue was not in his hands.

my friends offered me any advice one way or the other. I had to wrestle with my own conscience." Matthews was "amused" when he read newspaper reports that the Minister of Bantu Education made a statement saying that the ANC had compelled him to resign. "The decision was entirely my own," he says, adding, "it was only after I had taken the irrevocable step and made the announcement at a public gathering at Fort Hare that I began to receive congratulatory telegrams and letters from those who felt I had lived up to their expectations."<sup>113</sup>

### The Funeral

On 25 September 1959 the Secretary of Bantu Education wrote to Principal Burrows, informing him of the new rules governing admission to Fort Hare for the 1960 school year. "It should be noted that as far as Indian and Coloured students are concerned and Bantu of ethnic groups other than Xhosa, these can only be admitted if no facilities are available elsewhere."<sup>114</sup> Yet like a terminally ill person who gets his house in order as the end nears, Fort Hare had already begun to prepare for its death. Burrows and the Fort Hare administrators knew this letter was coming. In expectation of the imposed restrictions, the authorities admitted extra students in 1959. Rather than turn away more than 100 qualified applicants, three emergency huts were built and a staff house was converted into a hostel.<sup>115</sup> This small, but symbolic gesture resulted in record numbers of Indian and Coloured students studying at Fort Hare in 1959 and ensured that the multi-racial student body at Fort Hare would live on for the first few years of the 1960s.

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<sup>112</sup> Matthews, interview by author.

<sup>113</sup> Z.K. Matthews, *Freedom for My People*, 197;

<sup>114</sup> Minister of Bantu Education letter to H.R. Burrows, 25 September, 1959. Fort Hare Papers

<sup>115</sup> Burrows and Matthews, *Pictorial History*, 32.

Yet in the wake of mass dismissals and resignations, the brief extension of the life of multi-racial Fort Hare provided little respite to the college community. A new Council was appointed, consisting almost entirely of supporters of the government's policy. Burrows was informed that Dr. Johannes Jurgens Ross, a Professor of Law from the University of the Orange Free State, would replace him. Fort Hare continued to prepare for its own funeral. After more than four years of protest, the college, like a family faced with the death of a loved one, turned inward, seeking to soothe itself with memories of the institution before government interference.

Professor Donovan Williams was assigned the task of surveying university records and depositing a representative sample of documents at Rhodes for safekeeping.<sup>116</sup> A souvenir issue of the *Fort Harian* was published, full of students' remembrances of Fort Hare spanning many generations. The last page resembles a tombstone. It says, "R.I.P, 1916-1959."<sup>117</sup> Mrs. Darroll and Z.K. Matthews prepared eulogies as the entire community gathered on 28 October 1959 for an academic assembly to mark the end of the university as a free institution. The funereal ceremony was not open to the public, but Shingler quotes one of South Africa's leading political correspondents, who writes, "the report of the farewell ceremony at Fort Hare was one of the saddest things I have ever read."<sup>118</sup> Visitors to Fort Hare will find a plaque near Freedom Square, a testament of the assembly, that reads,

[t]he University College of Fort Hare, in deep gratitude to all who between 1905 and 1959 founded, maintained and administered this college at Fort Hare and in remembrance of all who between 1916 and 1959 taught and studied here in association with the University of South Africa and Rhodes University.

<sup>116</sup> Minutes of the Governing Council, 26 November, 1959. Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>117</sup> *Fort Harian*, 1959, back page.

<sup>118</sup> Shingler, "Crack Heard Round the World," 17.

## Birth of a Bush College: The Onset of Apartheid at Fort Hare

*The [Government appointed rector to the Tribal institutes] will not be the heads of educational institutions, but superintendents of brain washing camps. Instead of having docile tribalized students to deal with they will have to handle a hotbed of insurgents.*  
 -NUSAS President John Shingler<sup>1</sup>

### Welcoming the Regime

Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri woke up one morning early in 1960 and, upon leaving

Eluk, found

flags up and flagpoles cut, things written on top of Stewart, the library. ... And posters and lampoons all over the place, very methodically done, with precision. And there was not a single student around you who knew how that happened. ... It was quite clear that there had been those who had been organised to do this, did it well, and nobody talked.<sup>2</sup>

Having lost the battle to keep their school free from government interference, Fort Hare students' energies in the early 1960s went towards expressing their dissatisfaction with the new, apartheid-appointed regime that ran the university college. Ntombi Dwane says,

[w]e went to Fort Hare because you had to get a tertiary education and if you were going to get it, that was the university for you. And you were not going to sit and boycott your own development. But you were not going to cooperate with the regime. It was called REGIME, REGIME, right through. You were not going to cooperate with the regime; you were not going to play the game according to their rules.<sup>3</sup>

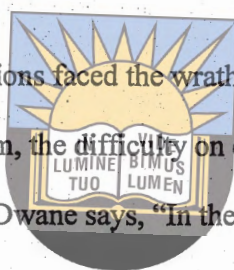
The 1960s brought unprecedented conflict at Fort Hare. In an era when opposition to apartheid was generally muted throughout the country following the Sharpeville massacre, protest against the authorities at Fort Hare served to politicise what would otherwise have been a rather quiet student body. With political

<sup>1</sup> Shingler, "Crack Heard Round the World," 18.

<sup>2</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

<sup>3</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

organisations forced underground by government ban, the opposition at Fort Hare was waged primarily by a leaderless student body that refused to elect an SRC and was forbidden by the authorities to cooperate with NUSAS. As the government attempted to reconfigure Fort Hare in the mold of a tribal university, the students responded with fervor. Faced with an inferior quality of education compared to pre-1960 Fort Hare and an increasingly draconian administration, Fort Hare students attended the university college—a ‘bush college’ to them—in a permanent state of protest.



Whereas previous administrations faced the wrath emanating from the students’ growing sense of nationalism, the difficulty on campus in the 1960s was of a somewhat different nature. Sigqibo Dwane says, “In the sixties the tension between the administration and the students was over the question of imposing the government policy. That is what caused conflict.”<sup>4</sup> A 1961 Report of the Liaison Committee looking into the causes of student unrest concluded that the protest was “connected with the concrete government policy and with the present political situation.”<sup>4</sup>

University of Fort Hare  
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Indeed protest in the 1960s was directly related to the government takeover of Fort Hare. Minor grievances such as food took a back seat to the broader issue of government control of student experiences. “The administration was there to push the policy of the government and then in that way it became a target. Each time they acted against a student, the whole university rose,” says Ntombi Dwane.<sup>5</sup> When Matsepe-Casaburri awoke to find the campus covered with slogans, it was clear the new objects of the students’ protest were the representatives of government policy on

<sup>4</sup> Report of Liaison Committee, 5 January 1961, Fort Hare Papers, 2.

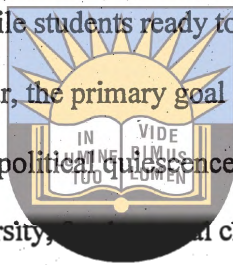
<sup>5</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

campus, namely the administration. Matsepe-Casaburri describes the successful beginnings of the protest:

The skull and crossbones was right in the center of the flagpole that used to [house the South African flag] between three buildings—the library, Stewart, and Henderson. And the struggle because they had also oiled the pole so nobody could go up this pole at all. And the frustration of the Rector was just, to me, I guess it set in one's mind that you can outwit them, you don't have to succumb, you can do things and make it uncomfortable.<sup>6</sup>

### The Government Takes Charge

From 1960, the government sought to transform Fort Hare from a campus of “agitators” to one that produced docile students ready to fall in line with its bantustan policy. As mentioned in chapter four, the primary goal of the separate, ethnically divided universities was to promote political quiescence. To achieve its aim of recasting Fort Hare as a tribal university, several changes in the social and educational structure of the college were enacted. Most importantly, as Beale writes,



[t]he successful introduction of the new policy required a sympathetic staff ... to clear the staff of hostile elements ... and to substitute academics and administrators with whom the task of transforming Fort Hare into a Bantu Education institution could be trusted.<sup>7</sup>

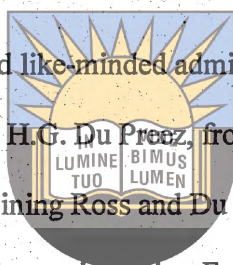
The purge of the so-called liberal staff, coupled with the ensuing mass resignations was the first step in the process. Appointing their replacements was next. Beale writes that the appointment of the Rector was crucial to the government intervention at Fort Hare. The Fort Hare Transfer Act assigned wide-ranging powers to the Rector and Professor J. J. Ross was chosen by the Minister of Bantu Education to wield these extensive powers. Ross, described as an “ideologue” by Beale, believed that separate university education provided the only “real opportunity for the full blossoming of human dignity.”<sup>8</sup> He was a perfect choice to carry out government

<sup>6</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri, interview by author.

<sup>7</sup> Beale, “Task of Fort Hare,” 43.

<sup>8</sup> Lin Menge, “Narrow path to higher learning.” *Rand Daily Mail*. 1 July 1968.

policy on campus. He was not only an experienced administrator and educator, but he also exhibited an interest in the development of government policy, serving on the editorial board of the *Journal of Racial Affairs*. He was Inspector of Native Education in the Orange Free State from 1928, earning the post of Chief Inspector in 1942. In 1954, he moved on to the University of the Orange Free State, where he taught law. In 1955, he was appointed Professor of Public Law, serving in that post until he left for Fort Hare in 1960.



The Rector, of course, needed like-minded administrators and staff to work with him. As previously mentioned, H.G. Du Preez, from the Department of Native Affairs, was appointed Registrar. Joining Ross and Du Preez were large numbers of academics trained at Afrikaans-medium universities. Following the 1959 mass exodus, twenty-three vacant posts were available. Instead of advertising them, the

University of Fort Hare  
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Department of Bantu Education filled the positions internally.<sup>9</sup> With political control usurping education as the primary purpose of the university college, sympathy with the government became the main criterion for appointment to the Fort Hare staff. Tootla recalls, “[t]hey got lecturers from Afrikaans universities who couldn’t speak English. I know in my biology class we had a guy who couldn’t say a word of English and he lectured to us.”<sup>10</sup> Selby Baqwa (’69-’73) says,

[y]ou’d find ... people who had been brought up truly in the Afrikaner tradition ... then ready for work. And then they’d realise they can’t speak English. ... And they’d get posts anyway. And you’d find a person can hardly articulate himself. But what could you do? This is how it was.<sup>11</sup>

Over the course of the 1960s a clear trend in staffing policy developed. Beale writes, “the new regime’s strategy was to appoint their own men, some of them recent

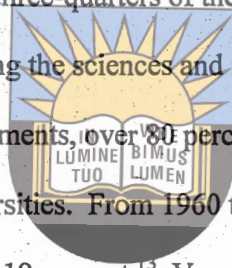
<sup>9</sup> Beale, “Task of Fort Hare,” 45.

<sup>10</sup> Tootla, interview by author.

<sup>11</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author, Pretoria, 15 July 1999.

graduates, invariably from the Afrikaans-medium universities, and promote them rapidly.”<sup>12</sup> The approach was two-pronged. Firstly, staff loyal to the National Party would alter the academic atmosphere at Fort Hare; secondly, the government-controlled university gave the National Party the chance to provide its men with a new, secure and sheltered professional life.

By 1962, almost 60 percent of the staff was educated at Afrikaans-medium universities. Two years later, nearly three-quarters of the staff had received their training at such institutions. Excluding the sciences and focusing solely on the more politically oriented humanities departments, over 80 percent of the staff in 1964 was educated at Afrikaans-medium universities. From 1960 to 1969, blacks on the lecturing staff fell from 35 percent to 19 percent.<sup>13</sup> Very few blacks held senior positions. Sizwe Satyo ('68-'71) says, “It was a real Afrikaner university, only that the student body was black.”<sup>14</sup> Moerane says that the “face of the [apartheid] regime was presented to [the students] in the form of these lecturers from Stellenbosch, Potchefstroom and Pretoria.”<sup>15</sup> Nkosinathi Gwala writes that the intellectual environment of Afrikaans-medium universities was reproduced at Fort Hare, with students receiving the same type of ideological training that was given at these universities. Calling Fort Hare and the other tribal colleges “extensions of Afrikaans universities,” Gwala implies that the staffing policies served to alter the intellectual atmosphere on the ethnic campuses.<sup>16</sup>



University of Fort Hare

Together in Excellence

<sup>12</sup> Beale, “Task of Fort Hare,” 45.

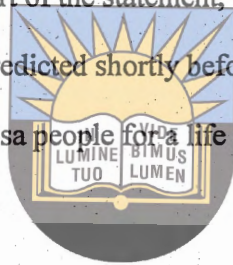
<sup>13</sup> *op. cit.* 44-45.

<sup>14</sup> Sizwe Satyo, interview by author, Cape Town, 17 February 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Moerane, interview by author.

<sup>16</sup> Nkosinathi Gwala, “State Control, Student Politics and Black Universities,” in W. Cobett and R. Cohen (eds.), *Popular Struggles in South Africa* (London: Africa World Press, 1988), 170.

With a sympathetic staff in place, the National Party went about altering the educational experience of the students at Fort Hare. Manipulation of the curriculum was undertaken to ensure that black students did not advance beyond prescribed levels in society. Ross felt it necessary to adopt the curriculum to a “Xhosa character” and that it be taught in a “Xhosa way.” To him, that meant adapting “more effectively and more adequately both the contents of its curricula and the methods of presentation to the needs and cultural background from which the Bantu student comes and to which he will return.”<sup>17</sup> The latter part of the statement, “to which he will return,” was crucial. As Principal Burrows predicted shortly before the takeover, the purpose of tribal Fort Hare was to “equip Xhosa people for a life of sophisticated, modernized tribalism.”<sup>18</sup>



## University of Fort Hare

In practice, Ross's new vision of black education succeeded in lowering the standards at Fort Hare. Beale writes that the Afrikaner academics created a conservative and positivist intellectual atmosphere at the tribal colleges.<sup>19</sup> At Fort Hare, departments were restructured in line with the new government approach. In the History Department, the new syllabus was “designed to leave the student without any meaningful understanding of the historical processes surrounding the subjugation of the black people.”<sup>20</sup> Native Administration replaced a previous favorite course of the students, Public Administration. “At one time I had hoped to do an honour's degree in history or public administration,” says Stanley Mabizela ('58-'61). “But once Bantu education was introduced in Fort Hare in 1960 I gave it up.”<sup>21</sup> Beale cites

<sup>17</sup> P. Duminy, “A Tribute to Professor John Jurgens Ross,” *Fort Hare Papers*, 4, Part 2 (June 1968).

<sup>18</sup> Burrows, “Fort Hare History,” from Box 2, Serial 17, Howard Pim Library.

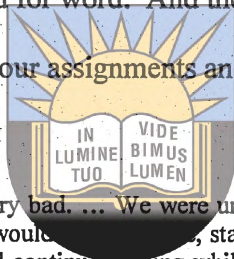
<sup>19</sup> Beale, “University Apartheid,” 145.

<sup>20</sup> M. Balintulo, “The Black Universities in South Africa,” in J. Rex, ed., *Apartheid and Social Research* (Paris: UNESCO Press, 1981), 150.

<sup>21</sup> Stanley Mabizela, interview by author.

Balintulo, who writes that the new subject was interpreted “from the angle of the White man’s mission of spreading Western civilisation and the necessity of discriminatory laws.”<sup>22</sup>

The students were subjected to an uncritical and far from rigorous intellectual environment. Sigqibo Dwane says that the students were treated as “glorified high school children” in classes, adding, “They lectured to us and you had to take down notes, which they dictated to us word for word. And then you had to give back those dictations to them when you wrote your assignments and examinations.”<sup>23</sup> Satyo paints a similar picture:



[The quality of education] was very bad. ... We were undereducated because it was notes, notes, notes. The lecturer would ... stand in front of you and [say] ‘where did we stop yesterday’ and continue reading while we were just taking down notes. No discussion, no input from our side whatsoever. ... I still have copies of some of those notes here where sentences were incomplete because the guy was talking so fast you couldn’t catch up.<sup>24</sup>

In the new world of Afrikaner educators at Fort Hare, students often chose major subjects based on who the teacher was. Satyo explains, “things were so bad ... that you decided which subjects you were going to do on the basis of who was running the department. If it was a monster, you’d say I’m not going to do that subject.” Satyo originally planned to major in English and history. However, after one year of history, he decided to change paths:

The English professor was very unpleasant and the history professor was also very unpleasant. So I felt that I wasn’t going to have two unpleasant professors. I was not going to do well. I decided I was going to do ... Xhosa because the professor there was a black person and he was very pleasant.<sup>25</sup>

Selby Baqwa remembers a private law lecturer, Mr. De Haan, who would say, “I have a class of 49 fools, imbeciles, nincompoops. I don’t care if you don’t do your

<sup>22</sup> Beale, “Task of Fort Hare,” 46.

<sup>23</sup> Sigqibo Dwane, interview by author.

work. My salary doesn't go one cent down, nor does it go one cent up."<sup>26</sup> In an anonymous letter to De Haan, a student called him "one of the intimidating lecturers" and deplored his use of the term "Bantu" when referring to his students. The letter reads, "[y]our chances of calling me a Bantu [are extinct]. ... Your coming here was not altruistic but to get a cheap platform where to propagate your cheap sub-intellectual propaganda."<sup>27</sup>

The spirit of student life went down along with the quality of the academic life of the university. "We were really there under protest," says Ntombi Dwane. In protest against the new regime students boycotted graduation ceremonies and refused to elect an SRC. "Right through, the graduation ceremony was boycotted," Ntombi Dwane says, "[t]hroughout the time I was at Fort Hare, we never really had a full student life [with] an SRC, people campaigning for elections, rag. We did not have all of those things."<sup>28</sup> The vibrancy of campus life that had been the trademark of pre-1960 Fort Hare vanished. Consider V.R. Govender's description of the pre-1960 graduation ceremonies:

Graduation was always a dignified affair. The solemnity of the occasion always made a deep impression on me. The people who came were black mothers and fathers, grandfathers and grandmothers from the countryside and the rural areas. With tears in their eyes, they came to see their children graduate. ... It was the only day the breakfast, lunch and supper were first class because parents were eating with us. The peas and the beans came out. The meat was so nice. The best food we ever ate was on graduation days because Magile had to put out his best.<sup>29</sup>

Sigqibo Dwane says that the students suffered due to the decline of the multi-racial atmosphere. "One felt that it wasn't the university it was before where one had

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<sup>24</sup> Satyo, interview by author.

<sup>25</sup> op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

<sup>27</sup> Unsigned, "Letter written to one of the intimidating lecturers, to De Haan," Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>28</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>29</sup> V.R. Govender, interview by author.

people from other cultures and one was therefore learning from people of different cultures. That caused a deprivation. We felt it.”<sup>30</sup>

The saving grace in terms of student life was the few staff members sympathetic to the students’ cause remaining in the wake of the takeover. Former Fort Hare students Andrew Masondo and Herby Govinden lectured in the early 1960s and got involved in the political life of the university. Long time staff members Professors J.T. Davidson and A.S. Galloway and senior lecturer Ms. G.M.H. Darroll also chose to remain. Davidson, called Davi by the students, taught physics devotedly well beyond the takeover. Ntombi Dwane says, “He actually stayed on as a missionary as it were, to see to it that black students got the best that he could offer.”

Davidson was not active in campus politics, but Dwane says he led by example:

I don’t know if he ever made a political comment, but he lived politics in the way he identified fully with students ... inviting students to his house for dinners, for meals. He did that on a regular basis. So he really was revered, he was held in awe, he was loved.<sup>31</sup>

Professor Galloway also got along well with the students. Jeff Baqwa calls him a “marvelous person who assembled a team of brilliant scientists.” Baqwa says that it was possible to learn in the sciences as the faculty had some people who were politically advanced.<sup>32</sup> Ms. G.M.H. Darroll, who taught English, is also spoken of highly by a number of students. Ntombi Dwane says that she refused a professorship following the takeover, telling the authorities that she had not stayed on after the exodus of lecturers for honors of that nature. Dwane says Darroll stayed on to “teach English to African students.”<sup>33</sup>

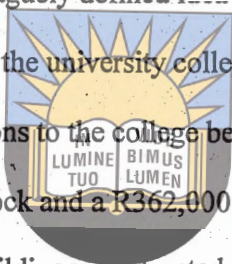
<sup>30</sup> Sigqibo Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>31</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>32</sup> Jeff Baqwa, interview by author, Cape Town, 18 April 1999.

<sup>33</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

Yet while the few decent staff members made life slightly more pleasant for the students, there was little the likes of Darroll and Davidson could do to stem the government barrage. Course offerings were expanded, but not for the benefit of the Fort Hare students. The wider range of subjects was offered to prevent blacks from studying at white universities. If courses were not available at assigned university colleges, black students could petition for admission to white schools. The broad course offerings were also part of a vaguely defined idea of providing a skill base for the bantustans, but this component of the university college strategy was never thoroughly conceptualised.<sup>34</sup> Extensions to the college between 1962 and 1966 included a R65,000 administrative block and a R362,000 science block.<sup>35</sup> Though new departments were created and buildings constructed, real educational opportunities were not. Beale writes, “If the administrators were themselves so unclear about what skills the institution was trying to transmit that it is difficult to establish whether they set any tangible goals. ... The task of defining these goals was secondary to the political imperative of segregation.”<sup>36</sup>



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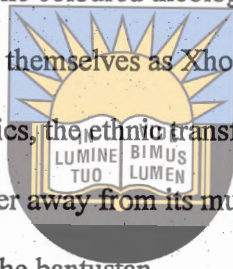
In addition to interfering with the educational development of African students, control of the atmosphere at Fort Hare was a key component of the government's scheme. Speaking in 1959 in favor of the transfer of Fort Hare, a minister in Parliament said, “[w]e should ensure, having placed our foot on the path of separate development, that intermingling should be systematically stopped in South Africa, and that is the reason why Fort Hare should be fitted into a new milieu and a

<sup>34</sup> Beale, “Task of Fort Hare,” 47.

<sup>35</sup> Menge, “Narrow path to higher learning.”

<sup>36</sup> Beale, “Task of Fort Hare,” 47.

new pattern, and that is why the transfer is essential.”<sup>37</sup> By 1964, it was evident that the element of ethnic segregation, key to their strategy, was working. In 1959, a year before the government takeover, 38 percent of the student body of 489 at Fort Hare was of Xhosa origin. The rest of the variegated student body was comprised of 14 percent each Indian and coloured, nine percent each Sotho and Tswana, six percent Zulu, three percent Swazi and seven percent from outside South Africa. By 1964, there were only three Indians and five coloureds in a student body of 272. Four years later, there were no Indians and just one coloured theology student. By 1969, 83 percent of the student body described themselves as Xhosa.<sup>38</sup> Coupled with the influx of Afrikaans-educated academics, the ethnic transformation of the Fort Hare student body moved the college further away from its multi-racial roots, bringing it in line with the government’s vision of the bantustan.



## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

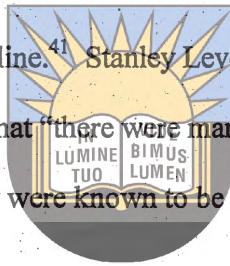
Yet the government plan went well beyond demographics. Not only did it dictate the ethnicity of the students allowed at Fort Hare, but once on campus, measures were put in place aimed at controlling the students’ socialization. Essentially, the government was trying to erase the mores of pre-1960 Fort Hare. No effort was spared to quell the politically charged atmosphere reminiscent of independent Fort Hare. Early in 1960, the Minister of Bantu Education sent a letter to Ross directing new students to be separated from students who were registered in 1959, both in the hostels and in the dining halls.<sup>39</sup> The administration also sought to curb the influence of the remaining staff sympathetic to the students’ cause. In 1965 Curick Ndamse was suspended for criticising university apartheid in one of his lectures. He is said to have said, “the white man has never had a firmer grip on the

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<sup>37</sup> Fort Hare Facts and Fiction, Fort Hare Papers, 8.

control of educational affairs of Africans.” Ross regarded Ndamse’s words as “a serious breach of discipline.”<sup>40</sup>

When the administration could not silence the students themselves, the help of the security police was sought. Professor Oosthuizen, who served as a liaison between the students and administration, says that from 1961 students increasingly complained of the disturbing amount of Special Branch activity at Fort Hare. He says that the students felt the presence of the Special Branch on the campus indicated that the Rector required it to maintain discipline.<sup>41</sup> Stanley Levenstein, a NUSAS delegate from Stellenbosch University, said that “there were many instances of constant vigilance over the students, and they were known to be watched by spies and informers.”<sup>42</sup> Sigqibo Dwane says,



University of Fort Hare

[t]he government had planted spies on the campus to watch what was going on. So one had to be very careful. Even with the reading material, it was sort of handed from one person to another very surreptitiously. You took it and put it inside your pocket and then went to your room and locked your door to read it.<sup>43</sup>

Satyo says that students would often take a break from late night political discussion to relieve themselves, with trees outside Wesley House serving as bathrooms:

You stand under the trees, you come across the policeman, you never come back. It became so dangerous that no one was allowed to walk out alone. So you had to go in twos or go on threes, the third one standing not far from the tree to see what happens because the police were really, really, middle of the night, twelve midnight, one a.m., you’d find those guys out there.<sup>44</sup>

When pressed about the presence of the security police on campus, Ross replied said that he never called in the police, but that “it doesn’t preclude that from being a possibility.” Clearly showing that his sympathies lay with the government

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<sup>38</sup> Student Statistics, 1964-69, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>39</sup> Minutes, 24 February 1960, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>40</sup> Beale, “Task of Fort Hare,” 44

<sup>41</sup> Oosthuizen, interview by author; Minutes, 9 May 1961, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>42</sup> “Victimization at Fort Hare Alleged.” *Cape Times*. 14 July 1965.

<sup>43</sup> Sigqibo Dwane, interview by author.

and not the students, Ross said that the police were not under his jurisdiction. "I am in no position to interfere with them if they, for any reasons of their own, feel it is necessary to carry out investigations or to be on the campus. It is not within my power to interfere and I do not intend to do so."<sup>45</sup> In 1966 Justice Moloto ('66-'68) organised a petition in protest against the police presence on campus. Ross said that the students had not been given permission to discuss the police and removed the petition from campus notice boards.<sup>46</sup> In response, Moloto and others wrote to the Minister of Bantu Education, informing him that

students experienced an unprecedented and unwarranted visitation and harassment by members of the South African Police Force. Without any reason or provocation students were physically molested and others, without being formally charged, were taken into custody.<sup>47</sup>

The minister replied that students at Fort Hare were afforded the same protection and security "guaranteed to all law abiding citizens."<sup>48</sup> Up to twenty students were refused readmission to Fort Hare for 1967, many of whom were leaders of the agitation against the police presence.<sup>49</sup>

Staff members were also constantly under watch and perpetually in fear of dismissal. The legislation establishing separate universities stipulated that a lecturer would be guilty of misconduct if he committed or permitted acts prejudicial to the administration or government; commented publicly on the administration or government; or joined a political organisation or partook in political activity.<sup>50</sup>

Writing in the *Fort Harian* student magazine just before the government takeover,

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<sup>44</sup> Satyo, interview by author.

<sup>45</sup> Minutes, 9 May 1961, Fort Hare Papers.

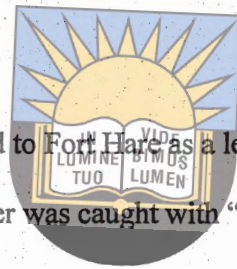
<sup>46</sup> Minutes, 19 May 1960, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>47</sup> Justice Moloto et. al., "Letter to Minister of Bantu Education, Student Unrest, 17 August 1966, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>48</sup> Letter to Justice Moloto et al. from Minister of Bantu Education, Student Unrest. 11 November 1966, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>49</sup> "Fort Hare refuses some students re-admission." *Eastern Province Herald*. 24 February 1967.

Asher L. Ntwana predicted that these restrictions would mean, “distinguished scholars, both white and non-white, who differ with the government’s policy cannot hope to be appointed on the staff.”<sup>51</sup> Ntwana’s words proved on the mark in 1960. In October, geography lecturer Nicol Childs resigned after being harassed by the security police. With the full knowledge of Professor Ross, Childs had been stopped and searched on the road and his mail and telephone conversations had been monitored. Ross said that Childs was targeted because of his “close association with the students.”<sup>52</sup>



Herby Govinden, who returned to Fort Hare as a lecturer in 1960, says that during the early sixties a young lecturer was caught with “subversive material” and fired. Govinden, who had not been active during his student days in the forties, joined the Unity Movement as a lecturer. *Together in Excellence*

We had meetings in what was called the bachelor’s quarters, where the younger lecturers were housed. We had the Special Branch keeping an eye on us. ... I was later called by the Special Branch and detained for half a day. They wanted to know what my political affiliations were. What did I think of the students at Fort Hare? What did I think of other lecturers? And I didn’t [say anything]. I kept mum.

Govinden says that the security police presence was omnipresent:

They were looking in at us from the sports field. They were lurking around the bachelor’s quarters. They had informers amongst the students who were asked to listen to what we said during lectures. What we did over weekends, who visited us, where we went during our spare times, what kind of relationships we had with students. Were we calling them to meetings? They were always very suspicious of us.<sup>53</sup>

The relationship between the university authorities and the police can be seen clearly in a 1962 incident when security police detained Rhodes economics lecturers Trevor Bell and M.B. Dagut, who had come to Fort Hare to provide extra tutoring to

<sup>50</sup> Shingler, “Crack Heard Round the World,” 18.

<sup>51</sup> *Fort Harian*, 1959, Howard Pim Library, 30.

<sup>52</sup> Beale, “Task of Fort Hare,” 43.

<sup>53</sup> Govinden, interview by author.

the students. The two lecturers were told they had no right to be on the Fort Hare campus. The *Sunday Times* reported that as Bell was chatting with a student, the student pointed to a car and said, “there goes the Special Branch.” Indeed, the Registrar had telephoned the police and alerted them to the presence of the two men. NUSAS president Adrian Leftwich condemned the authorities’ action, saying, “political police and university officials are clearly working hand in glove.”<sup>54</sup> In a statement released to the press, the Fort Hare students said they “wanted the public to know that conditions at Fort Hare were not what they used to be in the old days.”<sup>55</sup>



In addition to both sympathetic black and white staff having their every move watched, black faculty members were excluded from university policy-making bodies, paid less and promoted at slower rates than whites.<sup>56</sup> “We were not part of the decision-making bodies,” says Govinden. “I didn’t know what was going on with Senate.” Black staff members were incorporated into an advisory council, but it had no power and the students felt it was comprised of sell-outs. “I don’t think it was effective body,” says Govinden. “It was just a token.”<sup>57</sup>

Differential salary scales were a fundamental component of the separate universities. Proposing lower salaries for black staff, a Minister in Parliament said,

[m]y policy will be that there must be a difference between the salary scales of white and non-White ... staff. The salary scales of whites have always been determined in accordance with the salary structure of the White community and similarly the salary structure for non-White ... staff ought to be determined in accordance with the salary structure applicable to corresponding posts within the Bantu community.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *Sunday Times*, 21 October 1962.

<sup>55</sup> *Pretoria News*, 16 October 1962.

<sup>56</sup> Karis and Gerhart, eds., “From Protest to Challenge,” Volume 5, 91.

<sup>57</sup> Govinden, interview by author.

<sup>58</sup> Fort Hare Facts and Fiction, 1 July 1959, Fort Hare Papers.

The issue of differential salary scales disturbed the non-white lecturers a great deal.

They wanted equal pay for equal work. Masondo says,

I was a lecturer. There was a chap who was with me at Wits. Now I did my honors in one year. He did his honors in two years. When he came back, he got a post in Afrikaans. ... But you see, his salary, where his salary started, mine stopped. But status was the same. Only because I was black. That was a bit of a problem for me.<sup>59</sup>

Prior to the onset of university apartheid there was no racial discrimination in salaries at Fort Hare. In fact, when university salaries across the country were raised in the late 1950s, the Department of Education refused to subsidise increases for non-white staff. Fort Hare Council used its own funds to bring African salaries in line with the new standards. The new, all-white, government-appointed Senate would not do the same. "I was chosen to address the Senate [along with Ndamse] ... made up of whites ... on this whole matter of salary scales," says Govinden.<sup>60</sup> The Senate response was lukewarm. Its statement reads, "Senate, whilst it cannot associate itself entirely with the manner in which the plea is motivated ... nevertheless supports consideration of progressively narrowing the gap between the salary scales of European and Non-European staff."<sup>61</sup>

Govinden and Ndamse were not convinced by the Senate's reply. Ndamse said that the term 'progressive narrowing of the gap' was "of small effect since there had in fact already been a progressive increase in Non-European scales."<sup>62</sup> And Govinden wanted to know exactly what was objectionable in the motivation by the

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<sup>59</sup> Masondo, interview by author.

<sup>60</sup> Govinden, interview by author.

<sup>61</sup> Minutes, 11 September 1962 Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>62</sup> Minutes of Advisory Senate, 9 October 1962, Fort Hare Papers.

non-European staff. Senate replied that “if non-Europeans asked for too much their case would be weakened instead of strengthened.”<sup>63</sup>

### **The SRC and the Battle Over NUSAS**

The authorities felt limiting contact between Fort Hare students and NUSAS was crucial to their plan of segregation and to their control of the university college. Shortly after opening under government control, the issue of NUSAS sparked a pitched battle between the students and administration, leading to the dissolution of the Students' Representative Council. Speaking at a meeting of students shortly after Fort Hare opened in 1960, SRC president Seretse Choabi said,

[g]reat changes have taken place at Fort Hare, and we find ourselves part of an entirely new Fort Hare. ... As you all know, Fort Hare has for many years been affiliated to NUSAS. The position under [university] management is that this cannot be allowed to continue.<sup>64</sup>

University of Fort Hare

*Together in Excellence*

On Wednesday morning, 7 September 1960, John Shingler and two other

NUSAS officers arrived, unannounced, at the Rector's office at Fort Hare. Ross said that the NUSAS representatives “presented themselves without an appointment and in spite of the fact that NUSAS very well knows that affiliation of this Institution with that body has ended.”<sup>65</sup> The three presented Ross with letters from UCT, Rhodes and Natal protesting against the proscription of NUSAS from the Fort Hare campus. Together with the Fort Hare SRC, the NUSAS delegates met with Ross to discuss the banning of the organisation. Ross was offended by the tone of the meeting, charging that the students “took the opportunity of criticising government policy generally, and especially its policy in regard to separate development and the institution of separate

<sup>63</sup> op. cit.

<sup>64</sup> *Fort Harian*, April 1960, Howard Pim, 5.

<sup>65</sup> Senate Minutes, 12 September 1960, Fort Hare Papers.

universities.”<sup>66</sup> During the course of the SRC/NUSAS meeting with Ross, a note was passed under the door signed by 60 students asking for Shingler to address them at a mass meeting that evening. When Ross refused to grant permission for such a meeting, the students took matters into their own hands. That night, the NUSAS representatives met with Fort Hare students in Alice, assuring them of their organisation’s sympathy and support.

Ross’s refusal to grant permission for the mass meeting of students sparked a great deal of controversy. Before 1960, the SRC constitution provided the students with the power to call for mass meetings. If enough students were moved to call for a meeting, the principal would invariably agree to it. Although there was at least one instance prior to 1960 when the principal refused to grant students’ request for a mass meeting, it was generally assumed that the students’ right to call such meetings was protected by the SRC Constitution. Under the new regime, however, the old SRC constitution held little weight. The students requested a meeting with Ross to discuss the powers of the SRC and the possibility of drawing up a new constitution. At an emergency mass meeting on 8 September, the students resolved:

Whereas it was with the understanding that the SRC would function as in the past and it has become abundantly clear that this is not the case, we feel that we have been deceived and consequently request that the Rector meets the students to explain the constitutional structure of the SRC.<sup>67</sup>

Ross agreed to meet with the SRC. He said, “I then explained to the SRC that they had to accept the position that under the new regime all arrangements made in the past would obviously not be observed.”<sup>68</sup> In constant contact with the Minister of

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<sup>66</sup> op. cit.

<sup>67</sup> Emergency Mass Meeting Resolution, 8 Sept. 1960, Student Unrest, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>68</sup> Senate Minutes, 12 September 1960, Fort Hare Papers.

Bantu Education throughout the disagreement, Ross told the SRC that the Principal, not the students, had the power to grant mass meetings.<sup>69</sup>

At the same time, discontent boiled over in the dining halls, where the tradition of the SRC presiding over meals was replaced by the wardens assuming control. The students viewed this as another example of the new administration flouting the authority of the 1959 SRC constitution. Throughout September, meals were frequently interrupted by foot-stamping and mysterious blackouts. The clash between students and the authorities reached its climax when a student threw a knife, nearly injuring Professor Seboni, whom the students despised as a pawn of the apartheid regime.



Following the knife-throwing incident the Executive Committee of Senate forced all students to sign a declaration pledging good conduct. Any student refusing to sign would be expelled. Moerane says,

[m]eetings were held. I remember one particular day where meetings were held the whole day. There was division in the middle. The question was to sign or not to sign. Some senior students could see their futures going down the drain. Some had received telegrams from home saying that they dare not return.<sup>70</sup>

Masondo remembers, “[p]eople were strong. I remember one girl, she was saying they shouldn’t sign. Then [Seretse] Choabi said if we don’t sign, then we don’t leave this place, even if the police come. And this woman asked, ‘do police also arrest women?’”<sup>71</sup> Eventually all students signed, but they were not putting their names to a peace accord with the administration.

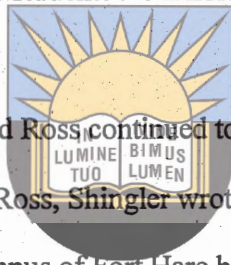
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<sup>69</sup> op. cit.

<sup>70</sup> Moerane, interview by author.

<sup>71</sup> Masondo, interview by author.

The students were still unhappy that they were not operating under the 1959 constitution. At a mass meeting on 18 September, it was decided that they would request the Rector to present them with a new written constitution by Monday, the 19<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m. When Ross refused, the students dissolved the SRC in protest. Ross responded by saying that he was no longer willing to work with the students and that they, "by their action, deprived themselves of the means of being heard in connection with redrafting [the constitution.] Ross cut off SRC constitution negotiations for the remainder of the year and forbade the students from holding further mass meetings."<sup>72</sup>



In the mean time, Shingler and Ross continued to spar over the banning of NUSAS from campus. In a letter to Ross, Shingler wrote, "I urge you to retract your proscription of NUSAS upon the campus of Fort Hare before you do irreparable harm to our generation of South African students."<sup>73</sup> Ross replied, "I am no longer prepared to have any further negotiations with your organisation. ... Kindly also note that your presence, or that of any of your officials, on our campus, will in future be considered trespassing and will be dealt with accordingly."<sup>74</sup> Thus, by the beginning of October, Ross had completely cut off the lines of communication with both his own student body and with NUSAS. Over the next year, relations worsened. In February 1961, the students wrote to Ross,

since the dissolution of our SRC last year a state of impasse and uncertainty has set in. ... There can be no happy relations between the students and the college authorities unless a solution has been found for this undesirable and uncondusive [sic] atmosphere. ... Cooperation cannot be achieved until the students have a recognized representative council.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Senate Minutes, 18 September 1960, Fort Hare Papers.

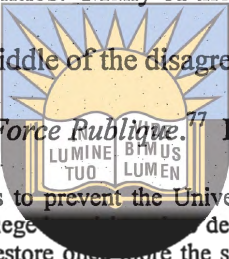
<sup>73</sup> John Shingler letter to Ross, 21 September 1960, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>74</sup> Ross letter to Shingler, 3 October 1960, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>75</sup> Stanley Mabizela, Sizakele Sigxashe, Seretse Choabi, Petition to Ross, 27 February 1961, Student Unrest, Fort Hare Papers.

However, the students could never get together with Ross on the issue of the SRC and they eventually abandoned those efforts.

Throughout the unrest, it was clear that the students were worried about more than just the SRC constitution. They were concerned with what it stood for, namely, independent Fort Hare. Moerane says, “[t]here was a school of thought which said rather destroy Fort Hare because these people have come to impose new values and new ethos, new politics, bantustan politics. Many of the students felt that was something to be resisted.”<sup>76</sup> In the middle of the disagreement, a new organisation was launched on campus, called the *Force Publique*.<sup>77</sup> Its policy statement reads,



[t]he aim of the Force Publique is to prevent the University College of Fort Hare from being turned into a tribal college and to demonstrate this to the world. ... The Force Publique wants to restore once more the solidarity that has existed in the past.<sup>78</sup>

Though the influence of the *Force Publique* was minimal, its founding is telling. Its reference to the old Fort Hare in its policy statement shows that although the students may have been fighting for a constitution on the surface, on the lower frequencies, the struggle was for much more.

### The expulsion of Stanley Mabizela

“I joined the liberation struggle very early. I think I must have been about twelve years of age when I first joined the ANC Youth League,” says Stanley Mabizela. Mabizela, whose parents were not politically active, first got involved in

<sup>76</sup> Moerane, interview by author.

<sup>77</sup> The context of the name *Force Publique* is revealing. *Force Publique* was the Belgian, and then independent Congolese security force, in the Congo. Following the precipitate granting of independence to Congo by Belgium on 30 June 1960, *Force Publique* soldiers staged a mutiny against its Belgian officers. At the very least, the naming of the new organization on campus shows that the students were aware of events elsewhere in the continent. It is likely that the students also equated the situation in the Congo with their own in South Africa, particularly in the wake of the takeover.

<sup>78</sup> *Force Publique* Statement, 15 September 1960, Fort Hare Papers.

politics when he was sent to do his schooling in Port Elizabeth. One of his earliest recollections of the racial strife in South Africa is of an incident in Port Elizabeth. He says,

[s]ometimes you'd be walking on the pavement and whites would come in the opposite direction and if you don't get off the pavement, you could be kicked to pieces. You could be boxed. I remember at one time I was boxed in PE. My eardrum was blown up and people had to take me to the hospital for treatment.

Mabizela stayed with an aunt whose entire family was involved with the ANC.

“Those are the people who took me to the ANC,” he says. The atmosphere in Port Elizabeth, a hotbed of the ANC, intrigued the young Mabizela. “In PE there were rallies every Sunday. Sometimes there would be meetings even at night. Meetings of the ANC, meetings of the ANC Youth League, meetings of the ANC Women’s League. It was a very active place, very active place.”<sup>79</sup> Mabizela was expelled from the Mariazel Mission School in the Transkei due to ANC political activity, but it would be his activism at Fort Hare in 1961 that resulted in an even more memorable expulsion.

By 1961, just over a year into the Ross regime, the only interaction between the authorities and students at Fort Hare was of a confrontational nature. The 1961 expulsion of Stanley Mabizela shows the extent to which the relationship had deteriorated during Ross’s second year in power. The trouble began after a meeting of the Advisory Council on 13 April 1961, when Mabizela was charged with insulting Kaiser Matanzima, who was a member of the advisory body.<sup>80</sup> Matanzima, in a letter to Ross, wrote,

<sup>79</sup> Mabizela, interview by author.

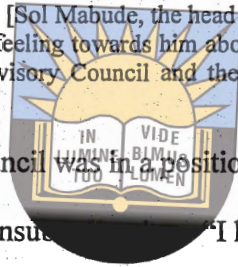
<sup>80</sup> Matanzima was appointed by the government as paramount chief of Emigrant Thembuland. Believing that Verwoerd’s policy of separate development was in the best interests of his people, he became head of the Transkei government in 1963 and led his country to ‘independence’ in 1976. He later became Transkei president. Authoritarian in manner, he was despised by many blacks as a collaborator.

[t]his student shouting at the top of his voice, first said to some of his colleagues, 'Kuzele apha zii nyhwagi' [this place is full of dogs, sell-outs]. Then while I was looking at him he came past me and Mr. Mzamane and uttered words in a manner intended that I should hear them 'nantsi le nyhwagi uMatanzima' [here is this dog, sell-out, Matanzima]. ... I take a very serious view of the conduct of this student and I appeal to you that in light of my status not only at your college but in South Africa as a whole, very strong disciplinary action should be taken.<sup>81</sup>

In a statement to Ross, Mabizela related a different sequence of events. He wrote,

I deny I directed the words mentioned to Mr. Matanzima. There were a number of students standing about and they were discussing the presence of the Advisory Council at the College. We were discussing whether they were serving a useful purpose at all. We saw Mr. Mabude [Sol Mabude, the head of the Advisory Council] and went to him and expressed our feeling towards him about the Advisory Council. ... I told Mr. Mabude that the Advisory Council and the Tribal Authorities were useless and sell-outs.<sup>82</sup>

Ross responded that the Advisory Council was in a position of authority and thus Mabizela's conduct constituted gross insult. "I had no option but to demand from him to leave the Institution within 24 hours."<sup>83</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
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In reality, it appears that neither Mabizela's nor Matanzima's account accurately reflects what happened on that April afternoon. Interviews with Mabizela, some of his classmates and Andrew Masondo, who was a lecturer on campus at the time, paint a completely different picture. Mabizela says,

I was seeing Matanzima for the first time in my life. I was very near him because I wanted to see the man, wanted to see his face. ... And then somebody from behind us, there were many of us, but I was in the front, somebody behind us says, 'Nanzi le nja nyaghi uMatanzima,' 'here is this dog, sellout, Kaiser Matanzima.' Well when the man was speaking behind me I could tell who it is. Because it is somebody I had known for a long time. ... The person who made that statement was a chap called Griffiths Mxenge ('57-'61). And I was together with Griffiths at Newell High School. ... Of course when this remark was made by Griffiths Mxenge, many people laughed and agreed with him. But strange enough ... it was said that it was me who said Matanzima is a sellout and I was expelled from Fort Hare by the Principal."<sup>84</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Matanzima letter to Ross, 13 April 1961, Mabizela File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>82</sup> Minutes of Meeting between Mabizela and Ross with Registrar present, 28 April 1961, Mabizela File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>83</sup> op. cit.

<sup>84</sup> Mabizela, interview by author.

Mabizela was singled out because of his political activity. He was consistently a thorn in the administration's side and the incident with Matanzima was viewed as a way of ridding the campus of one of its main political agitators. Additionally, Professor Seboni had a hand in fingering Mabizela as the student who offended Matanzima. Mabizela says, "Seboni hated me. He even expelled me from Beda hostel."<sup>85</sup> Masondo describes Seboni as "the administration's man" and it is likely that Seboni blamed Mabizela to spite him.<sup>86</sup>

Yet it was precisely because Mabizela was a leader on campus that the administration could not get rid of him. He says, "At the moment [Ross expelled me] every student stopped school, not only the students went on strike, but the domestic workers stopped cooking for the people there. Everything came to a standstill." The students called Mabizela to a meeting, asking him to comment on the situation.

Mabizela says,

[s]o I said, I want to tell you all here as you are looking at me that I know who said those words, but I will never tell anyone of you who it is, who he is. I will never give you his name. I will never give his name to anybody. I am not a sellout. Gee Whiz, they just stood up and applauded [claps his hands].<sup>87</sup>

Tixie Mabizela, Mabizela's current wife, and girlfriend at the time of the incident says, "I said [to Stanley] 'did you do it' and he said, 'no I did not do it and I'm not going to tell you who did it.' So I said 'why are you not going to tell?' He said 'because the other student is a lightweight. Nobody will do this for him. But for me they will do it and it will work.' And this is exactly how it happened."<sup>88</sup>

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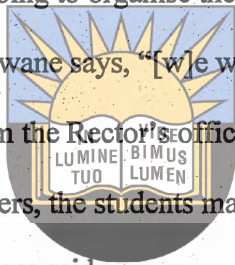
<sup>85</sup> op. cit.

<sup>86</sup> Masondo, interview by author.

<sup>87</sup> Mabizela, interview by author.

<sup>88</sup> Tixie Mabizela, interview by author with Stanley Mabizela, Cape Town, 19 April 1999.

Immensely popular with both the students and elements of the black staff, Mabizela, the president of the ANC Youth League at the time, knew that his expulsion would be fought tooth and nail. To him, accepting the blame was, in and of itself, a political act. Not only would it save Mxenge from certain expulsion, but it would also serve to rally the students in protest against the administration. Andrew Masondo describes what happened: "I'm going towards my office and I meet Sizakele Sigxashe ('58-'61). And Sigxashe says to me, 'they've expelled Mabizela.' ... I meet Chris Hani. I said to Chris... 'I'm going to organise the [black] staff, you go and organise the students.'"<sup>89</sup> Ntombi Dwane says, "[w]e went to mass meetings and we were told that we were going to storm the Rector's office."<sup>90</sup> Organised by Seretse Choabi and Chris Hani, amongst others, the students marched into Ross's office. In a report at a special Senate meeting, Ross said,



## University of Fort Hare

*Together in Excellence*

[o]ne of the students directed himself to me and told me that the students had come to demand that Mabizela be reinstated, that they had not come to argue about the matter, and that they came with a plain and simple demand; that they were tired of my dictatorial dealings with students and they demanded the reinstatement of Mabizela. ... I thereupon told the students ... I was not prepared to concede to a demand.<sup>91</sup>

Immediately after the students left Ross's office, thirteen members of the non-European staff, led by Andrew Masondo, walked into Ross's office, upset that they had not been consulted regarding the expulsion. Ross said, "[t]hey informed me they were perturbed about the unrest among the students as a result of Mabizela's expulsion."<sup>92</sup> Masondo says,

Professor Ross tells us, reads all these powers, because according to the Transfer Act, the rector had immense powers. So ultimately I said to him, look, you can't expel that person. ... I said to him, the rector must, yes, he's given such powers, but it is supposed that he'll use them responsibly or else it would just be destroying and building nothing....<sup>93</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Masondo, interview by author.

<sup>90</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>91</sup> Minutes of Special Meeting of Senate, 1 May 1961, Fort Hare Papers.

At the request of the non-European staff, the Mabizela case was referred to a liaison committee. After looking into the case, the committee recommended Mabizela be reinstated. He was subsequently allowed to continue as a student. More revealing, however, are the committee's comments on the atmosphere leading to the Mabizela unrest. It said, "[n]o matter how we reason ... the fact remains that the students consider him another victim of political circumstances."<sup>94</sup> The committee viewed the unrest as a symbol of the deteriorating relationship between the students and authorities that had plagued the College since the takeover:

It is a fact that there was trouble in the past. But the present difficulty is of a completely different nature. ... There is no contact whatsoever between the authorities of the College and the student body. This fact is a source of constant friction, suspicion and distrust. It is the cause of the explosive atmosphere that constantly hangs over the college.<sup>95</sup>

The Mabizela unrest stemmed directly from the events surrounding the onset of government control at Fort Hare. As Mabizela puts it, "[w]e were not going to play nicey-nicey with [Ross] because we knew that he is a member of the National Party."<sup>96</sup>



Ntombi Dwane remembers the Mabizela expulsion as her initiation into politics. Examining her first few months on campus shows how the events surrounding the new regime at Fort Hare served in this new context to politicise the student body. Dwane arrived at Fort Hare in 1961, a year after the takeover by the National Party and found a Fort Hare far different from the one she would have encountered had she gotten there a few years earlier. Born in 1942 at the foot of the Drakensberg Mountains in the Mount Fletcher District of the Transkei, her father

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<sup>92</sup> op. cit.

<sup>93</sup> Masondo, interview by author.

<sup>94</sup> Report Of Liaison Committee Mabizela Dispute, 1 May 1961, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>95</sup> op. cit.

<sup>96</sup> Mabizela, interview by author.

was the headmaster of a primary school and her mother, who had done industrial education up to standard six, was a housewife, caring for Dwane and her six sisters. Both of Dwane's parents were heavily involved with church work and thus religion, not politics, dominated her childhood. She did her primary education in the Transkei town of Etyeni, where her family moved following her father's death in 1951.

Dwane studied towards her junior certificate at Cikirha, near Umtata, before moving on to Shawbury, near Qumbu, for high school. At Cikirha, Dwane says there was an emphasis on evangelism and trying to convert pupils to Christianity. At Shawbury, she says, there was much more freedom. "We were left most of the time on our own. There were a lot of debates." Dwane remembers a history teacher, Mr. Mayekiso, who was openly political. "He actually introduced us to politics," she says. "It was the time of 1959, 1960. The time of Ngqiza Hill. Sharpeville happened in March when we were in standard ten. ... He would go away and he would bring newspapers. And not only would he bring a newspaper, but he would talk about it." Dwane says that Mayekiso, who came from Pondoland, would tell his students about the Pondoland Uprising. "He opened our eyes," she says. "He was able to weave things into the teaching of English and history." At the same time, a classmate's boyfriend who worked for *New Age* would bring the newspaper to campus. Dwane says, "[w]e'd hide it in desks and we'd discuss it. But we were afraid. We didn't quite know what would happen to us."<sup>97</sup>

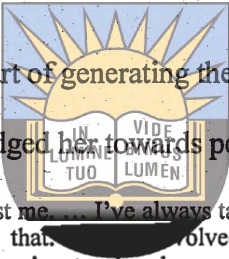
Shortly after her arrival at Fort Hare, Dwane remembers descending upon Ross's office to defend Mabizela. "You went as part of the crowd," she says. "We

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<sup>97</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

were going to march *en bloc*, that was the first time I heard that phrase, into the Rector's office and demand the reinstatement of Stanley Mabizela." Though her eyes were somewhat opened during her time at Shawbury, Fort Hare presented a completely different experience. "You got to Fort Hare ... and you find a boiling pot and then you are thrown to the middle of it. ... While we were not as students in high school conscious so much of repression, you just knew when you got to Fort Hare that here, it's bad."<sup>98</sup>

Chris Hani was an integral part of generating the heat that that boiled the pot and Dwane recalls how he gently nudged her towards politics:



"I remember he made a joke against me ... I've always taken a very active interest in religion, church, worship and all that ... I was involved in all these things, SCA [Students' Christian Association], going to church. ... And uChris Hani, I think it was before I joined the ANC, so one afternoon I was sitting in the library reading, uChris Hani came to this section of the library where I was, which was not Latin or English, which was his subject. ... And uChris Hani, I think he just made a beeline for me. I think Chris Hani was sort of saying to me the time has come for you to get involved. ... And uChris Hani came and stood behind me and made as if he was getting a book out. Of course he was not getting any book out. He didn't do science. And then he said, softly, but clearly for me to hear, 'man shall not live by the Bible alone, but also by politics.' And then he walked away [laughter]. Well by that time I think I was about to join the ANC anyway, so I did."<sup>99</sup>

Dwane recalls that right after the Mabizela incident, the students organised a stay-away to protest against the withdrawal of South Africa from the Commonwealth.<sup>100</sup> A three-day stay-away was called for by the national ANC and the students responded. "We had to tell the mamas who worked in the kitchens and the tatas who did the grounds to go away for three days." Slogans were painted on the facades of buildings protesting against the establishment of the Republic of South Africa. Dwane remembers that the stay-away was accompanied by intense political

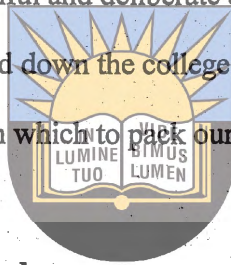
<sup>98</sup> op. cit.

<sup>99</sup> op. cit.

<sup>100</sup> From 31 May 1961, when it became a republic, South Africa ceased to be a member of the Commonwealth.

education. "At Eluk we had quite a lot of political teachings to orient us new people, juniors, to the situation," she says. "I remember Monto Mali Tshabalala walking around with a button with Chief Luthuli's head. And I remember her saying 'Diya sebenza,' I am working. I am working for the country."<sup>101</sup>

Still reeling from the students' victory in the Mabizela case, the administration reacted strongly to the boycott of classes. Senate declared, "[t]he entire action by the students must be considered as a willful and deliberate defiance of authority."<sup>102</sup> At the end of the three days, Ross closed down the college. "We were all expelled," says Dwane. "We were given 48 hours in which to pack our clothes and go."<sup>103</sup>



### The ANC Goes Underground

## University of Fort Hare

The coming of apartheid to Fort Hare coincided with a shift in political tactics

*Together in Excellence*

by the liberation movements nationwide. On 8 April 1960, in the wake of the Sharpeville Massacre, the ANC and PAC were declared illegal organisations. Through the Suppression of Communism Act, membership in either organisation was made a crime. Increasingly, work of the liberation movements, particularly the ANC, shifted underground. In October 1960, led by Nelson Mandela, the strategy of armed struggle was adopted and *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) was launched in December 1961. Many of the leaders went into exile, including Oliver Tambo.

At Fort Hare, a parallel shift occurred. Still without an SRC to articulate their grievances and desires, the students turned to the national political structures for direction. Particularly in the Eastern Cape, the spirit behind the M-Plan lived on in

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<sup>101</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

the early sixties, with Fort Hare serving as a vital component of the underground structure. Mabindisa says,

[a]nd we decided at that time ... to follow the M-Plan, that is the Mandela Plan. We wouldn't meet in big groups, but in small groups. We would divide ourselves into cells. It really became difficult now, divided into cells, to influence the non-political students because we knew that we were watched all the time.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, the vibrant political atmosphere of the fifties, with open discussion dominating campus life, was replaced by one of secretive meetings. "Oppression was now very, very clear and one started becoming aware of *impimpis*, talk about informers and so on, the special branch," says Dwane.<sup>105</sup> Mabindisa says,

[t]here was the special branch assigned to the town. Some of them were very cruel people. I remember one called Hutton, I'm sure you'll hear many stories of that man. ... But what we didn't know was that the government had infiltrated these cells, spies were also in the cells, the ANC youth league cells that were operating at Fort Hare. And this became clear later on when many students who belonged to the ANC were arrested at Fort Hare round about 1963-64.

## University of Fort Hare

Dwane attended meetings secretly. *Together in Excellence*

I was in Doreen [Ngumede's] cell," she says. "There was a hierarchy and your own connection was with your leader, your cell leader. ... There were about four of us in our cell. ... We'd have political discussions. ... We've got to do this now, we've got to go and scatter pamphlets, try and recruit a person, try and get somebody interested...I took my orders from Doreen."<sup>107</sup>

Sigqibo Dwane says, "It was all anonymous. You only knew people in your own cells. You didn't know about people in other cells in the same organisation."<sup>108</sup>

Masondo says that he worked underground at Fort Hare, along with Chris Hani, under the direction of Govan Mbeki:

Chris and I, '61, we go to Ntselemanzi. The police are combing the area and we wanted to put leaflets. Govan has asked us to do that, to mobilise people for that area. So the two of us go to Ntselemanzi. The police are combing the area. We

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<sup>102</sup> Minutes of Senate Meeting, 3 June 1961. Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>103</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>104</sup> Mabindisa, interview by author.

<sup>105</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>106</sup> Mabindisa, interview by author.

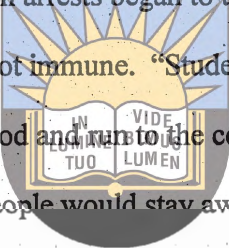
<sup>107</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>108</sup> Sigqibo Dwane, interview by author.

move behind the police, as they are going that way, we are putting leaflets in the houses.<sup>109</sup>

Mabizela says, “[w]hen I was at Fort Hare, I was already part of the ANC underground in the Eastern Cape. I was operating at Fort Hare and sometimes [elsewhere] in the Eastern Cape. Sometimes I used to be sent to Cape Town. Govan Mbeki would send me.”<sup>110</sup>

The government introduced measures such as the Ninety-Day Detention Act and the 180-Day Detention Act. When arrests began to take place throughout the country, students at Fort Hare were not immune. “Students started getting detained,” says Dwane. “We had to organise food and run to the court room, we were afraid of course, during free periods. Some people would stay away from a lecture to take food, some of us were organised to collect food and others would take it to the students who were standing trial.”<sup>111</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

On 11 July 1963, a dry cleaning van pulled into the driveway at Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, the headquarters of the MK High Command. Police officers emerged from the van and descended upon the farm. They found 12 men sitting around a table, engaged in discussion. The farm was searched and hundreds of documents were confiscated. The entire High Command of MK was detained under the new Ninety-Day Detention Act.<sup>112</sup> Charged with high treason, they faced a possible death sentence. In the wake of the Rivonia Trial, with detentions around the country increasing, many political activists began to leave the country. With leaders such as Govan Mbeki (on trial for high treason) and Andrew Masondo (arrested for

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<sup>109</sup> Masondo, interview by author.

<sup>110</sup> Mabizela, interview by author.

<sup>111</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

sabotage in 1963) out of commission and others in exile, activism at Fort Hare began to drop off. Masondo says,

[o]ne day I went with my unit to sabotage the pylons, but by this time, the police were preparing to ban me. And on the day we acted, they were there at my house. And when I came back, they arrested me for that. Then I went to Robben Island. I was arrested on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, '63. I was ultimately sentenced to twelve years on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April.<sup>113</sup>

Three days after his arrest, Masondo was suspended from his lecturing duties at Fort Hare.

Dwane says that Fort Hare was affected by the increased vigilance of the government. "In 1963 quite a lot of people just left the university," she says. "There was actually a break in leadership at that time. ... The ANC instructed them to go into exile."<sup>114</sup> "People just disappeared. I remember some people, we read about them in the newspapers and we saw that they had gone, although she's gotten back to the camera, who left the university, went into exile."<sup>115</sup> Monto Mali Tshabalala was studying for her B.Sc. when, according to Dwane, "she just disappeared."<sup>116</sup>

### The Arrival of the Broederbond

From 1964 to 1968, activism at Fort Hare was quieted. With ANC leaders either in jail or in exile and no SRC to speak of, the campus was far from the hive of political activity it had been in previous years. Barney Pityana, a first year student in 1966 who had participated in Fort Hare politics while a student at Lovedale from 1960-64, says, "[things] had changed. This was a different Fort Hare I was coming to. The radical edge of the university had gone." With the traditional means of

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<sup>112</sup> Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 305.

<sup>113</sup> Masondo, interview by author.

<sup>114</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>115</sup> op. cit.

<sup>116</sup> op. cit.

organising blocked by the government, the main vehicles for political expression in the mid-1960s were denominational societies. Campus religious groups linked with the nearby Federal Theological Seminary (Fedsem) provided the students with a forum to assert themselves politically. Pityana says, “[m]ost denominational societies had chaplains attached to Fedsem who were lecturers. Like Desmond Tutu became our chaplain when he was at Fedsem.”<sup>117</sup>

A political rebirth of sorts began towards the middle of 1968 when Professor Ross retired and Johannes Marthinus De Wet was brought in to replace him. The selection of De Wet, like that of Ross before him, was a calculated move on the part of the government. “De Wet was a direct appointee of Pretoria,” says Selby Baqwa.<sup>118</sup> G.C. Oosthuizen remembers that De Wet was a member of the Broederbond and calls him a “Nazi type.”<sup>119</sup> “The change of rectors should be smooth,” wrote Lin Menge in the *Rand Daily Mail*, “... the passing on of a vitally important Government task from one loyal and dedicated Nationalist to another.”<sup>120</sup> De Wet came to Fort Hare from Potchefstroom University, where he taught mathematics and headed the department of statistics. His résumé provided no hint of any interest in African education other than his service on the all-white Fort Hare Council from 1960.<sup>121</sup> From the outset, the appointment of De Wet re-energised the students at Fort Hare, who resented the Broederbond influence filtering into their university.

The De Wet era opened with the students boycotting his installation ceremony. Makhenkesi Stofile says, “[h]ere was this Broederbond being installed. We were

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<sup>117</sup> Barney Pityana, interview by author, Grahamstown, July 1999.

<sup>118</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

<sup>119</sup> Oosthuizen, interview by author.

<sup>120</sup> Menge, “Narrow Path to Higher Learning.”

protesting against the Broederbond capturing of the university. ... We didn't want him. We wanted him gone."<sup>122</sup> Barney Pityana says, "Blaar Coetzee came to speak. We protested the whole installation. In fact, we made a whole lot of noise around it to try to flood it out."<sup>123</sup> Satyo says,

Coetzee was one of the terrible ministers in the cabinet of John Vorster. ... Everybody was just shouting Blaar! Blaar! Blaar! Blaar! [Laughs]. And they were very, very angry about that because Afrikaners and their supremacy, if a person of authority like a cabinet minister to be shouted at by non-voters, to them that was very insulting, demeaning.<sup>124</sup>

Pityana says that the boycott was a success, with no students attending the installation. "That was something organised by us individually. I don't think we used any umbrella body to resist it," he says. "We wanted to make it very clear to De Wet that he was not welcome at Fort Hare. In fact, I don't think De Wet ever forgave us for that."<sup>125</sup>



## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

De Wet's authoritarian and condescending approach sensitised students who entered Fort Hare with varying levels of political awareness. Sizwe Satyo, born in Lady Frere in 1948, arrived in Alice a relative political novice. He was aware of the situation in the country, but had never assumed the role of activist. One of his earliest political memories is of South Africa becoming a republic in 1961. He says, "[a]ll our primary schools were supplied with miniature flags and badges and the teachers were supposed to hand over those things to us. But because the teachers were very much politicised, what they did was not to give any flags to any pupil." His parents were not openly political, but Satyo says, "because the political parties were banned, there was that tacit knowledge that everybody belonged to a political party." Satyo

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<sup>121</sup> op. cit.

<sup>122</sup> Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile, interview by author, Bisho, 22 March 1999.

<sup>123</sup> Pityana, interview by author.

<sup>124</sup> Satyo, interview by author.

<sup>125</sup> Pityana, interview by author.

grew up under Bantu Education, but at the time, was not aware what it meant. “We all knew that we were attending B.C. schools. You knew that in your address you must write Mount Arthur, B.C. School. It was only later in life when you knew B.C. school means Bantu Community School.”<sup>126</sup> Satyo arrived at Fort Hare just in time to greet De Wet. He studied under Ross for one semester, with the boycott of De Wet’s installation marking his first open political involvement.

The unrest surrounding De Wet’s appointment continued well beyond his unceremonious greeting from the students. Indeed, the appointment of De Wet had the students clamoring for their old nemesis, Ross. “[Ross] was regarded as far more open-minded than ... De Wet,” says Satyo. “Even if Ross was not going to do what you were asking from him, at least he would give you a hearing and then would just not give you what you asked for. De Wet didn’t want anybody to go and discuss anything with him.”<sup>127</sup> Barney Pityana says, “[Ross] didn’t present himself like De Wet, as a kind of die-hard ideologue of the regime.”<sup>128</sup> Though their relationship with Ross had been far from rosy, the coming of De Wet sparked even worse interaction between the students and their Rector. “Soon after De Wet came, things changed completely,” says Satyo. “It was very clear that there was going to be a strike.”<sup>129</sup> And indeed, in the second half of 1968, there was a protracted battle between the students and De Wet that led to the closure of the university and the expulsion of 21 alleged ringleaders.

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<sup>126</sup> Satyo, interview by author.

<sup>127</sup> op. cit.

<sup>128</sup> Barney Pityana, interview by author.

<sup>129</sup> Satyo, interview by author.

To an extent, the unrest in 1968 was a continuation of the earlier SRC dispute. Since the SRC disbanded during the early days of the Ross regime, there had been no representative body on campus. The students were determined that no SRC be formed for two main reasons. Firstly, they were afraid of the administration using the SRC to identify and victimise student leaders. Secondly, the students were afraid that the SRC would disintegrate into a body collaborating with the administration. In March of 1968 a student poll was taken on the prospect of forming an SRC. One student, on his ballot, called it an ARC, or “administration representative council.”<sup>130</sup> Pityana says that the students would never form an SRC as long as De Wet was the Rector because they did not want him there and weren’t going to collaborate with him in any manner.<sup>131</sup>



## University of Fort Hare

The tension surrounding the installation of De Wet grew as the year moved on.  
*Together in Excellence*

The consistent presence of the security police and informers disturbed the students. “We know that the campus is overrun with police informers, that the Security Branch and the police know what is being said and done there at all times,” said one student.<sup>132</sup> Problems began late in August 1968 when a visiting professor from Johns Hopkins University in the United States delivered a lecture on Namibia, then South-West Africa, justifying its colonial subjugation by South Africa. Students at Fort Hare were offended by his analysis and vociferously denounced the professor.<sup>133</sup> Around the same time, the students presented De Wet with a petition detailing grievances and proposed changes surrounding various campus matters. The petition arose out of a University Christian Movement (UCM) mission to Fort Hare led by

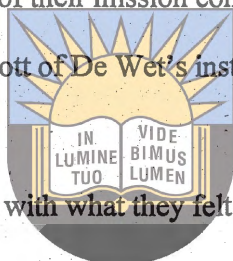
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<sup>130</sup> SRC File, 4 March 1968, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>131</sup> Pityana, interview by author.

<sup>132</sup> “Fort Hare students hit at denial of freedom.” *East London Daily Dispatch*. 10 September 1968.

Steve Biko. According to Pityana, the mission “was intended to find a means of activating students and doing a critique of what’s happening at the university.”<sup>134</sup> He says it was also to begin the process of forming a UCM branch at Fort Hare. Biko told the students that their responsibility was to the whole university, “including the people that are working, underpaid and treated like slaves.”<sup>135</sup> The students were convinced, but De Wet would never allow UCM to take root at Fort Hare, on the grounds that it contained “a liberal element that would mislead the students.”<sup>136</sup> However, the petition that arose out of their mission continued the movement of dissent that had begun with the boycott of De Wet’s installation.



The students were also upset with what they felt was the unjust treatment of 17 students who had been singled out by the Rector after political slogans such as “We do not want Potch boere scum,” “Fort Hare not rubbish bin for Potchefstroom scum,” “Fort Hare for Africans not for Afrikaners” and “Vorster is identical to Hitler” were scrawled on the university library and the Great Hall.<sup>137</sup> Ignoring their plea to be brought before a disciplinary committee, De Wet warned the 17 students that they would be responsible for any future trouble that might occur at the university. Additionally the security police, whom the students felt were in communication with De Wet, questioned some or all of the 17.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Mokubung Nkomo, *Student Culture and Activism in Black South African Universities* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984), 147.

<sup>134</sup> Pityana, interview by author.

<sup>135</sup> Lindy Wilson “Steve Biko: A Life,” in N. Barney Pityana, Mampehela Rampehele, Malusi Mpumlwana and Lindy Wilson, eds., *Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko and Black Consciousness* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991), 24.

<sup>136</sup> “Fort Hare students hit at denial of freedom.”

<sup>137</sup> “Quarter of students left at college,” *Rand Daily Mail*. 9 September 1968.

<sup>138</sup> “Bishop Delivers Protest Letter to De Wet,” *Daily Dispatch*. 10 October 1968.

In general, the students alleged that De Wet was being “arbitrary and treating [them] like young schoolboys.”<sup>139</sup> Specifically, they were also upset over De Wet’s refusal to permit them to hold a variety concert to raise funds for charity, the banning of mass meetings, and the proscription of UCM from campus.<sup>140</sup> When the students tried to organise a “Hunger Week” to aid hungry children in Alice, the Rector told them to “go and study. You will help your people when you have graduated and left Fort Hare.”<sup>141</sup> The students felt that under Ross there would have been no difficulty in organising the events they had planned. One student told the *Daily Dispatch*,

[t]he crux of the matter is that the new Rector will not allow us to get together to organise social, cultural or charitable activities—activities that are normal on any university campus. He is trying to run Fort Hare University as though it is a school and he is trying to discipline us as though we are school children. This is what we resent.<sup>142</sup>

When the students asked De Wet to meet with them to discuss the newly imposed restrictions on student social activities, the Rector asked to meet with a delegation from the student body. Pityana says that the students refused for fear that De Wet would victimise the group. They wanted him to address the entire student body. When De Wet refused, the students decided that he was ignoring their petition. “We then decided to march on the administration,” says Pityana.<sup>143</sup> Day after day of sit-ins followed, with classes suspended for an entire week. The students were warned “Pretoria takes a very serious view” of the strike and that they would be ordered to leave campus if they continued with their action.<sup>144</sup> De Wet continued to insist that he was prepared to meet “a small delegation from the students,” but that his offer would

<sup>139</sup> “Police, Dogs Clear Campus: Sitters at Fort Hare sent home,” *Rand Daily Mail*. 7 September 1968.

<sup>140</sup> “Fort Hare Crisis is Mounting,” *Daily Dispatch*. 9 September 1968.

<sup>141</sup> “Fort Hare students hit at denial of freedom.”

<sup>142</sup> op. cit.

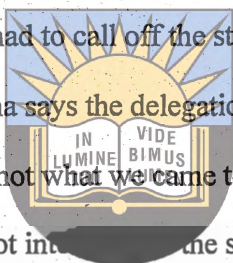
<sup>143</sup> Pityana, interview by author.

<sup>144</sup> Minutes of Senate, 29 August 1968, Fort Hare Papers.

expire after 3 p.m. on 5 September. The students continued to respond that they were “a leaderless group.” They sent a memo to De Wet stating that

[t]he students maintain that they are not prepared to send a delegation. They do not want time until 3 p.m. because they have already decided. They say that democracy means that the Rector should appear before the students. They do not want to listen to a delegate from the Rector, but to the Rector himself.<sup>145</sup>

At the end of the week, Pityana and the other *de facto* leaders of the strike decided that they had to send a delegation to meet with De Wet or they would risk losing student support. “We went to his office,” says Pityana. “At this meeting, all he could address us about was that we had to call off the student strike and if we don’t he’s going to call the police.” Pityana says the delegation had no intention of heeding De Wet’s warning. “We said that’s not what we came to do. We came to address the grievances of the students. We’re not interested in the student strike. We were not going to call it off. The people who were going to call it off were the people who called it: the students.”<sup>146</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Within an hour of the meeting, it was announced that the campus was to be closed. At two o’clock on 6 September, with the students refusing to leave campus, the police were called in. A few minutes after three o’clock, at least ten police vans with six police dogs and 30 policemen equipped with tear gas arrived on the scene.<sup>147</sup> As students sat in front of the administration block singing “We Shall Overcome” and “Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika,” police removed them in small groups, watched them pack and loaded them on buses which took them to the railway station in Alice.<sup>148</sup> As they were taken away, the students chanted, “justice will prevail.”<sup>149</sup> A student

<sup>145</sup> Minutes of Senate, 5 September 1968, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>146</sup> Pityana, interview by author.


<sup>147</sup> “Fort Hare Situation Serious,” *Natal Daily News*, 9 September 1968.

<sup>148</sup> “Police, Dogs Clear Campus: Sitters at Fort Hare sent home,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 7 September 1968.

<sup>149</sup> “Defiance at Fort Hare: Chanting marchers are sent home,” *The Star*, 7 September 1968.

interviewed by the *Daily Dispatch* said, “[t]he police...adopted a nasty attitude and even refused us a drink of water before they escorted us to the station.”<sup>150</sup> Pityana says, “[w]e had police sent into the campus with dogs and riot gear and we were escorted out of the campus. The whole college was closed and all of us [protesters] were expected to go home.”<sup>151</sup> Over 400 of the 453 enrolled students left campus, including the 350 who were suspended.<sup>152</sup>

Both during and after the disturbances, the students vehemently denied De Wet’s allegations that the strike was the result of the agitation of a select group of leaders. A statement issued to the press reads, “It was a spontaneous demonstration with no leaders and no links with communism, foreign groups, Nusas or any other body. The demonstration was due to oppressive conditions on the campus and the interrogation of 17 students by the Security Branch.”<sup>153</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

The students’ worst fears were realised when the administration singled out the “ringleaders” of the strike and expelled them. Twenty-one were “sent down”, including Pityana, Kenneth Rachidi, Justice Moloto and Peter Vundla. All other students were allowed back after agreeing to abide by stringent new rules. Writing to De Wet, Reverend Gordon Tindall, the Bishop of Grahamstown said,

In fact, precisely what the students most feared and guarded against in their protest has happened—the victimisation of a small minority who are labeled and condemned as agitators. Is this not why the students refused to send a delegation—because of what happened to the 17 earlier and what they feared would happen to such a delegation?<sup>154</sup>

<sup>150</sup> “Fort Hare Crisis is Mounting,” *Daily Dispatch*, 9 September 1968.

<sup>151</sup> Pityana, interview by author.

<sup>152</sup> “Fort Hare Crisis is Mounting,” “Fort Hare Situation Serious.”

<sup>153</sup> Expelled students deny leading Fort Hare demonstration,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 March 1969.

<sup>154</sup> “Bishop Delivers Protest Letter to De Wet.”

Following pressure at a meeting to discuss the unrest parents and others, the 21 “ringleaders” were allowed to write their final examinations, but they were not readmitted as full students of the university. Some of the leaders chose not to write.

Pityana says,

I personally took the view that it would be wrong to take the final exam when we were not on campus because part of our struggle was to not be expelled. And for us to accept the lesser of the two things was not acceptable. So I never wrote. ... I never graduated from Fort Hare.<sup>155</sup>

The struggle against the administration continued throughout the remainder of 1968. In late October, students were again caught painting slogans on campus buildings. Seven students were charged with malicious injury to property for scrawling such phrases as “Go Home Scum,” “Why Turn Fort Hare into Police Camp,” “Away with Nazis,” and “Stamp out Police Officers, or Else.”<sup>156</sup>

University of Fort Hare  
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### **Ghettoizing Fort Hare**

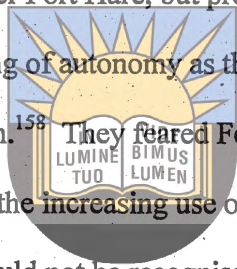
In 1970, the government repealed the Fort Hare Transfer Act. Yet the annulment of the act was not the result of the decade of student protest against Ross, De Wet and Bantu Education. Rather, it was a continuation of the government’s strategy to transform Fort Hare into a bantustan university. The Fort Hare Transfer Act was replaced by The Fort Hare Act of 1969, which granted full university status to the University College of Fort Hare. Long a constituent college of various other ‘white’ institutions, Fort Hare was finally given the chance to issue its own degrees and move along on its own path of development. Its name was officially changed from the University College of Fort Hare to the University of Fort Hare.

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<sup>155</sup> Pityana, interview by author.

<sup>156</sup> “Students told they were misguided,” *Daily Dispatch*, 20 November 1968.

However, in 1970, in the era of university apartheid, the onset of autonomy, a long sought after goal for the entire university community, was not a cause for celebration, at least not for the students of Fort Hare. While the administration planned a gala barbecue complete with fireworks, the students were not in a mood to rejoice. Despite government proclamations that the act signified greater academic independence for Fort Hare, the students agreed with the United Party's chief spokesperson, P.A. Moore, who said that the Minister of Bantu Education had not divested himself of any authority over Fort Hare, but proposed to get more control than before.<sup>157</sup> They saw the granting of autonomy as the cheapening of their degrees, the "ghettoization" of their education.<sup>158</sup> They feared Fort Hare's autonomy would mean a drop in academic standards, the increasing use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction and that their degrees would not be recognised.<sup>159</sup> They viewed the government's act as the continuation of the apartheid policy to curb the critical and independent thinking for which Fort Hare had become known and to replace it with a curriculum in line with the policy of separate development. They agreed with Helen Suzman, when she argued in the House of Assembly that autonomy would mean the government would "decide what should be taught, who should be taught and who should teach."<sup>160</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
Together in Excellence

To the authorities at Fort Hare, autonomy was an achievement to celebrate. A commemorative book was commissioned to mark the occasion. Festivities were planned that included sports, fireworks, a braaivleis, art exhibitions, exhibitions of science apparatus, the graduation ceremony, a dinner for guests, a separate dinner for

<sup>157</sup> "More Power for College," *Natal Witness*, 7 March 1969.

<sup>158</sup> Satyo, interview by author.

<sup>159</sup> "Boycott at Fort Hare was Protest at Autonomy." *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 June 1970.

<sup>160</sup> "Suzman in Clash on Fort Hare," *Rand Daily Mail*, 14 March 1969.

non-European guests, and the laying of a foundation stone for the new agriculture building. Invitations were sent to the Prime Minister of South Africa and the Minister of Bantu Education. De Wet described the celebrations as a “resounding success” despite the fact that the majority of the student body chose not to participate.<sup>161</sup>

To the authorities, independence marked a “milestone” in Fort Hare’s history. Autonomy placed Fort Hare in a position to “adapt both the content of its curricula, and the methods of presentation more effectively and more adequately to the needs of the people it serves.”<sup>162</sup> Former Rector Ross felt that autonomy “made it possible for Fort Hare to meet the specific needs and demands of the specific community which it is called upon to serve in a greater measure.”<sup>163</sup> And De Wet wrote, “the future responsibility of Fort Hare is to train the Xhosa students in even greater measure so that they may pass on the benefit of their education by rendering service to their fellow countrymen in the most effective manner.”<sup>164</sup> Indeed, independence was just one more piece of the government’s plan to make Fort Hare into an institution to serve the Transkei and Ciskei.

To the students, independence marked a low point in Fort Hare’s history. They viewed autonomy as just one more step along the path towards making their education useless. Moerane says, “[w]hat they taught at UNISA they taught to everybody, to whites and blacks and Indians and coloureds. Now they were going to be taught a

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<sup>161</sup> “Boycott at Fort Hare was Protest at Autonomy.”

<sup>162</sup> J.M. De Wet. *Fort Hare Autonomy*, 15.

<sup>163</sup> op. cit. 73.

<sup>164</sup> op. cit. 36.

particular Fort Hare curriculum which they associated with bantustans. That's why they resisted that."<sup>165</sup> Satyo says,

[t]he students were dead against that because they felt that it was part of a general plan to ghettoize black education. ... UNISA was regarded as quite a prestigious university so to have a degree from UNISA not from these other colleges ... it was regarded as prestigious to have behind your name B.A. UNISA rather than B.A. Bush College [laughs].<sup>166</sup>

Thus, while the government celebrated what was viewed as the crowning achievement of the separate university system, the students, once again, protested. Makhenkesi Stofile, says,

[w]e boycotted the celebrations, autonomous celebrations. I don't know how many cattle were slaughtered, but we just stayed away. It was a feasting time for the peasants. They came from Ntselemanzi, Gaumashe and all those villages. The workers and non-workers, they just came and consumed the meat and whatever was there. We bought all the bread from town and we shared our own bread and we didn't participate. But the celebrations went ahead without us.<sup>167</sup>

The few students that participated in the festivities did so because the administration had timed them to coincide with graduation. Thus, students who turned out for graduation seemed to be in support of the celebrations. Yet Satyo says that even students who attended graduation were not in support of autonomy, and symbolically protested against the short-changing of their education by refusing to wear the graduation gowns of the autonomous Fort Hare. "Students went specifically to buy UNISA gowns and went to the graduation [laughs]," he says.<sup>168</sup>

The independence celebrations provided the authorities at Fort Hare and the government with the opportunity to take stock of the decade old separate university system. They liked what they saw. De Wet wrote, "[t]he new status actually crowns the success of the ten-year period since the transfer of Fort Hare to the Department of

<sup>165</sup> Moerane, interview by author.

<sup>166</sup> Satyo, interview by author.

Bantu Education.” He pointed to the increased enrollment of African students throughout the country as evidence that the system of separate universities was working. In 1959 when Fort Hare took in students of all the population groups, the total enrollment was 489. By 15 May 1970, Fort Hare was home to 615 students and combined enrollment at the five bush colleges totaled 4,668. To De Wet, the ten-fold increase in student numbers over ten years was “made possible by the founding of these [separate] universities.” He estimated that autonomy would allow Fort Hare to increase its student numbers to 1,500-2,000 by 1975.<sup>169</sup>



Yet the system was working in terms of numerical expansion only. While it is a fact that the creation of separate universities made university education available to more black students, Beale writes that the policy of university apartheid had a contradictory effect. It increased the access of black students to university education, but simultaneously lowered the quality of the education provided.<sup>170</sup> Karis and Gerhart write, “[t]he government was methodically but often clumsily pursuing its strategy for breeding a compliant future leadership class, programmed to play a cooperative role in maintaining social order.”<sup>171</sup> Draconian administrations consistently quarreled with the students. Lecturers were hired who sometimes could not speak English. Uncritical styles of rote instruction were introduced. Departments were reconfigured in alignment with government philosophy. Yet while their policy sought to quell political opposition by promoting ethnic identification, the nation’s bush colleges erupted in the 1970s with a new brand of nationalism, the ideology of Black Consciousness. By the early 1970s it became apparent that university

<sup>167</sup> Stofile, interview by author.

<sup>168</sup> Satyo, interview by author.

<sup>169</sup> De Wet. *Fort Hare Autonomy*, 36.

<sup>170</sup> Beale, “*Apartheid and University Education*, 4.

segregation was producing “hothouse conditions” for the growth of a new spirit of resistance.<sup>172</sup> “[The] approach was scientific, but the chemistry went badly wrong.”<sup>173</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

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<sup>171</sup> Karis and Gerhart, eds., *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 5, p. 90.

<sup>172</sup> op. cit. 90.

<sup>173</sup> op. cit. 90.

## 6

### Countering Separate Universities: Fort Hare and the South African Students' Organisation

*I want to kill SASO.*

*-Johannes Marthinus De Wet, Fort Hare Rector<sup>1</sup>*

#### A Widening of Scale: The Traditional Fort Hare Fades Away

The onset of university apartheid, the arrival of De Wet and the granting of autonomy stamped out any lingering remnants of the traditional Fort Hare. Barney Pityana makes frequent mention of this “traditional” or “historic” Fort Hare.<sup>2</sup> This was the Fort Hare that from the 1930s produced a spirit of fraternity and resistance among its students that reached a crescendo with the protests against the introduction of university apartheid. By 1973, the Fort Hare that Pityana speaks of, that of the Mkhomo, Mlaloses and Govenders, was a relic of the past. Indeed, as the protest spirit died in the introduction of university apartheid down, the third-rate system of black higher education was expanding, and Fort Hare, thrust into this environment, no longer occupied the unique place in the South African landscape that it had in earlier years. The centre of gravity had shifted and though political activity at Fort Hare lived on, the situation at the university more closely reflected that of the rest of the country.



University of Fort Hare  
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Events at Fort Hare in the late 1960s and early 1970s take on greater meaning when viewed in the context of this fading Fort Hare tradition. Protest at the university preceding and immediately after the takeover was aimed at preserving Fort Hare's distinctive culture of resistance. It failed. Yet student political activity at Fort Hare did not stop after 1960. In the new situation, opposition to government policy continued, but as part of a wider movement.

<sup>1</sup> Karis and Gerhart, eds., *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 5, p. 531.

<sup>2</sup> Pityana, interview by author.

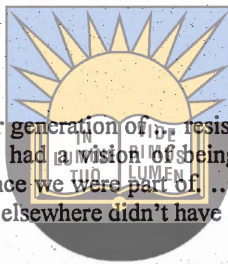


themselves confronted not just with one institution in revolt, but many. Students at the bush colleges, previously unconnected with one another, began to establish mutual contact.<sup>5</sup>

While Fort Hare's importance declined in the overall picture, SASO ushered in a new, broader phase of resistance that reached beyond the Alice campus.

Yet even though its students were now part of a broader movement, memories of Fort Hare's uniqueness continued to reverberate. A residual difference between Fort Hare in the 1970s and institutions such as the universities of the North and Zululand did exist, to a certain extent. Pityana says,

[w]e were always conscious during our generation of the resisting the Fort Hare that was being constructed by Bantu education. We had a vision of being part of the historic Fort Hare. Really that is what defined the resistance we were part of. ... The issues were about trying to preserve a tradition. Other institutions elsewhere didn't have a tradition to preserve.<sup>6</sup>



Thenjiwe Mtintso says that the continuum of resistance separated Fort Hare from the other bush colleges:

University of Fort Hare  
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Here is an institution that had been there all along. It produced the Mandelas, the Sobukwes; it had a rich history. ... It was not like these others. ... And even when you get admitted to Fort Hare, there is this pride that you are admitted at Fort Hare, senior to all other institutions. ... We were following the generation of the Pityanas and when they got in they were following another generation of the Mbekis. So you see generation after generation, you would get in there and say, here are the role models. At Turfloop, [O.R.] Tiro was the role model and ... prior to that, it has no history. But Fort Hare had this history. And when I got there I knew that Barney [Pityana] had been on strike. And you knew the kind of leadership that had been at Fort Hare before.

Selby Baqwa agrees that even if it was no longer unique, Fort Harians still drew inspiration from the university's past. Its history stood out from that of the other bush colleges:

It [Fort Hare] was still a bush college but it was better. The Zululands and the Turfloops were a much more transparent creation of the system. ... [They were] a sham. I don't know what you call it, a superiority complex, even when it [Fort Hare] became a bush college, you still felt, if you've been to the Fort, you've been to the place. Even if the prestige or aura is more historical than real.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Buthelezi "The Emergence of Black Consciousness," 114.

<sup>6</sup> Pityana, interview by author.

<sup>7</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

Initially, the Fort Hare authorities, taking the government's cue, did not view SASO as an outgrowth of the Fort Hare tradition of protest. In the early days of SASO, the government heaped praise on the organisation, believing it signified that black students had finally acquiesced in separate institutions. Selby Baqwa says, "because it was a black students' organisation, the system was happy. They said yes, now the students have realised that they have to form their own organisations. Because NUSAS was a pain in the side of the system. It had become a nuisance."<sup>8</sup> Barney Pityana says, "[w]e were quoted in Fort Hare by National Party politicians as the new thing around that is going to put the liberals in their place."<sup>9</sup> *Die Burger* applauded the "new spirit" that had "taken root among some non-whites in South Africa," noting that its expression was "an African's" "desire to determine their future themselves as people in their own right... fits in well with the objectives of our relations policy."<sup>10</sup> Jeff Baqwa remembers the state-run South African Broadcasting Corporation producing a program called *Current Affairs* that outlined the government's opinion of the newly-formed SASO:

After the launch of SASO, they came out in full, almost obsequious praise of black students that had realised the truth of apartheid. They have chosen now to go the other way and SABC gave us full blessing, encouragement and very high confidence about intellectual advancement.<sup>11</sup>

Believing that SASO showed that the separate university system was working, the government initially provided both physical and psychic space for the organisation to develop. SASO leaders took advantage of this early acceptance to build up an organisational base on the bush college campuses. Selby Baqwa says that the initial label of legitimacy granted to the organisation by the authorities allowed for the formation of SASO branches at

<sup>8</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

<sup>9</sup> Pityana, interview by author.

<sup>10</sup> Gerhart, *Black Power*, 269.

<sup>11</sup> Jeff Baqwa, interview by author.

the five bush colleges. At Fort Hare, the administration even sponsored the local SASO branch, giving it the same financial support afforded to other campus societies. Following the government's lead, De Wet initially allowed SASO representatives to canvas on campus and hold open political meetings. However, as Selby Baqwa says, the official line on SASO reversed rather quickly: "And sooner than later though, they realised this is a Frankenstein monster. When they started making speeches about the system and what these universities themselves were standing for, then the honeymoon ended."<sup>12</sup>

### A Divided Student Body

SASO membership nationwide increased rapidly in 1970 and 1971. Since there was no SRC at Fort Hare, affiliation to the organisation was authorised by a majority decision at a meeting of the student body and by 1971, a branch was operating on campus. Although SASO did gain recognition from the students at Fort Hare, it was not without a fight. Siphon Buthelezi writes, "[t]here was an overriding fear amongst some students, especially those who had been associated with NUSAS, that any form of division in student rank along 'racial lines' amounted to tacit conformity to the policy of apartheid."<sup>13</sup> Pityana says that this reluctance to embrace SASO was particularly evident at Fort Hare. "Fort Hare had a strong liberal tradition, which was a problem. I myself was part of that liberal tradition. The idea of being part of an exclusive organisation was very hard for the students in my time to understand." Pityana also suggests that Fort Hare students' hesitancy to join SASO was related to the fact that the administration encouraged the group. He says, "I think predominant in the thinking at Fort Hare was that anything the administration didn't like, there must be something good about it."<sup>14</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
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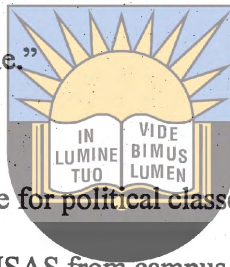
<sup>12</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

<sup>13</sup> Buthelezi, "The Emergence of Black Consciousness," 115.

<sup>14</sup> Pityana, interview by author.



Though Pityana eventually became president of SASO, he first had to reconcile identification with SASO with his past. Pityana's growth in the liberal tradition began in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth, an ANC stronghold. Though neither of his parents was politically active, Pityana says that growing up in New Brighton, he could not avoid ANC politics. At the age of fifteen, he was sent to Lovedale, where his involvement with the ANC increased. "When you go to Lovedale, you just have to be immersed in it," he says. "We were very close to what was happening at Fort Hare. And the people at Fort Hare were very much involved in the politics of Lovedale."



Pityana recalls going to Fort Hare for political classes in the early 1960s at a time when the debate over the banning of NUSAS from campus was taking place. At the time, NUSAS carried a lot of weight on the Fort Hare campus because it was an outspoken voice against the separate university system. He suggests that the students aspired to being part of NUSAS partly because it was banned on campus. "The idea, the excitement, the adventure, the defiance, of really insisting on being part of that which the administration didn't want, conjured up the ideas that there must be something right and good about it."<sup>15</sup>

Having grown up around Lovedale and Fort Hare, Pityana found it difficult to accept the validity of an exclusively black organisation. "The appeal to black was very difficult to understand at the beginning," he says. Indeed, at the 1968 University Christian Movement conference in Stutterheim, where black students walked out of a multi-racial student organisation for the first time and formed a black caucus, it was Pityana who was "probably the only one who spoke against it." He says that at the time, he had good relations with

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<sup>15</sup> op. cit.

NUSAS and continued to participate in the organisation's activities. Late in 1968 Steve Biko invited Pityana to a meeting of black students in Marianhill, Natal. Pityana says, "I didn't go. I think I didn't go because I wasn't convinced that it was the right way forward."<sup>16</sup>

That same year, Pityana was expelled from Fort Hare. He slowly began to realise that what was needed "was a qualitative and radical way of mobilising students." Despite his concerns over the perceived racial structure of SASO, Pityana "began to see that through SASO we were really going to be able to mobilise students in a way that we'd not been able to do before." He was able to come to terms with the idea that joining SASO did not mean leaving his ideological homes behind. The two were not mutually exclusive. He says,

I was the one who articulated the idea that we haven't broken from liberals, but we have actually formed a home for black students. In SASO, we hadn't abandoned our political homes and SASO by its nature wasn't a substitute for the liberation organisations, but that SASO was an expression of a desire for black students to come together, to make a difference politically in their country at a time when nothing else was really taking place.<sup>17</sup>

In 1970, following a long, questioning inward journey, Pityana attended his first SASO meeting, where he was elected president.



Pityana's difficulties in becoming a SASO supporter were mirrored in the experiences of numerous other students at the time. They did not always result in a commitment to SASO. Makhenkesi Stofile was one of those who had grown up in the liberal tradition, born and bred in the ANC. He was born in Adelaide in 1944, the oldest of seven sons born to politically active parents. His mother was a domestic servant and his father had various jobs, including one on a chicken farm. Stofile's family moved to Port Elizabeth in 1952, in time for him to witness the events surrounding the Defiance Campaign. "When we got to PE in 1952 my parents were already involved full time as activists of the ANC. We went with them

<sup>16</sup> op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> op. cit.

virtually every Saturday and Sunday to the meetings at the old T.C. White Hall.” Stofile remembers his father enlisting as a volunteer in the Defiance Campaign:

When people got arrested ... we had to be involved in one way or another. As youngsters, the ANC had these meal coupon arrangements at the time for people who were in detention. And so we had to go and get the coupons and go and get their bread, soup and milk from the shop ... and distribute it amongst their families.

Politics became intertwined in Stofile’s everyday existence. “We got used to being sent around with messages, letters or pamphlets. We got used to that.”<sup>18</sup>

The anti-Bantu Education campaign also influenced Stofile a great deal. “I was a pupil at primary school at the time,” he says. “It was nice, the singing, the anti-Bantu Education songs and saying we were not going to school on the first of April, the song went. We are not going to school on the first of April.” In 1955, Stofile’s mother participated in the Women’s Pass Campaign. “We were old enough to have been with our mothers when they protested, when they marched,” he says. “We were introduced to politics by our parents. They are responsible.”<sup>19</sup>

In 1960 Stofile joined the African Students’ Association (ASA), which was formed after the banning of the ANC. His political activity continued in this forum when he finished Standard Six and started working on a farm. “It had become a way of life, being part of a political program,” he says. After working for two years, Stofile enrolled at Newell High School, where he studied up to matriculation. While at Newell, he participated in ANC discussion groups led by Harry Njomba. “He took us to the coast, Deal Party coast.”<sup>20</sup> We

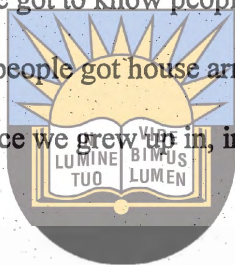
<sup>18</sup> Stofile, interview by author.

<sup>19</sup> op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> Deal Party coast is located on the Indian Ocean coast right next to New Brighton in Port Elizabeth. The strange name comes from the group of 1820 settlers who came from Deal, in England.

walked there and had picnics and had political discussions. We were able to learn about the history of our country and they took us through the paces of political thought.”<sup>21</sup>

Following his Newell High School experience, Stofile went back to work, first as a hospital porter and then in various positions at a factory. In 1968, he arrived at Fort Hare, fully schooled in the ANC tradition. It had become increasingly clear to Stofile that he would dedicate himself to fighting for freedom. “Either you are going to fight for it or you just have to remain in that problem,” he says. “We got to know people who got arrested, people got killed, people got detained for nothing, people got house arrested and people got beaten up for nothing. ... So that was the experience we grew up in, in song, in life, in death sometimes.”<sup>22</sup>



## University of Fort Hare

Having been schooled in the nonracial tradition of the ANC, it was hard for Stofile to

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accept the seemingly racial foundation of SASO:

It was a very serious challenge to those of us who came through the old tradition of the African Students' Association. We could not really buy this black consciousness thing. It sounded very funny. In fact, it sounded like negative, philosophies of reverse racism. ... We thought it was a crazy, narrow, nationalistic organisation.

The ASA had a small following at Fort Hare. Stofile says, “there was a unit, we had a discussion group on campus already. Those who sat in [hostel] rooms to discuss the politics of the ANC, we could never join SASO. We never joined it until we left Fort Hare.” Yet Black Consciousness spread in spite of the criticism it received from the likes of Stofile. He says, “[o]h, it was the in thing. It was the in thing. Everybody, literally, supported SASO. We were a small minority, but a vocal minority. We spoke in each and every mass meeting

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<sup>21</sup> op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> op. cit.

and we said we're not going to join SASO because South Africa is not just for black people."<sup>23</sup>

Pityana says that the differences in philosophy amongst the students can be attributed to a north-south divide that developed, with students from the north generally supporting SASO and those from the south, having grown up in the liberal tradition, opposing it. "Those of us from the south were much closer to what we regarded as the traditional Fort Hare. And we sought to preserve it in a way that the people from the north didn't understand," he says.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, most of the SASO supporters were products of the northern locations and townships who arrived at Fort Hare mostly as a result of their own labor in factories and even in mines.<sup>25</sup> Called amaKaringes, or rebels, at Fort Hare, these were often the children of domestic workers and garden workers. The SASO detractors, called abaThembus, were from Eastern Cape families and were primarily the children of teachers, principals and nurses. Thenjiwe Mtintso says that the amaKaringes felt the abaThembus were reactionary and conversely the abaThembus felt the amaKaringes were irresponsible and would go on strike at the slightest provocation.<sup>26</sup>

Though they never understood the ideological divide amongst the students, the government recognised its presence and tried to capitalise on it. Unrest in the SASO era was largely, and falsely, attributed to the divided student body. The authorities frequently pointed to "sharp divisions amongst students" and an "urban/homeland" rift, without understanding that the differences were well thought out and of an ideological nature.<sup>27</sup> The authorities presented the students as hopelessly divided and attributed the absence of an SRC to the fact

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<sup>23</sup> op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> Pityana, interview by author.

<sup>25</sup> Buthelezi, "The Emergence of Black Consciousness," 114.

<sup>26</sup> Mtintso, interview by author.

that they could not get together to elect one. Senate minutes consistently refer to a cleavage in the student body. However, the more stark division was between the students and the authorities. By placing the emphasis on the students' differences, the authorities sought to remove themselves from the equation whenever the university erupted in protest. Events at the university prove that the student body could come together, across ideological lines, when provoked by the authorities. As had been the case in the pre-SASO days, the primary enemy remained the second rate system of separate universities.

### **SASO Takes Control**

Having established a foothold at most of the black universities, teacher training colleges and seminaries, SASO launched an aggressive recruitment campaign at the beginning of the 1972 academic year. Some 4,000 SASO brochures and membership cards bearing the organisation's fist symbol were distributed to incoming students in February 1972.<sup>28</sup> This year witnessed escalating battles between the students and the administration. At the root of the disturbances was the government's system of separate universities. With a new, militant voice to articulate their grievances, student protest led by SASO swept across the campus and by the end of a tumultuous year it was estimated that over 60 percent of Fort Hare students belonged to the organisation.<sup>29</sup>

The trouble at Fort Hare in 1972 dated back to the end of 1971, and once again, it was the SRC issue that sparked the unrest. The Joint Hostel Committee, consisting of representatives from the various hostels, had assumed some of the roles of the non-existent SRC. When the Committee approached De Wet on behalf of the student body to discuss a list of grievances, he said that the matters had nothing to do with hostel affairs and that the

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<sup>27</sup> See for example, Report of Inquiry into Sit-In Protest at Fort Hare, 1972, Fort Hare Papers, 2.

group had no right to bring these issues before him. De Wet wrote, “[t]he Joint Hostel Committee was really an ad hoc committee without a constitution, and its terms of reference were therefore limited to hostel matters of general interest to all the hostels and to the ‘approved fields’ agreed to by the Rector.”<sup>30</sup> Feeling they had “no real function to serve” the Joint Hostel Committee dissolved itself immediately.<sup>31</sup>

In April 1972, Vincent Gobodo (’69-’72) sought to revive the spirit behind the Joint Hostel Committee. He obtained permission from De Wet to hold a meeting to elect representatives to various campus committees. De Wet, anxious to get the body running again, said that he was mistakenly under the impression that Gobodo represented a revitalised Joint Hostel Committee. Following the Gobodo-led mass meeting, the students charged De Wet with trying to break the student body by a divide and rule strategy. They alleged that De Wet granted permission to Gobodo to hold the meeting in an attempt to play one group of students against the other. When De Wet refused to address a mass meeting desired by both the amaKaringes and the abaThembus, hostility mounted against him.<sup>32</sup> The details surrounding this conflict over representation are murky. However it is clear that the disagreement over the Joint Hostel Committee served as a launching pad for further action.

Around the same time that Fort Hare students were in turmoil over the position of the Joint Hostel Committee, events elsewhere in the country thrust the students into a broader context of activism. Conflict both within the student body and between the students and De Wet would have been enough to precipitate campus disturbances without any outside forces.

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<sup>28</sup> Karis and Gerhart, eds., *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 5, p. 125.

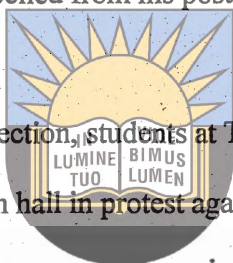
<sup>29</sup> Evidence before Commission of Enquiry on Student Unrest, Student Unrest File, Fort Hare Papers, 43.

<sup>30</sup> Notice to Students With Regards to the Position of the Joint House Committee. 21 April 1972, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>31</sup> op. cit.

<sup>32</sup> Report of Inquiry into Sit-in Protest at Fort Hare, May 1972, Fort Hare Papers.

But on 29 April 1972, Onkgopotse Ramothibi Abraham Tiro, President of the Students' Representative Council at the University of the North at Turfloop, delivered a speech at the school's graduation ceremony that made a remarkable impact. He attacked the system of separate universities and warned the authorities that times were changing. He said, "[t]he magic of human achievement gives irrefutable proof that as soon as nationalism is awakened among the intelligentsia it becomes the vanguard in the struggle against alien rule."<sup>33</sup> Tiro's speech shocked the university authorities, stepping "far over the boundaries of official tolerance."<sup>34</sup> Four days later, he was expelled from his post-graduate diploma course.



On 4 May, the day after Tiro's ejection, students at Turfloop embarked on a lecture boycott and sit-in at the university's main hall in protest against the expulsion. The Rector, Mr. J.L. Boschhoff, called the police onto campus. The university was closed down and all 1,146 students were expelled.<sup>35</sup> An emergency SASO meeting, attended by forty delegates from Fort Hare and other schools around the country, was held in Alice at the Federal Theological Seminary on 13 May to assess the Turfloop situation. Jeff Baqwa, who was at the meeting, says, "After debating the importance of solidarity with Turfloop, Keith Mokoape ... moved the motion that everyone should go on strike and we should close up."<sup>36</sup> The delegates issued the Alice Declaration, calling for "all black students [to] force the Institutions/Universities to close down by boycotting lectures."<sup>37</sup>

There were thus two forces at play. The Fort Hare students had their own problems in Alice. The Gobodo incident illustrates both the divisions within the student body and the rift between the students and the administration. But more importantly, there was the national

<sup>33</sup> Karis and Gerhart, eds., *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 5, p. 125.

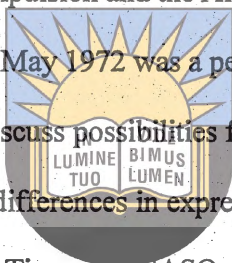
<sup>34</sup> *op. cit.*, 125.

<sup>35</sup> *op. cit.*, 125.

<sup>36</sup> Jeff Baqwa, interview by author.

issue, in the form of SASO's struggle against the bush colleges vociferously articulated in the wake of the Tiro expulsion. Fort Hare was now operating in the midst of a national revolutionary upsurge. The days of provincial squabbles due to stringent college regulation or the poor quality of food were over. The inquiry into the unrest at Fort Hare in 1972 concluded that, at this time, mid-May, 1972, a strike was inevitable. The commission wrote, "it was but a step to organise, and stage, a protest at Fort Hare."<sup>38</sup>

Indeed, in the wake of the Tiro expulsion and the Alice Declaration, it was clear that Fort Hare students were going to strike. May 1972 was a period of intense activity at Fort Hare, with frequent meetings called to discuss possibilities for action. It appears that the student body was able to put aside their differences in expressing their support for the students of Turfloop despite the fact that Tiro was a SASO supporter. Stofile says,



### University of Fort Hare

*Together in Excellence*

I was one of the most vociferous speakers in those mass meetings. So we supported that entirely. Tiro had been to Fort Hare the previous year in the inter-varsity. And so it was ridiculous to have him chopped down like that. We were very sentimental and angry about what had happened to him. We could not find any justification for what Boschhoff and his council had done. And we supported that 100 percent.<sup>39</sup>

Ultimately, a petition was drawn up, unanimously accepted by the entire student body, outlining grievances with university life. These included complaints against the Rector, lecturers, the administration of the university, police harassment on campus, facilities, sexual segregation in the dining halls and student fees. The students were particularly angry about the growing police presence. When SASO leader Strini Moodley came to speak on campus, a man who said, "I am from the Special Branch and I demand your name and

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<sup>37</sup> De Wet letter to SASO Secretary, 7 November 1972, SASO File, Fort Hare Papers.

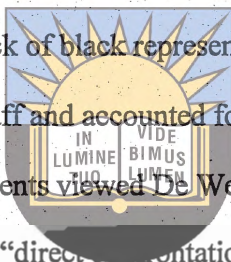
<sup>38</sup> Report of Inquiry into Sit-in Protest at Fort Hare, May 1972, Fort Hare Papers, 6.

<sup>39</sup> Stofile, interview by author.

address” confronted him.<sup>40</sup> Before the Commission of Enquiry into the unrest De Wet admitted that he was in communication with the Special Branch:

A White Special Branch man ... he sometimes comes here to get information from the administration and I think they [the students] have noticed that. ... So I asked Mr.- not to come again. If he wants something, phone us and we can let him have the information.<sup>41</sup>

In the petition, the students also expressed outrage against the encroachment of Afrikaans at the university, charging, “It is distressing to note that Fort Hare is employing more and more Afrikaners into its lecturing and administration staff as if to employ them as watchdogs of the government policy to keep Fort Hare an exclusively Afrikaner institute, under disguise.” They bemoaned the lack of black representation on staff, noting that blacks comprised only 13% of the academic staff and accounted for only one of the thirty university professors.<sup>42</sup> Most importantly, the students viewed De Wet as a mouthpiece of Pretoria. The *Daily Dispatch* labeled the unrest a “direct confrontation between black students and white authority—the rector.”<sup>43</sup> The students’ resolution reads, “[t]he major problem ... seems to lie in the attitude and policy of the present government which—to the ordinary black student—dictates to more than guides the student; the method used is rather more dogmatic than persuasive, and instructive instead of consultative.”<sup>44</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

The students, still upset over De Wet’s refusing to address them during the Gobodo incident, demanded that he meet with them immediately to discuss their memorandum. The petition reads, “[w]e demand to be addressed by [the] Rector and failing in which course, or in the event of any dissatisfaction with the address, to boycott lectures until we have been satisfactorily redressed.”<sup>45</sup> De Wet refused to speak at a mass meeting, but agreed to meet

<sup>40</sup> Evidence Before the Commission of Enquiry into Unrest at Fort Hare,” Student Unrest File, Fort Hare Papers, 8.

<sup>41</sup> op. cit., 10. Mr. – in original.

<sup>42</sup> Memorandum of Student Grievances, 22 May 1972, Fort Hare Papers.

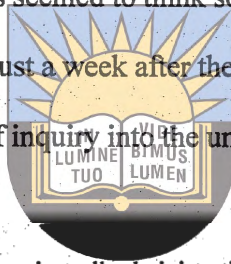
<sup>43</sup> Leslie Xinwa. “What’s behind the trouble at Fort Hare?” *Daily Dispatch*, 10 June 1972.

<sup>44</sup> Memorandum of Student Grievances, 22 May 1972, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>45</sup> op. cit.

with a student delegation. This did not satisfy the students, who were intent on striking. Angry over De Wet's failure to address them and eager to display sympathy with the students of Turfloop, the Fort Hare students began a sit-in strike on 22 May with approximately 800 of the 900 students boycotting lectures. Carrying placards that read "No redress, no lectures" and "Rector don't dictate, negotiate," more than 500 students participated in the sit-in.<sup>46</sup>

It is unclear whether it was the incident at Turfloop that impelled the students to draw up the list of grievances. The authorities seemed to think so, making repeated references to the fact that the student strike occurred just a week after the adoption of the Alice Declaration. The official commission of inquiry into the unrest, which was boycotted by the students, reported,



SASO mounted a vigorous campaign against all administration in Black Universities; events at Turfloop escalated to many spheres, and Fort Hare had to stand up and be counted, regardless as to whether there were grounds or not for her taking action. ... Something had to be done, even if it was taken action, to place Fort Hare on the side of those who sympathised with the recent events at Turfloop, and to line her up with the decisions of SASO.<sup>47</sup>

At the same time, SASO refused to take the blame for the strike. In August, the Fort Hare branch wrote to De Wet saying that his failure to address the student grievances caused the strike, noting "with regret that you, Mr. Rector, put the blame squarely on SASO's shoulders in the press statements you issued."<sup>48</sup> SASO president Themba Sono blamed the strike on the Fort Hare administration and said that the Turfloop unrest was just "the tip of an iceberg."<sup>49</sup> He said, "[the students] are bitter because they interpret the authorities' action against them to be paternalistic and they resent being treated like children."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> "Fort Hare Students Stand Firm on Sit-in," *Daily Dispatch*, 25 May 1972.

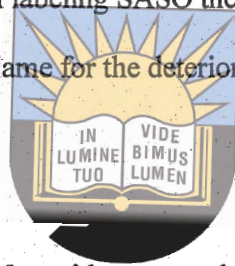
<sup>47</sup> Report of Inquiry into Sit-in Protest at Fort Hare, May 1972, Fort Hare Papers, 6.

<sup>48</sup> SASO Local Committee Letter to De Wet, 3 August 1972, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>49</sup> "Students stage sit-in, boycott at Fort Hare," *Daily Dispatch*, 23 May 1972.

<sup>50</sup> Op. cit.

In analysing the 1972 unrest, the administration focused on unimportant details, rather than big questions. Instead of looking at the root of the problems—namely the system of separate universities—the authorities chose to blame SASO. They repeatedly referred to SASO as a “pressure group,” and thus failed to legitimise the students’ grievances. A SASO statement noted that this view “insults the students’ originality and intelligence. The Rector at Fort Hare must look at the part he is playing ... and must question himself before making wild allegations at the organisation.”<sup>51</sup> In the world of the apartheid academic ideologues, the system was rarely, if ever, questioned. In labeling SASO the guilty party, the administration sought to absolve themselves from any blame for the deterioration of relations at Fort Hare.



### To Stay or Not to Stay

The strike drew to a close on 30 May with most students, except a group labeled “hard-core” by De Wet, returning to classes on the first of June. But the resumption of classes did not mean that students and the administration were to coexist peacefully. A group of 23 students, spearheaded by SASO leaders Jerry Modisane and Jeff Baqwa, had begun to strategise about reconstituting an SRC. Selby Baqwa says, “[s]ome of us thought that maybe an SRC should be there. ... During the SASO era, other student bodies were able to access funds by which they were entitled to by virtue of the fact that they had an SRC. They were able to organise better.”<sup>52</sup> Jeff Baqwa says that following the strategy sessions, the SASO leaders called for a mass meeting to present their SRC proposal to the student body. He says,

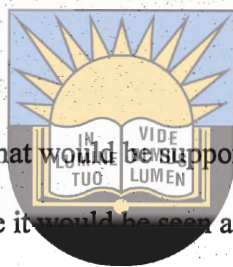
[e]ach one of us, the 23, had a specific area of focus in terms of what you would address in your speech. ... And when all the people had spoken, we knew we had the house. And Kelly [Sesane, '68-'71] and myself moved the motion. By that time it was easy. You could feel the electricity in the air. And when I finished speaking, they all stood up. It was very exciting times, actually, because you could feel the powers of change.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Ray ka Msengana, “Saso ‘not to blame’ for Fort Hare disturbances,” *Cape Times*, 9 August 1973.

<sup>52</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

<sup>53</sup> Jeff Baqwa, interview by author.

The motion was adopted with, according to Jeff Baqwa, “a standing ovation.”<sup>54</sup> The following morning, the resolution calling for the institution of an SRC was presented to De Wet. The Rector, who had in the past encouraged the students to form an SRC, said the students’ demand was not acceptable because the meeting had not been sanctioned. Baqwa writes, “[t]he administration of the University refused to accept the resolution and blocked its implementation ... [saying] ... the meeting had not been quorate.”<sup>55</sup> Though there is no documentation to prove the point, it is safe to assume that De Wet was afraid of a SASO-dominated SRC.



Selby Baqwa says, “[a]nything that would be supported by [Jerry] Modisane or Jeff [Baqwa] would be unacceptable because it would be seen as strategy. I knew it wouldn’t be accepted because it would be seen as a vehicle for bringing revolution.”<sup>56</sup> University documents make no mention of De Wet’s refusal to accede to the SRC resolution. Instead, the Commission of Enquiry into the unrest, made up of people appointed by and who participated in the apartheid government, stated, “[f]or the time being, and for a long time to come, the establishment of an SRC or anything purporting to be an SRC, must be written out, and consequently forgotten. There is no room for an SRC at Fort Hare and, for that matter, for anything resembling an SRC.”<sup>57</sup> The rapid and decisive about-face on the part of De Wet regarding the SRC was in large part due to the swift and powerful ascent of SASO to leadership amongst the students.

With their SRC proposal rejected, the students convened a meeting to discuss a way forward. On 7 June, the Fort Hare Students’ Manifesto was issued, revealing explicitly, for

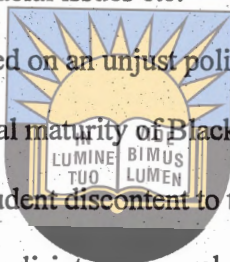
<sup>54</sup> Jeff Baqwa, letter to author, 12 April 1999.

<sup>55</sup> *op. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

<sup>57</sup> Report of Inquiry into Sit-in Protest at Fort Hare, May 1972, Fort Hare Papers, 9.

the first time, the root causes of the disturbances. The manifesto, a document originating with SASO, was the students' attempt to capitalise upon the May unrest. Whereas the focus was previously on apparently isolated incidents, this new document sought to place the students' grievances within a broad framework. Jeff Baqwa writes, "[The] campus conflict coincided with a national revolutionary upsurge."<sup>58</sup> The commission of inquiry wrote, "[t]his manifesto brings to the fore, for the first time in this impasse, the whole broad and controversial issue of Government policy regarding University education for the Black people, Bantu Education and the whole gamut of politics, labour, racial issues etc."<sup>59</sup> Charging that all black institutions of higher learning "are founded on an unjust political ideology of a White Racist Regime bent on annihilating all intellectual maturity of Black People in South Africa," the manifesto linked the widespread black student discontent to the system of separate universities.<sup>60</sup> In a clear reference to their disintegrating relationship with De Wet, particular mention was made of the "unchecked powers vested upon the Rectors of the Tribal Universities."<sup>61</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

The day after the Fort Hare Students' Manifesto was drafted, 42 students, including the entire SASO Local Committee, left the university voluntarily, refusing to give notice. Jerry Modisane, in an article in the SASO newsletter entitled *Why I Walked off Fort Hare in Protest*, analysed the causes of the 1972 unrest:

That the education given by the white-racists to blacks is of an inferior calibre and thus not very useful to the eradication of black suffering is axiomatic. The big question is: What does one do about it? In the past there was argument to the effect that we Blacks have no alternative but to use what we are given and make the best of it. I would like to submit that there are more than one alternative: the walk-off from these tribal institutions of so-called higher learning. ... At a tribal university one does not get real education. ... I therefore submit that we must have nothing to do with this system. In fact we must pull out of these tribal universities and by doing so force the white racist politicians and educationists to change this system. ... It is not so much us black people who need these tribal institutions. ... It is actually

<sup>58</sup> Jeff Baqwa, letter to author.

<sup>59</sup> op. cit., 8.

<sup>60</sup> Fort Hare Students' Manifesto, Fort Hare Papers.

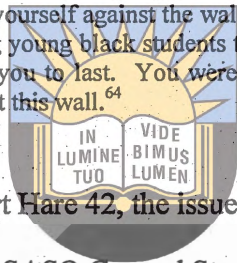
<sup>61</sup> op. cit.

the oppressor who needs them because they are ... their best weapon to keep us oppressed. ... It is because I yearn for real black education that I reject tribal education.<sup>62</sup>

Selby Baqwa decided to stay at Fort Hare even though his brother Jeff walked out.

“The realisation was that if you walk out of Fort Hare, Fort Hare is going to carry on like nothing happened.”<sup>63</sup> He comments on why his brother walked out:

We went there because we realised together with our parents that we needed an education, whether it's Bantu education and so on. Perhaps you'll go out and be a lawyer or be a teacher. If only they made it comfortable in terms of talking to you and trying to pretend at least to address your concerns, maybe trying to improve your food. I tell you, that regime would have lived longer. It's not as if you were anti-education. We saw these wrong things, but they actually forced you, for instance, Jeff and company walking out, because there was this impasse. Always, you were knocking yourself against the wall. And then it actually became a precarious thing for any self-respecting young black students to go to any of these institutions. Because it was totally impossible for you to last. You were not going to last. Sooner than later you were going to come up against this wall.<sup>64</sup>



Following the walkout of the Fort Hare 42, the issue of boycotting the bush colleges altogether was seriously debated. At the SASO General Student Council Meeting in July, Mokoape proposed a motion that SASO should withdraw from the campuses and urge all black students not to attend Bantu Education institutions. Lindy Wilson writes that Mokoape felt “the stage was set for confrontation, and being part of these institutions compromised that.” Wilson says that Biko interjected with four main questions: “As SASO *were* they, in fact operating within government institutions? Was there much to be achieved by students if they were not registered with universities? Would SASO be able to sustain political activity with a large number of students outside the campuses? What would happen to the remainder of students still at these universities?”<sup>65</sup> Biko saw SASO’s presence at the universities as being more powerful than a potential boycott. Wilson writes, “he had a vision of the potential impotence of students who, if they were no longer *students* in the struggle, would

<sup>62</sup> Jerry Modisane. *Why I Walked off Fort Hare in Protest*. Photocopy of May/June SASO newsletter, 1972, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>63</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

<sup>64</sup> op. cit.

cease to have a base from which to operate.”<sup>66</sup> Shutting down the bush colleges was an attractive rallying cry, but in the end, Biko’s even-handedness won out. With the absence of viable alternatives, organising at the bush colleges, not shutting them down, was more realistic.<sup>67</sup>

### Turning Violent in ’73

Following the unrest in June 1972, those that remained at Fort Hare approached De Wet, complaining that they could not concentrate on their studies. They requested a cooling down period. The Rector agreed to close the university a week early, moving forward the June vacation.<sup>68</sup> Yet it was going to take more than an early holiday to cool down the campus. While the remainder of 1972 went off smoothly as compared to the first half of the year, trouble began again early in 1973. By the end of the year, following more than six months of intermittent strikes, relations between the students and administration had deteriorated so dramatically that there was little hope for a resolution.

Following the 1972 sit-in strike, relations between SASO and De Wet grew increasingly strained. The Rector was hurt by what he perceived as SASO’s rejection of Fort Hare. In a letter to the SASO Secretary late in 1972 he wrote, “[w]hile SASO could have done wonderful work at University level on the black campuses, in my opinion they failed miserably. Its present leaders have far overstepped the limits of tolerance.” Pointing to the Alice Declaration and the article by Jerry Modisane in the SASO newsletter, De Wet

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<sup>65</sup> Lindy Wilson, “Steve Biko,” in N. Barney Pitso, Mamphela Ramphele, Malusi Mpumlwana and Lindy Wilson, eds., *Bounds of Possibility: The Legacy of Steve Biko & Black Consciousness* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991), 32.

<sup>66</sup> *op. cit.*, 33.

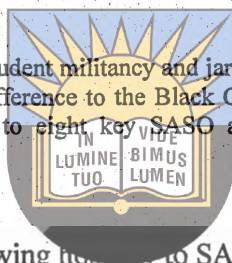
<sup>67</sup> Karis and Gerhart, eds., *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 5, p. 125.

<sup>68</sup> Summary of Important Events, 1972, Fort Hare Papers.

concluded, “[c]learly some of your organisation’s leaders are enemies of Fort Hare.”<sup>69</sup>

Stating that he refused to subsidise Fort Hare’s enemies, De Wet withdrew the financial support he had previously provided to SASO.<sup>70</sup> By August, he was so outraged at SASO that he forbade people expelled from other university colleges from entering the Fort Hare campus.<sup>71</sup> The SASO Local Committee report of July 1973 states that De Wet was trying to “cripple” the organisation and that he was “generally keeping a Hawk’s eye over the activities of SASO LOCAL and trying to intimidate [us].”<sup>72</sup> By 1973, the government started to crack down on SASO as well:

The State, alarmed by the growth of student militancy and jarred by the sudden labor unrest in early 1973, abandoned its earlier indifference to the Black Consciousness Movement, and in March, 1973 issued banning orders to eight key SASO and Black Community Program leaders.<sup>73</sup>



The first sign that De Wet’s growing hostility to SASO would affect life at Fort Hare came in March 1973, when students were charged with holding an illegal meeting. Over 500 students attended the gathering at the sports field, called to discuss the banning of SASO leaders. Baqwa and fellow SASO representative Pumsile Majeke were charged with holding an illegal meeting on Fort Hare grounds and kept in custody for about two weeks. A note in Majeke’s student file reads, “[t]he charge is one of breach of regulation 8 in that at about 1400 hours on Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1973, you held a meeting on the Fort Hare campus without previously obtaining permission therefor.”<sup>74</sup> Baqwa says, “[w]hat would happen immediately was there was also a disciplinary hearing that was instituted by the university and we were found guilty of having broken university rules by holding this meeting.”<sup>75</sup> The SASO report on the proceedings states, “They subsequently appeared before the D.C. where the hearing

<sup>69</sup> De Wet letter to SASO Secretary, 7 November 1972, SASO File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>70</sup> De Wet letter to Selby Baqwa, 21 September 1972, SASO File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>71</sup> De Wet letter to Selby Baqwa, 29 August 1972, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>72</sup> Karis and Gerhart, eds., *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 5, 530.

<sup>73</sup> *op. cit.*, 120.

<sup>74</sup> Pumsile Majeke, Student File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>75</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

was bulldozed, and in a matter of some 40 minutes, the defenceless were found guilty of 'resisting and undermining authority.'"<sup>76</sup> Baqwa and Majeke were each given a one-year suspended sentence.

The government's growing anti-SASO sentiment continued to affect events at Fort Hare throughout 1973. Though the year was full of many of the same clashes between students and administration that had occurred in past years, a new element of violence was introduced into the situation by the authorities. A special police branch in Alice, specifically set up to deal with Fort Hare, was particularly active in 1973.<sup>77</sup> The disturbances began with a boycott of lectures in protest against the Hogsback rule, named after the road leading to the Hogsback Mountains that marked the boundary between male and female residences. Students were not allowed to cross from their side of the gender-defined barrier. In 1972, Vuyiso Qunta was caught in his Beta Hall room with a woman student. He was ordered to pay a fine of R20 and placed on probation.<sup>78</sup> The incident passed without much protest by the students. However, as Selby Baqwa says, the unrest of 1973 was a continuation of 1972 and, increasingly dissatisfied with the administration's refusal to negotiate with them, a similar case set off a battle between the students and the administration in 1973.<sup>79</sup>

The actions of Skhumbuzo Magongo, a 22-year-old third-year BA student from Port Elizabeth, renewed tensions in the winter of 1973. Magongo pleaded guilty to bringing a woman to his room and was rusticated. Stofile says, "[a]nd of course the students said no, nonsense, this Hogsback rule again. This thing is discriminatory." With relations between students and administration having already deteriorated, the Hogsback incident set off a

<sup>76</sup> Karis and Gerhart, eds., *From Protest to Challenge*, Volume 5, p. 531.

<sup>77</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

<sup>78</sup> Vuyiso Qunta, Student File, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>79</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

“terrible strike” according to Stofile. “Although it was so small a trigger, just this thing of a boy/girl sleeping in the room thing, it became a huge thing and it linked up with similar upheavals in other parts of the country. ... In fact emotionally it was a follow up ... to 1972 ... of the Tiro Turfloop thing.”<sup>80</sup>

Upset over the suspension of their colleague, the students of Beda Hall sought the resignation of Mr. O.H.D. Makunga, the warden of the hostel, who had charged Magongo. They alleged that he persistently refused to cooperate with the students’ House Committee and that he engaged in “unnecessary nightly interference,” walking into hostel rooms for “no reason at all.”<sup>81</sup> A petition was drawn up and signed by 154 Beda Hall residents, demanding Makunga’s resignation by 31 July. When the warden refused to resign, about 200 students held a demonstration in front of his home, which adjoined the hostel.<sup>82</sup> Claiming that the students had ransacked Makunga’s home and threatened to hang him, De Wet called in the police, who arrived in nine vans and surrounded Beda Hall. Six students, deemed leaders of the protest, were arrested and the remaining students were rounded up and 19 were suspended.<sup>83</sup>

The Beda Hall suspensions set off a succession of troubles that never completely subsided during 1973. Describing the suspensions as “unfair and unwarranted” a three-hour mass meeting of approximately 750 students decided to stage a walkout if all their 159 rusticated colleagues were not reinstated.<sup>84</sup> Though the unrest began due to the students’ unhappiness with Makunga, as events unfolded, it became clear that their grievances had more to do with De Wet’s obstinacy and the general oppressive campus environment.

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<sup>80</sup> Stofile, interview by author.

<sup>81</sup> Tim Clarke and Marianne Gray, “Fort Hare Students Issue ‘Ultimatum.’” *Sunday Express*, 5 August 1973.

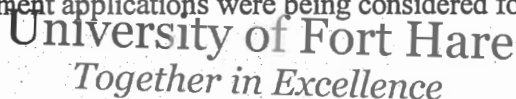
<sup>82</sup> “Fort Hare students plan to quit,” *Pretoria News*, 4 August 1973.

<sup>83</sup> op. cit., “Fort Hare boycott ends,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 August 1973.

Hamilton Quambela, the president of SASO said that the idea of a walkout stemmed from the students' "frustration at being unable to negotiate or make realistic contact with the rector."<sup>85</sup>

A student from Cape Town told the *Natal Mercury* that Fort Hare had "turned into a concentration camp. Police have access into our living quarters, we are treated like primary school children."<sup>86</sup>

De Wet rejected the students' demand to reinstate the Beda students. Having exhausted "all possible peaceful means" to meet the Rector to discuss the fate of their suspended classmates, the students embarked on a large-scale stay-away from classes in the middle of August.<sup>87</sup> As the students boycotted lectures a countrywide parent campaign called for the unconditional reinstatement of all students. By 20 August, 18 students had been readmitted and reinstatement applications were being considered for 34 others.<sup>88</sup>



Yet as students began to arrive back on campus, the situation remained threatening. Selby Baqwa says, "[t]hen we were ordered to come back, but there were conditions attached to us coming back. For instance ... you musn't hold meetings without the Rector's permission, you must not talk to the press." These were conditions the students could not agree to. Selby Baqwa says, "[w]hen we came back, the first thing we did was to call a meeting. Because we were saying, what kind of student body is it going to be, what are universities for, if you can't hold a meeting?"<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Clarke and Gray, "Fort Hare Students Issue 'Ultimatum.'"

<sup>85</sup> "Fort Hare students plan to quit." *Pretoria News*.

<sup>86</sup> "Students want all, or nothing," *Natal Mercury*, 1 September 1973.

<sup>87</sup> op. cit.

<sup>88</sup> "Students Return to Fort Hare," *Rand Daily Mail*, 21 August 1973.

<sup>89</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview with author.

The meeting, called to discuss a strategy for the reinstatement of the entire Beda Hall contingent, ended in violence. Selby Baqwa says, “[w]e had this meeting which went into the night. And before we knew what was happening, the dogs and policemen were on us. I’ve got marks here where I was bitten by dogs.”<sup>90</sup> Thenjiwe Mtintso remembers the meeting beginning in a peaceful manner:

We were at the football stadium. We were having this meeting. Students were sitting there, very disciplined. And we were addressing them about now, we’ve waited for two weeks. There’s no response. We’ve been on strike for two weeks. Should we now walk out of Fort Hare? ... And without any provocation we just saw the police coming. And we were quite young. And I think many students were very frightened. Very frightened. Just the sight of police and dogs. And they just let loose the dogs and the police with batons. Now those of us who were supposed to be in the leadership were forming this wall and we were saying to the students, if the police are going to arrest us, let them arrest us all. There was this slogan, Take Us All! Take Us All! So we were holding hands that they must take all of us. But of course students just broke loose and ran. And the more they ran, the more the dogs ran onto them.<sup>91</sup>

Five students were injured in the dog and baton charge and five were arrested.

Amongst the arrested were Majeke and Selby Baqwa, prompting student suspicion that the arrests were “in line with the administration’s hunt for alleged instigators.”<sup>92</sup> However, the repression only fueled the students’ fire. While De Wet took a hard line, prohibiting meetings, gatherings and processions on campus, and promising “drastic measures” for those breaking his rules, a meeting of about 100 students in Freedom Square on 26 August decided to continue with the boycott of lectures and stage a sit-in the next day in protest against the arrests and detention of Baqwa, Majeke and Zolisa Mdikane, a second-year B.Com. student. Though there was no police action at this meeting, word of the students’ resolution reached De Wet, prompting him to call for reinforcements the following day. Increasingly, throughout 1973, De Wet worked hand in hand with the police, bringing them onto campus when he smelled trouble. On 27 August he said that he was “obliged” to ask the police to

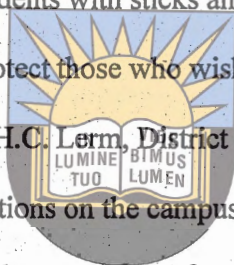
<sup>90</sup> op. cit.

<sup>91</sup> Mtintso, interview by author.

<sup>92</sup> “Police on Fort Hare Campus,” *The Evening Post*, 27 August 1973.

enter campus because there were “certain students planning to disrupt normal activities by boycotting lectures and preventing others from attending lectures.”<sup>93</sup>

The police prevented the sit-in on the 27<sup>th</sup>, arriving on campus with six vans at 7 a.m., but the situation had already spiraled out of control. The next day, the Rector issued an ultimatum to the students to return to lectures or leave the university. Mayhem broke out. Newspaper reports of the events of 28 August 1973 focus on a group of students who went into lecture rooms and beat up fellow students with sticks and bricks. The reports allege that the police were called onto campus to protect those who wished to return to classes only after the students started the violence. Major H.C. Lerm, District Commandant of Police at King William’s Town, who commanded operations on the campus, said, “You will not believe the extent of the intimidation. They have endangered the safety of those who continued to study. Agitators have attacked those attending lectures with kieries and pounded us with stones.”<sup>94</sup>



University of Fort Hare

Together in Excellence

In reality, the violence was likely to have been started by the police. Firstly, reporters were barred from campus because, according to Registrar H. van Huysteen, the police “were given a free hand and you know what can happen.”<sup>95</sup> Thus, the newspaper accounts are predominantly based on police reports. Secondly, student estimates put the number of students attending lectures at about forty, leaving little room for the mass intimidation that allegedly occurred.<sup>96</sup> It must also be remembered that just days before, the police unleashed their dogs at an illegal student meeting. Reverend R.G. Brown, the President of the Federal Theological Seminary suggests that the police provoked the unrest, stating that “a police baton charge had again been made ... on a group of students of the university who had

<sup>93</sup> “Police stop sit-in at Fort Hare,” *Eastern Province Herald*, 28 August 1973.

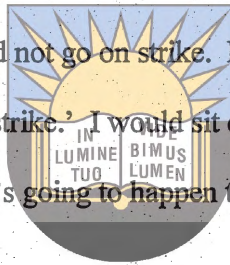
<sup>94</sup> “13 Students Held After Campus Riot,” *Eastern Province Herald*, 29 August 1973.

<sup>95</sup> “Violence Erupts At Fort Hare,” *Daily Dispatch*, 29 August 1973.

<sup>96</sup> “400 Sent Home From Fort Hare,” *Eastern Province Herald*, 29 August 1973.

gathered on the campus.”<sup>97</sup> Additionally, Thenjiwe Mtintso remembers that Fort Hare students were “not violent students” and that trouble started when De Wet brought in the police.<sup>98</sup>

Indeed, the newspaper accounts simplify the story to a point beyond recognition. The decision to strike was not, as the papers stated, taken by an angry mob of irrational students who “worked themselves into a frenzy.”<sup>99</sup> Mtintso describes the thought and debate that resulted in the determination to boycott lectures. She says, “[s]o there was this strong feeling amongst the abaThembus that we should not go on strike. Even amongst the amaKaringes, we were all not just saying ‘let’s go on strike.’ I would sit down and think about the consequences. I’m on a bursary. What’s going to happen to me and all those things.”<sup>100</sup>



## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

Though the question of who started the violence on 28 August can be debated, the details of the violence and its aftermath are quite clear. The police arrived on campus and promptly hurled teargas canisters at and baton-charged a group of over 300 students. The students dispersed, with many taking refuge at the nearby Federal Theological Seminary.<sup>101</sup> “Many of these students had felt it necessary to seek sanctuary at the Seminary from the harassment of the police and dogs,” said R.G. Brown.<sup>102</sup> By late in the afternoon, 500 students had been rounded up by the police and detained in the Great Hall. Shortly thereafter, the students who had fled to the Seminary returned and were ushered into the Great Hall.

<sup>97</sup> “Violence Erupts At Fort Hare.” *Daily Dispatch*.

<sup>98</sup> Mtintso, interview by author.

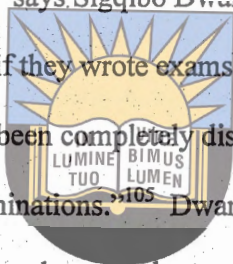
<sup>99</sup> “Students Riot At Fort Hare,” *The World*. 28 August 1973.

<sup>100</sup> Mtintso, interview by author.

<sup>101</sup> “Violence Brings Varsity To A Halt,” *Cape Argus*, 29 August 1973.

<sup>102</sup> Violence Erupts At Fort Hare,” *Daily Dispatch*.

All students who had been boycotting lectures were sent home as a result of the events of 28 August. A letter was handed to more than 400 students informing them that “In view of criminal acts of violence committed by a large number of students on August 28 ... it has been decided that all those who have been boycotting lectures must be removed from campus for the rest of the current year.”<sup>103</sup> Over 400 students were expelled for the remainder of the year and about 300 left campus voluntarily. As students were loaded onto buses and trains, it became obvious that the entire 1973 college year had disintegrated. “The strike continued until the end of the year,” says Siggibo Dwane, a chaplain to Anglican students at the time. “I don’t even know if they wrote exams.”<sup>104</sup> A senior staff member told the *Cape Argus*, “The academic year has been completely disrupted. ... The vast majority of students will not now be admitted to examinations.”<sup>105</sup> Dwane says the various strikes “went on for about six months. Students would go home and return and go home again. It went on.”<sup>106</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

Many students, mostly SASO leaders, left Fort Hare after 28 August. Selby Baqwa and Thenjiwe Mtintso both abandoned their studies to work full time for SASO. At a final meeting on campus, the students decided they should inform their communities throughout South Africa about the unrest at Fort Hare and raise support for the unconditional reinstatement of all suspended students. Mtintso says, “[After] we got expelled, we met. And we said one of the first things we need to do is go country wide and explain to parents what has happened.”<sup>107</sup>

<sup>103</sup> “Fort Hare Students Sent Home,” *Natal Witness*, 29 August 1973.

<sup>104</sup> op. cit.

<sup>105</sup> “Violence Brings Varsity To A Halt,” *Cape Argus*, 29 August 1973.

<sup>106</sup> Siggibo Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>107</sup> Mtintso, interview by author.

Ntombi Dwane, a former Fort Hare student who was a teacher at Lovedale and who lived adjacent to the Fort Hare campus, recalls the various strikes in 1973 going on for a “very, very long time.” Though a veteran of Fort Hare protests, she says that the 1973 unrest was different:

They beat students up. It was terrible. I returned one day from work and I thought, I thought, what was happening here? And then they said the students just overran the campus. They came into our houses and hid. And then my domestic worker said they hid everywhere, in toilets, and everywhere. And she said, ‘I had to lock the doors against the police.’ It was terrible. Whoa, they were brutal. You see, now in seventies, you know after SASO and all that, they really were openly, it was warfare.<sup>108</sup>

Stofile, who was lecturing at Fort Hare by 1973, remembers shielding students from the police onslaught:

The Boers came with their dogs and batons and they beat up everybody. I remember I had to open my office at the commerce block. ... I opened my office and some kids ran there. I put them in. I had a blackboard there. So when the police came I was busy teaching Greek. I started writing Greek there. And I said, yes, can I help, no, sorry. [They said] ‘Are you having a class?’ ‘Yes, I’m having a class.’ I was just writing and they left.<sup>109</sup>

## University of Fort Hare

Thenjiwe Mtintso says that the violence did not achieve De Wet’s goal of silencing

*Together in Excellence*

the students. She believes it had the opposite effect and says that it was the violence that “completely politicised her.”<sup>110</sup> She says, “[w]hen De Wet began to bring in the police, that hardened the attitude of students. That hardened all of us, even the abaThembus, because when the police came they didn’t say who was amaKaringe and who was abaThembu. They were hitting all of us.” Mtintso recalls the first instance of violence, where the police charged the student meeting on the football field, as a turning point. She says, “many of those students who had not been activists, that incident, they had not done anything, they’d only attended a meeting.” She remembers the case of one of her classmates:

One student arrived at her home and her parents were asking, ‘what is the strike about?’ She says, ‘I don’t know. What I do know is that I’ve been bit by a dog and I’m not going back to Fort Hare.’ ... She had not internalised what it was all about, but one thing she was sure was there was no reason why she was bitten by a dog. The institution was wrong. ... So De Wet had helped our cause indirectly.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

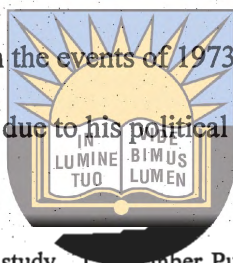
<sup>109</sup> Stofile, interview by author.

<sup>110</sup> Goodwin, *Cry Amandla!*, 20.

<sup>111</sup> Mtintso, interview by author.

Selby Baqwa agrees that the batons and dogs created a spirit of resistance:

Whenever you'd want this or that, you'd want to negotiate, I mean I don't know how many strikes we had where we'd be asking for the Rector to come and address you on the issues you raised. It's something that you never get. And even as we had sit-ins, boycotts of classes, you knew you'd never get it. You'd stay for a number of days, you could send delegations and so on to see whoever. ... There were a number of days and then you'd know the next thing that is going to come is the police and dogs and you'd be taken to your rooms and shoved. That's the way it always happened. In this sense, it's always amazing because you look back and say, these are the people who actually promoted the political influences that shaped these fellows into different animals than they would have been.<sup>112</sup>



Selby Baqwa was a key player in the events of 1973. Much like his brother Jeff, Selby was forced to leave the university due to his political leanings. For Selby, it wasn't easy:

When we left, some of us wanted to study. I remember Pumsile Majeke and I talking and saying man, one wishes you were in a normal country where you would study peacefully. ... Some of us would have studied to get a Ph.D. We used to regret it, not in a regretful manner, but in that we wished we were in a normal situation. Not that we shouldn't have done what we did. We accepted the fact that what we did was for a good cause, a good reason. If I could do it all over again, I would do it the same way or even more.<sup>113</sup>

Selby Baqwa's journey resulting in expulsion from Fort Hare began in Natal, where he was born into a family that was middle class by the standards of African society. His father was a school inspector and his mother a nursing sister who later became a matron in a few small hospitals in Natal. Neither of Baqwa's parents was politically active and his maternal grandfather was a minister in Kaiser Matanzima's first cabinet. If Baqwa had any influences growing up, they were conservative ones. "As a child ... you say oh yes, my grandfather is a minister and you are actually proud of it. Matanzima was alleged to have said, 'ask for what you want, take what you get, make use of what you get to get what you want,' and you think, well, great thinking," he says. Baqwa talks of his high school education, at St. Francis College, Marianhill, as a "significant growth point," in terms of his

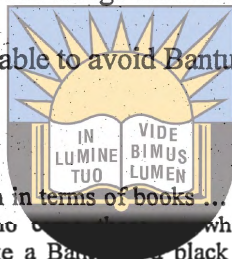
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<sup>112</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

political maturation. He says, "It was only when I got into Marianhill that I started seeing no, things can be viewed differently. They are different."<sup>114</sup>

Selby's brother Jeff says that Marianhill attracted people who were intellectually quite astute. "They wanted to confront problems and go through analyses of strategies of what should be done," says Jeff Baqwa. Steve Biko was a classmate of the two Baqwa boys. "That's the calibre of [student] that went up to that school," he says. "And as a result we engaged the administration in a whole lot of things that we thought were not just or fair."<sup>115</sup>

Selby Baqwa says that he and Jeff were able to avoid Bantu Education by studying at Marianhill:



Not taking you out of Bantu Education in terms of books ... but in terms of the environment. There were German missionaries who were coming directly out of Germany so they didn't treat you like a Bantu black person. They had that normal interaction with people which you take it as people who had not been tainted by local politics. They treated us as students and taught us as students. Not as Bantu black students. I thought that was very important in terms of making you grow, that there is another way of living ... that things can be different.

Selby Baqwa remembers that an African teacher who supervised study used to explain the significance of political events of the time. Baqwa says the teacher, Mr. Baldwin, would analyse the system of separate development within South Africa to his charges: "He would explain about how South Africa was being Balkanised in the bantustans." Baqwa remembers Baldwin spending evenings talking of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Rhodesia, harping on the negative effect it would have on blacks in South Africa. He says, "[p]olitically, I think my eyes got opened in St. Francis College, Marianhill through interaction with certain personalities there." Immediately upon completing his matriculation

<sup>113</sup> op. cit.

<sup>114</sup> op. cit.

<sup>115</sup> Jeff Baqwa, interview by author.

<sup>116</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

in 1968, Baqwa's schoolmate, Steve Biko, began speaking in terms of the SASO. At that point, Baqwa says, "there was never to be any looking back."<sup>117</sup>

### **The Role of the Federal Theological Seminary<sup>118</sup>**

"If the Federal [Theological] Seminary had not been there," says Jeff Baqwa, "there's a doubt we could have gotten as far as we did."<sup>119</sup> A multi-racial institution that prepared black students of four denominations for the ministry, the Federal Theological Seminary (Fedsem) was established in Alice in 1963. Adjoining the Fort Hare campus, Fedsem was diametrically opposed to everything for which the new Fort Hare stood. It arrived in the wake of the government takeover of the college, reinvigorating the area with the spirit of community trust irrespective of race that had been predominant at the old Fort Hare. Allowed to exist unencumbered during the Ross era, a relationship between Fort Hare students and Fedsem grew. With the chapels at Fort Hare closed following the takeover, students found a place to worship at Fedsem. Staff such as Desmond Tutu and Ronnie Samuel served as both spiritual and political advisors to Fort Hare students. During the mid-1960s, with ANC activity at Fort Hare hampered, it was Fedsem that provided the operational base for religious groups to assert themselves politically. With the inception of SASO, the seminary, one of the most intense centers of Black Consciousness thinking, became a second campus to students who felt that their actions were restricted at Fort Hare, providing both physical and emotional space for the students to develop their activism.<sup>120</sup> "Anything you couldn't do at Fort Hare, you could easily do at Fedsem," says Selby Baqwa.<sup>121</sup>

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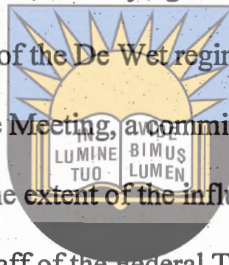
<sup>117</sup> op. cit.

<sup>118</sup> For more on the Federal Theological Seminary, see Khayaletu Gxabalashé's forthcoming University of Fort Hare M.A. Thesis, *Church, State and Theological Education Under Apartheid: The Relationship Between the Federal Theological Seminary, the University of Fort Hare, and the South African Government, 1963-1976*.

<sup>119</sup> Jeff Bawqa, interview by author.

<sup>120</sup> Gerhart, *Black Power*, 294.

Once De Wet arrived on campus in the second half of 1968, the Fort Hare administration's previous tolerance of the seminary began to dissipate. "Fedsem was a second, more liberated campus, which did exactly the opposite of what De Wet wanted to be the case. It was diluting or undoing anything physically and mentally that Fort Hare was supposed to represent," says Selby Baqwa.<sup>122</sup> Sigqibo Dwane says De Wet "thought that Fedsem was influencing students to resist authority ... that Fedsem was a dangerous neighbor to have. That while he was busy trying to tell his students that government policy was an excellent policy, Fedsem on the other hand, was saying the opposite."<sup>123</sup> As early as September 1968, during the initial days of the De Wet regime, the role of Fedsem preoccupied the authorities. At a Senate Meeting, a committee was established to "investigate and formulate a report on the extent of the influence on, and access to, Fort Hare students exercised by members of the staff of the Federal Theological Seminary."<sup>124</sup>



## University of Fort Hare

*Together in Excellence*

By 1971, De Wet's concern about the influence of Fedsem on Fort Hare students was sufficient to warrant a government investigation into taking control of the seminary. Under the guise of needing to expand the university to accommodate growing student numbers, De Wet wrote to the seminary asking whether they would be prepared to sell their land to the university.<sup>125</sup> The Minister of Bantu Education told seminary officials that there was no alternative way of solving the problem of overcrowding at Fort Hare but to acquire the seminary. But to the Fedsem officials, Fort Hare's desire to purchase their land was politically, not spatially, motivated. In the *Daily Dispatch* of 16 August 1972, the Fedsem

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<sup>121</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

<sup>122</sup> op. cit.

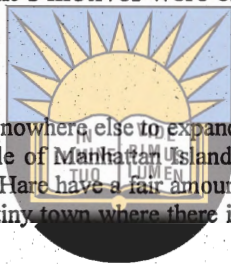
<sup>123</sup> Sigqibo Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>124</sup> Minutes of a Senate Meeting, 10 September 1968, Fort Hare Papers.

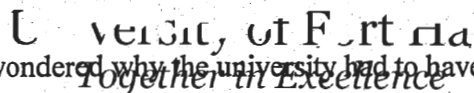
<sup>125</sup> Statement by the Rector to members of Staff Re: Fedsem, Document File 1, Background to the Fort Hare and Alice Seminary Dispute, Fort Hare Papers.

council dubbed the Fort Hare move to take over its land as “a political one to rid the university of a multi-racial community on its doorstep.”<sup>126</sup>

For two years following Fort Hare’s initial inquiry into buying Fedsem, De Wet and the government continued to couch their interest in logistical terms. It was said that Fort Hare was expanding its student numbers by 25 percent each year and that without the seminary land, large numbers of black students would be deprived of a university education.<sup>127</sup> To Fedsem, the government’s motives were clearly political. As *South African Outlook* reported,



[t]he argument about Fort Hare having nowhere else to expand might be valid if the university was situated somewhere like the middle of Manhattan Island. ... Examination of the area in question shows that not only does Fort Hare have a fair amount of room still left for buildings, but that it is situated on the edge of a tiny town where there is un-built-up land in almost any direction for scores of miles.<sup>128</sup>



Supporters of the seminary wondered why the university had to have the seminary’s 94 hectares of land when there were 1,104 hectares available in the vicinity of Fort Hare.<sup>129</sup>

Indeed, the university’s actions outside the public eye during the early 1970s reveal a more sinister intent on their part. As noted above, Fort Hare was concerned at the seminary’s influence on its students as early as 1968. De Wet was also upset that Fedsem did not encourage its students to take classes at Fort Hare. And as SASO’s activism grew, De Wet’s ill will only increased. Jeff Baqwa speaks of Fedsem’s role in the 1972 student strike: “At some point when they were praying and appealing to God, the next thing they were hearing

<sup>126</sup> op. cit.

<sup>127</sup> op. cit.

<sup>128</sup> “Magazine Devotes Entire Issue to Takeover of Seminary,” Document File 1, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>129</sup> “Alien culture at seminary reason for expropriation,” *Natal Daily News*, 26 February 1975.

screams and voices of students and they had to run out and basically play the practical role of the church being the protecting savior.”<sup>130</sup>

Evidence given before the government appointed commission into the unrest at Fort Hare in 1972 reveals a preoccupation on the part of the authorities with the role of Fedsem. Both student and faculty witnesses were subjected to numerous questions relating to Fedsem’s influence at Fort Hare. At one point, a commissioner called Fedsem’s justification for wanting to hold onto its land “so much nonsense.”<sup>131</sup> A government witness said that the university was concerned with the “the types of sermons preached” by Fedsem staff.<sup>132</sup> One student witness was asked, “[w]ere [the students] addressed by people who came from outside [such as] seminary [representatives] with the intention of getting them to come to some disturbance?”<sup>133</sup> Professor Coetzee, who was called to testify, was asked, “[d]o you think that the theological seminary across the road is exercising such influence that would hurt cooperation with this university?” Worried that the seminary was encouraging Fort Hare students to resist authority the commission also asked Coetzee, “[h]ave they [the seminary] accepted the policy as exercised by this university?”<sup>134</sup>

Clearly, the university and government were concerned about the political influence Fedsem had on its students. Ntombi Dwane says, “It was regarded as a thorn in the face of Fort Hare. ... And somehow, like all repressive people, they will never think that you are taking this resistance position because of your ideas, but because somebody is instigating you to do it.”<sup>135</sup> The final report of the commission stated, “[e]very time there was trouble at Fort

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<sup>130</sup> Jeff Baqwa, interview by author.

<sup>131</sup> Evidence Before Commission into 1972 Fort Hare Unrest, Fort Hare Papers, 24.

<sup>132</sup> op. cit., 22.

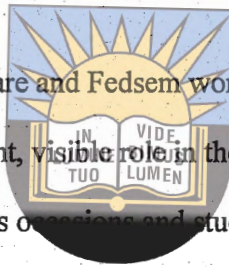
<sup>133</sup> op. cit., 42.

<sup>134</sup> op. cit., 22.

<sup>135</sup> Ntombi Dwane, interview by author.

Hare the seminary offered shelter to the students who had been 'sent down' ... the suspicion [arose] that the seminary was aiding those persons who were opposed to, or created trouble at, Fort Hare."<sup>136</sup> The report pointed to certain preachers who "delivered themselves of hostile sermons." Showing that there was a genuine fear of Fedsem on the part of Fort Hare authorities, the report concluded that there "can never be peace between the two institutions." It stated,

[t]he influence of the seminary on the Fort Hare student could not be said, to say the least, to help settle things peacefully at Fort Hare. Certainly the seminary was not indifferent to what was taking place at Fort Hare: certain individuals ... were openly hostile to Fort Hare."<sup>137</sup>



In 1973, relations between Fort Hare and Fedsem worsened. When protests broke out at the campus, Fedsem played an important, visible role in the disturbances. As the university closed and opened on numerous occasions and students were shuttled back and forth to the train stations throughout the year, Fedsem officials lent a helping hand. Siggibo Dwane, who was on the staff at Fedsem during 1973, says, "once agreed amongst ourselves as chaplains that we would ask our colleges to make transport available to Fort Hare students to take them to the station. And that was noticed by the Fort Hare administration."<sup>138</sup> Thenjiwe Mtintso remembers the assistance: "We were accompanied by the priests to the station. They had to take us to the station so that the police didn't arrest us. They literally had to accompany us."<sup>139</sup>

Mtintso says Fedsem served as a refuge for Fort Hare students during the strike:

We used to run from Fort Hare when we were chased by police straight to Fedsem. And police would not get into, they would surround Fedsem, but they would not get into the classrooms or dormitories and take us out. There was still this element that this was a theological institution. And the priests would come out and talk to the police and we would be sitting there hiding.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Evidence Before Commission into 1972 Fort Hare Unrest, Fort Hare Papers, 6.

<sup>137</sup> op. cit., 7.

<sup>138</sup> Siggibo Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>139</sup> Mtintso, interview by author.

<sup>140</sup> Mtintso, interview by author.

Sigqibo Dwane remembers one instance, during 1973, when Fort Hare students descended upon the seminary:

One morning we were listening to a lecture by Theo Coetzee on violence, the whole seminary. And while he was talking somebody noticed that there was movement from St. Peter's College up towards the seminary building. And then all of us became curious and stood up. There were Fort Hare students running towards the seminary building. We had abandoned the lecture. And Grant Brown who was the President suggested we should go to the front of the seminary building and just sit there with Fort Hare students. So we walked out, met them there, sat together with them. They were being chased by the police. The police came in a van and said they have come to collect Fort Hare students. And Grant Brown said no, we can't tell who's a Fort Hare student and who's a seminary student. If you can tell, you can try. Of course they were furious.<sup>141</sup>

Mtintso says that the seminary staff, in addition to playing the role of protector, served in an advisory capacity to Fort Hare students:

They also had to counsel us. Some students were quite young. It was traumatic. It's not like it was just a picnic. It's traumatic for students to find that they are kicked out and suddenly when you are all alone, you realise I'm going to go home and face my parents. They would provide that. In a very political way.

She says that the Fedsem staff gently nudged Fort Hare students to action by clarifying issues for them. To Mtintso, the counseling sessions were invaluable. She came from a poor family that was relying heavily on her education to provide relief from their poverty. Being expelled from Fort Hare generated a variety of emotions. Mtintso remembers talking with a Fedsem lecturer who helped her realise that she was acting with conviction. "She sat with me just talking about how things can't be that bad. You are standing for what is just. You are standing for justice. Your mother will be proud of you for standing for justice."<sup>142</sup>

As 1973 drew to a close, De Wet and the government intensified their efforts to gain control of Fedsem. For two years following their initial letter, Fort Hare charged the seminary with employing "delaying tactics," but did little to wrest control of the land from

<sup>141</sup> Sigqibo Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>142</sup> Mtintso, interview by author.

Fedsem.<sup>143</sup> The renewed drive on the part of Fort Hare to take over the seminary coincided with the disturbances of 1972 and 1973 and shows Fort Hare's politically motivated intentions. Indeed, following the 1973 unrest at Fort Hare, it was apparent that the University was going to make a move. Sigqibo Dwane notes that the turning point came during the 1973 unrest, when De Wet discovered a list of student grievances had been typed on a Fedsem machine. He says,

De Wet noticed that this was not typed on a Fort Hare machine and came to the conclusion that it was typed at the seminary. And from that he deduced that we had actually helped the students to draw up the document. And so he wrote a letter to the President of the Seminary saying this is what I discovered. You are aiding my students in this strike. And then a sinister note at the end: this is not the last time that you hear of this matter.<sup>144</sup>

Indeed, the De Wet letter to Grant Brown was not the last word from Fort Hare. On 26 November 1973, an order of expropriation was served. Fort Hare was to seize control of Fedsem. Seminary officials fought to keep control of their land, but much like the Fort Hare attempt to confront government control in the late 1950s, their efforts were ultimately unsuccessful. They met with the Minister of Bantu Education who told them there was no going back on the decision to expropriate.<sup>145</sup> Next, the seminary leaders met with De Wet. According to Sigqibo Dwane, De Wet made it clear he preferred the seminary to leave immediately. He says,

De Wet had drawn up his terms. The terms were that if we wanted to stay ... you will surrender two of the four colleges because I need accommodation when the students return. And Fedsem said no, you can't do that because it will affect our life. Because your students will live at Fedsem, you're going to have to control us.<sup>146</sup>

Unwilling to surrender control of the seminary campus to De Wet, Fedsem officials decided to pack up and move. Sigqibo Dwane says,

[w]hen the students returned, they didn't want to go. So we persuaded them that we didn't have a choice in the matter. And they were saying, no we must stay here and protest and let the government get us out: ... Then the vans started coming in to move us out and when they

<sup>143</sup> Statement by the Rector to members of Staff Re: Fedsem.

<sup>144</sup> Sigqibo Dwane, interview by author.

<sup>145</sup> Background to the Fort Hare Alice Seminary Debate, Doc. File 1, Fort Hare Papers.

<sup>146</sup> Sigqibo Dwane, interview by author.

came in a group of about 11 students decided they would stop the vans from carrying stuff out of Fedsem. That was another painful thing. Imagine having to go to the students and then ask them to move and then force them to move. And they were taken and locked up in one of the side chapels at St. Peter's. That was a very, very painful experience.<sup>147</sup>

Fedsem packed up and moved to Umtata. It was later forced to move out of Umtata to near Pietermaritzburg. The expropriation of Fedsem, important in that it removed a significant organisational and spiritual ally from the students, also had a symbolic meaning. As the traditional Fort Hare began to fade with the government takeover, Fedsem emerged as a reminder of what was possible in South Africa. The vibrant, multi-racial community that to a certain extent mirrored the traditional Fort Hare served to ease the pain caused by the introduction of ethnic higher education. Fedsem's demise marked the last in a string of government blows that succeeded in transforming Fort Hare from a unique institution to just another bush college.



## **Beyond Fort Hare** University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

The National Party's experiment with ethnic universities indirectly led to the formation of SASO. Beale writes that the university colleges "ended up creating the ideal medium for the evolution of the new, vigorous ideology of Black Consciousness."<sup>148</sup> The Fort Hare campus was affected, but more importantly, SASO was part of a wider stream of resistance that swept across the country in the 1970s. By the end of 1973, scores of leaders had abandoned their efforts to receive an education at Fort Hare and instead, like Thenjiwe Mtintso and Jeff and Selby Baqwa, began to organise full-time for SASO.

Gerhart writes that one of the results of the expulsion and voluntary withdrawal of large numbers of students from the bush colleges was a transfer of energy to activities outside the campuses. As ex-bush college students traveled the country, they made an impression on

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<sup>147</sup> op. cit.

the age group behind them. This led to an upsurge of activity among high school students beginning around the end of 1972, resulting in the formation of a number of new political youth organisations across the country, most notably the South African Students' Movement in Soweto and the National Youth Organisation in Natal.<sup>149</sup> Thus, by the time the government stepped up repression of SASO in 1973, it was too late. The organisation had already indirectly given birth to a new wave of political activity that would culminate in the 1976 Soweto Uprisings.<sup>150</sup>



At the same time that increased government vigilance forced people like Thenjiwe Mtintso and Selby Baqwa out of Fort Hare, the prototype of the Fort Hare student had begun to change. It has already been noted that Indian, coloured and non-Xhosa African students from South Africa and beyond were almost entirely phased out of the student body following the takeover. With the entrenchment of Bantu Education and the linked nationwide government attack on missionary institutions, another significant change in the type of student that arrived to study at Fort Hare occurred: the pre-university experiences of the Fort Hare student beginning in the late 1960s and even more so in the 1970s was very different from previous years. Whereas the pre 1960 Fort Hare student grew up in the missionary tradition, attending such schools as Clarkebury, Healdtown, Lovedale, and St. Matthews, the post- 1960 Fort Harian was educated at B.C. schools, with B.C. standing for Bantu Community. In earlier decades, students were often introduced to politics through activity at mission schools. The new Fort Harians grew up not in the mission environment, but in the battle against Bantu Education.

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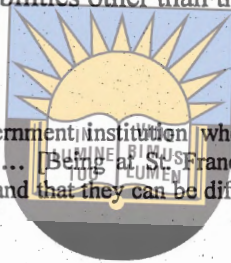
<sup>148</sup> Beale *Apartheid and University Education*, 4.

<sup>149</sup> Gerhart, *Black Power*, 297.

<sup>150</sup> There is some controversy over the precise role the overtly political organizations played in the genesis of the 1976 events. In *The Soweto Uprisings: Counter-memories of June 1976* (Randburg: Ravan Press, 1998), Sifiso Ndlovu argues that the uprising was completely unexpected to the formal organizations. He writes that they

Selby Baqwa was amongst the last of the mission-educated students to enter Fort Hare. He attended St. Francis College in Marianhill, Natal, a liberal Catholic boarding school run by German missionaries. It was one of the few remaining private high schools for blacks in South Africa.<sup>151</sup> Baqwa says that even taking into account the ambiguities of missionary education, the institutions were significant in that they took students “out of Bantu Education.” Baqwa says that the German missionaries were instrumental in opening his eyes and mind to the idea that there were possibilities other than those espoused by the government. He says,

[a]s opposed to if I went into a government institution where already your teachers are Afrikaners and they treat you [badly]. ... [Being at St. Francis College] ... gave you that realisation that things must be different and that they can be different. It was a very formative influence in that sense.<sup>152</sup>



University of Fort Hare  
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By contrast, Sizwe Satyo was amongst the first of the Fort Hare students to know only Bantu Community schools. He attended Mount Arthur Bantu Community School in Lady Frere. He says,

[the] methods that were used in teaching us ... [we were] spoon-fed and ... beaten up. ... [It] was a common practice not to be allowed to speak your own language. You'd end up being a caricature, speaking a language you understand only imperfectly and yet you've got a language in which you can communicate effectively. So it was another very strange thing at school. You really felt you were there to be changed into some other animal with a new language or new languages later, because Afrikaans was also introduced.<sup>153</sup>

As Bantu Education took root, more and more students with experiences closer to those of Satyo than Baqwa arrived at Fort Hare and by the middle of the 1970s, Fort Hare students arriving in Alice knew nothing but Bantu Community schools. The lack of mission school experience among new students was exacerbated by government control of Fort Hare. In earlier times, students, given relative freedom to develop, could have caught on to the

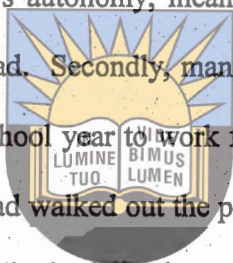
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were a product of the young schoolchildren who had Afrikaans forced on them and that only later did the activists of a more overtly political nature become involved and take credit for the insurrection.

<sup>151</sup> op. cit., 259.

elements that made Fort Hare special without prior experience in such an environment. But with the government firmly in control, there was no chance for students to immerse themselves in an open intellectual environment and Fort Hare moved further from the place it had been prior to 1960.

Thus, the confluence of four factors marks 1973 as an appropriate point to end this study. Firstly, the expansion of the third-rate system of black higher education followed ten years later by Fort Hare's *autonomy*, meant that Fort Hare no longer occupied the unique position it once had. Secondly, many student activists left Fort Hare following the tumultuous 1973 school year to work full-time for SASO. When put together with the 42 students that had walked out the previous year, it is clear that young political activists found it exceedingly difficult to remain at the bush colleges. As activists left Fort Hare and the other bush colleges, the starting point in the struggle for liberation was no longer the university campus. Added to the expansion of black higher education and the loss of political activists, for the most part students entering Fort Hare in the late sixties and early seventies had not had mission high school experiences similar to those of earlier generations. The loss of Fedsem at this same time made it clear that Fort Hare was no longer what it once had been.



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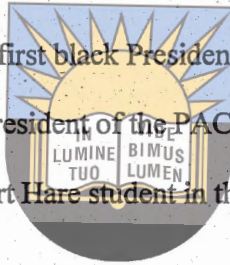
<sup>152</sup> Selby Baqwa, interview by author.

<sup>153</sup> Sizwe Satyo, interview by author.

## Conclusion

*Can you separate the history of South Africa from what took place around Fort Hare?*  
-Govan Mbeki<sup>1</sup>

In 1938, an unassuming, intelligent Fort Hare student, Yusuf Lule, aspired to become elected to the Students' Representative Council. His supporters coined the phrase "Lule for President."<sup>2</sup> The slogan proved to be prophetic as Lule went on to serve as the President of Uganda for sixty-nine days in 1979. Other ex-Fort Hare students had even more success than Lule. Nelson Mandela, elected to the Fort Hare SRC in 1940, became South Africa's first black President and Robert Sobukwe, the SRC President in 1949, became the President of the PAC. The President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, was a Fort Hare student in the early 1950s.



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Up to the late 1950s, Fort Hare produced nearly all of sub-equatorial Africa's black university graduates and many of its early nationalists. In the 1960s and beyond, political leaders continued to emerge from the ranks of the university's student body. Clearly then, the University of Fort Hare played a significant role in Southern African history. Why? What is it about the Fort Hare that made it "the most historically significant institution for higher education in sub-equatorial Africa?"<sup>3</sup> I posed this question to Joe Matthews. He answered, "[w]hat if this is all one big historical accident?" His response, though rhetorical in nature, raises legitimate questions. For Fort Hare was not created to be a center of revolutionary thought. Most people attended Fort Hare because it was their only educational option, even before the 1960 takeover.

<sup>1</sup> South African Broadcasting Corporation, "Fort Hare at 80," 1996. SABC Video on Fort Hare's 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, lent to author by Mbulelo Mzamane.

<sup>2</sup> Thandeka Gqubule, "The African Nursery," *The Saturday News*, 19 October 1991.

Yet though the course of Fort Hare's development did not proceed as intended by its missionary founders and apartheid trustees, it is too simplistic to attribute Fort Hare's significance to "one big historical accident." Fort Hare clearly impacted upon South African history, but South African history also impacted upon Fort Hare. That the university turned into a hotbed of nationalism, producing political leaders throughout Southern Africa, was not merely a coincidence.



If Matthews had said that the history of Fort Hare was one long string of unanticipated consequences, he would have been more accurate. Fort Hare was not created to breed revolutionaries and its role in the production of leaders throughout Southern Africa is primarily due to the circumstances of South African history.

Speaking at his inauguration as chancellor of Fort Hare in 1991, Oliver Tambo said,

[t]he history of Fort Hare cannot be retold as if it were one event. It was, and is, the culmination of a drama of interpenetrating and, at times, contradictory forces. It was molded by the peculiarities of the history of this region of southern Africa, and the struggles authored by that history.<sup>4</sup>

In my interviews with ex-Fort Hare students, it became clear that their politicisation was not an historical accident, but rather a result of a confluence of factors, both general to South African history and specific to the surroundings in which they grew up. There is no one clear path towards politicisation that can be pointed to. For some, like Jeff Baqwa, experiences at mission boarding schools were instrumental in awakening a sense of political consciousness. Others first

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<sup>3</sup> Fort Hare Division of Marketing and Communication, "The Crucible of African Leadership." Alice: Media Relations and Production Office, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> op. cit.

encountered politics upon arriving at Fort Hare. All interviewees were affected by the political situation in the country.

While some of the factors affecting politicisation at Fort Hare are unique to the university and its students, others are common to students all over the world. Lipset writes that over the course of history, students have almost invariably been more responsive to political trends and opportunities for social change than any other group in the population, except possibly intellectuals. From revolutionary Russia before 1905 to civil rights and anti-war protest in the United States in the sixties, students have been in many ways the vanguard of political change.<sup>5</sup>



Lipset and others detail the aspects of students' situation that press them to act politically.<sup>6</sup> The most general hypothesis explaining student protest suggests that it is the result of what Birnbaum calls "generational dissidence," that is, rapid rates of social change creating a sharp discrepancy between the formative experiences of parents and their children.<sup>7</sup> A student culture develops that denounces adult values and behaviors. Other theories, more psychological in nature, suggest that students do things "excessively and vehemently" because they "have not yet been humbled by life or learnt its necessary limitations."<sup>8</sup> Another hypothesis is that students are idealists who demand that the values of their society be implemented in the actions of that

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<sup>5</sup> Seymour Lipset, *Rebellion in the University: A History of Student Activism in America* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 14.

<sup>6</sup> See for example, Lipset, Lewis Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations*, Julian Nagel, *Student Power*, and Gary Weaver and James Weaver, eds., *The University and Revolution*.

<sup>7</sup> Norman Birnbaum, *The Crisis of Industrial Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 148.

<sup>8</sup> Lipset, *Rebellion*, 16.

society.<sup>9</sup> In the United States, opposition to the Vietnam War placed American actions in Vietnam at odds with core American beliefs such as self-determination.

While there was a generational conflict of sorts between the young militants of the ANC YL and the organisation's older members over tactics and degrees of militancy, at the core the two groups were united in their fight against white supremacy. The theory of students as idealists may come closest to describing the South African context. Though South African society did not purport to be democratic, students were demanding, as idealists, the rights afforded to white citizens of South Africa. Students at Fort Hare frequently protested that they were treated poorly because they were black. Such issues as the poor quality of food, compulsory attendance at religious services, and lack of control over their education led black students to believe they were not receiving equal treatment to white students. More importantly, voicing dissatisfaction with campus conditions often served to express deeper discontent with the political situation in the country.

Some of the factors that facilitated student protest around the world can be seen at Fort Hare. Lipset notes that students, as compared to other groups, have less responsibility in the form of commitments to families and jobs. He also writes that radical staff and the physical situation of the university, with large numbers of students in relatively small areas, make mobilisation easy.

There was, in the context of the student disturbances worldwide in the sixties and seventies, a vigorous discussion of the position of students in relation to politics

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<sup>9</sup> Gary Weaver and James Weaver, eds., *The University and Revolution* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall,

and society. But many of the factors, social and perhaps even psychological, that pertained in the United States, for example, do not explain the full story when transposed to the South African setting I have studied. The root cause of student activism in South Africa is particular to the country's history of segregation and apartheid.

Through 32 interviews of ex-Fort Hare students (33 including Professor Oosthuizen), distinct patterns of politicisation emerge. Many students became involved in politics because their parents, relatives or members of their community were active. Mangosuthu Buthelezi learned politics from his "mother's knee."<sup>10</sup> Ambrose Makiwane, whose mother was an organiser for the ANC in the Ncobo district of the Transkei, was sent on errands for the movement before he was old enough to understand what he was doing. Thenjiwe Muntso's sister offered her a vivid analysis of their family's class situation. Marumo Moerane vividly recalls his father, M.T. Moerane, speaking out against the 1949 anti-Indian riots. Andrew Masondo's mother left him stacks of papers of the Communist Party of South Africa. Joe Matthews was constantly engaged in political discussion and debate with his father.

Geography was fate for many Fort Harians. Formative years spent in particularly active areas of the country nudged many Fort Harians towards politics. Many Fort Hare students came from the Eastern Cape, an area of South Africa that has a complex and often radical political tradition. Students like Stanley Mabizela, Barney Pityana, and Makhenkesi Stofile were all introduced to politics as they grew

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1969), 4.

up in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth. In the 1950s, New Brighton was a hub of ANC activity and, according to Pityana, those students that grew up in Port Elizabeth couldn't avoid politics.<sup>11</sup>

Experiences and personalities in mission boarding schools influenced some. Ambrose Makiwane and Thenjiwe Mtintso led protests against poorly prepared food. His mentor, Oliver Tambo, who was able to get him to think about politics in an indirect fashion, awed Henry Makgothi. Ntombi Dwane's history teacher was "openly political," and Selby Baqwa's political consciousness was awakened through contact with a teacher who explained the significance of current events such as the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in what was then Rhodesia. That they were viewed and treated as students and not 'black students' by their German missionary teachers profoundly influenced both Selby and Jeff Baqwa. A large contingent of Fort Harians who studied at Lovedale, including Isaac Mabindisa and Sigqibo Dwane, were influenced by people such as Ambrose Makiwane, who frequently led political meetings of the high school students.

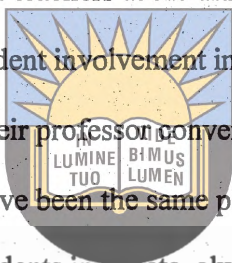
Upon arrival at Fort Hare, more politically advanced colleagues influenced many students. The SRC President during Devi Bugwhan's student days, Oliver Tambo, opened her eyes. She says, "I mean Oliver Tambo was sitting there as a grown man as president of the SRC when I was a 15 year old. I do remember him and what dynamism he had even then."<sup>12</sup> Robert Sobukwe, perhaps the most politically astute student of his generation, impressed numerous classmates, including Herby Govinden. Mangosuthu Buthelezi drew Frank Mdlalose to his first ANC Youth

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<sup>10</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author.

League meeting. Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri was both awed and influenced by the debating ability of Ambrose Makiwane and V.R. Govender recalls being challenged by the argumentative Youth League President. From the time they met as high school classmates in Johannesburg and through their years at Fort Hare, Henry Makgothi learned from Joe Matthews.

Aside from learning through debate and discussion with fellow students, many Fort Harians were influenced by their teachers at the university. Though D.D.T. Jabavu did not openly encourage student involvement in politics, Wycliffe Tsotsi and Govan Mbeki were affected when their professor convened the All-African Convention. Fort Hare would not have been the same place without the influence of Z.K. Matthews, who engaged his students in debate, always encouraging them to think. To a lesser degree, younger staff members in later years such as Andrew Masondo and Herby Govinden helped students develop politically.



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Over the years, Fort Hare's neighbors—Fedsem, Lovedale, and Victoria Hospital—directly and indirectly spurred student activism. Nurses' strikes at Victoria hospital in 1949 and 1958 politicised the student body. The 1949 strike was an especially important event in the development of a nationalistic outlook amongst the students. The relationship with Lovedale was symbiotic. Fort Hare students supported Lovedale students in their battles with the high school authorities, particularly in 1946, and Lovedale students joined with Fort Hare students in protest against the university apartheid bills. All the while, a continuum of resistance was being forged, as Lovedale students like Isaac Mabindisa would move on to Fort Hare

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<sup>11</sup> Pityana, interview by author.

already well-schooled in the facets of political activism. In the 1970s, Fedsem had a direct politicising effect on Fort Hare students. In addition to the institution serving as a refuge for students being chased by the police, Fedsem staff helped Fort Hare students such as Thenjiwe Mtintso find a comforting political meaning in their expulsion from university.

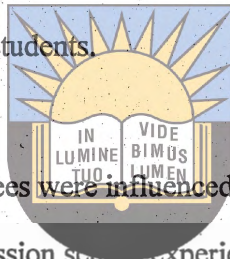
The atmosphere at Fort Hare also served to politicise the student body. Its diversity was unique in a racially divided South Africa. As Indians like Rama Thumbadoo and G.S. Tootla came into contact with blacks as equals for the first time in their lives, stereotypes were put to rest and friendships were formed. Similarly, black students like Ivy Matsepe-Casabuni had their first experiences with Indian and coloured students. In segregated South Africa this interaction was in and of itself political. The rural, residential nature of the college also boosted activism. Students were placed together in a small town and developed into a tight-knit community, despite political factions that emerged. Beard also points out that the lack of contact with white students created a commonality of experience that furthered political mobilisation.<sup>13</sup> With little on the outside to entertain them, the students were forced to turn inwards, resulting in what Beard calls “a highly integrated society with its own *mores*, its own mutually recognised identity, and a cherished *esprit de corps*.”<sup>14</sup> Politics was an integral component of this shared Fort Hare identity.

Even more than the residential nature of the college, the political *esprit de corps* that developed was due to the rules of the college and conditions under which students lived. Students’ politics were forged in reaction to the very institution that

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<sup>12</sup> Bughwan, interview by author.

was educating them. Many students felt the strict, conservative nature of college life and the paltry dining hall diet existed because they were black. Wycliffe Tsotsi's first political involvement came in the form of a 1935 protest against the prohibition of a mixed campus dance. Devi Bugwhan was introduced to student politics by agitation against the prohibition of Sunday tennis. Logan Naidoo recalls that though protests against its poor quality never resulted in more palatable food, the agitation served to bring the student body together. In later years, protest was spurred on by the administration's complicity with government policy, its heavy-handed approach, and its refusal to communicate with the students.



While some of the interviewees were influenced by fellow students, others by staff members and still others by mission school experiences, all interviewees agreed that their politicisation was related to the question, posed by Govan Mbeki in 1996 at the eightieth anniversary celebrations of the university: "Can you separate the history of South Africa from what took place around Fort Hare?"<sup>15</sup> Indeed, from its founding, which was a conservative reaction to increasing numbers of South Africans going abroad to study, to the SASO period, where the organisation was initially applauded and then brutally repressed by government and university authorities, the experiences of Fort Hare students were largely shaped by the ever-changing South African political scene.

Students brought personal experiences of growing up in a racist society with them to Fort Hare. Most had direct encounters with racism, and, as Beard notes, the

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<sup>13</sup> Beard, "Background to Student Activities," 158.

<sup>14</sup> *op. cit.*, 159.

<sup>15</sup> South African Broadcasting Corporation, "Fort Hare at 80."

entire student body suffered in some degree the effects of legal discrimination.<sup>16</sup> The vicious pass laws he encountered on a daily basis aroused Govan Mbeki's consciousness. Wycliffe Tsotsi was upset when forced to ride in the back of a truck on top of mealie sacks. Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri watched as her parents were forcibly removed from their homes on two separate occasions. She was also affected by the arrest of her school principal for not carrying his pass. Marumo Moerane, Isaac Mabindisa and Makhenkesi Stofile remember watching as respected community elders were arrested during the 1952 Defiance Campaign. Thenjiwe Mtintso recalls being poorer than anyone else she knew. As Mbeki says, "Who would not have been aware?"

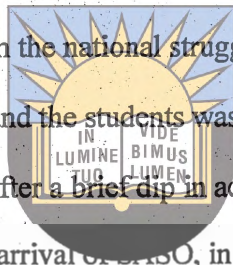


Upon arrival in Alice, students began to contextualise their experiences of growing up in South Africa, giving voice to feelings that had previously been internalised. Before 1960, a great deal of the political mobilisation on campus came about as students began to construct a more nationalistic identity. As noted, this often manifested itself in scuffles with college authorities. In the 1930s, reacting to legislation of the Pact government and the assault on the Cape Franchise, students began to agitate for change within a conservative, missionary institution. The 1940s witnessed a national ferment in extra-parliamentary politics with Fort Hare at the center. The founding of the Youth League in 1944 in Johannesburg and of a branch at Fort Hare in 1948 injected militancy into the national liberation movement and ushered in a golden era of political activity at Fort Hare. In the early 1950s, students played a role in the nationwide Defiance Campaign.

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<sup>16</sup> Beard, "Background to Student Activities," 158.

Later in the decade, government efforts to expand the reach of Bantu Education to include universities served to politicise the student body. The fight against university apartheid signified a shift in student politics at Fort Hare as the attack was now clearly focused on concrete government policy. Though Fort Hare's history had always been intricately tied in with the politics of South Africa, the rapid and calculated transformation of Fort Hare into a bush college brought about unprecedented conflict and made it abundantly clear that events outside campus would impact on university life in ways previously unseen. There was no chance of separating the fight at Fort Hare from the national struggle against apartheid as tension between the administration and the students was now centred on the imposition of government policy. After a brief dip in activism in the sixties with the bannings of the ANC and PAC, the arrival of UFSO, in large part a response to the government's segregated university system, re-energised the student body, but also brought on a new wave of government repression.

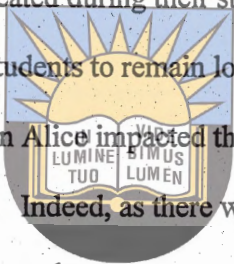


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Thus, their backgrounds, school experiences and the political climate in South Africa influenced students at Fort Hare. Yet while discernible patterns of politicisation do emerge and many students were influenced by similar factors, students did not join the same political organisations after Fort Hare. How does one account for the diverse political paths that students gravitated towards upon leaving Fort Hare? Govan Mbeki, Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo aligned themselves with the ANC while Wycliffe Tsotsi and Herby Govinden joined the Unity Movement. In later years, Robert Sobukwe was a founder of the PAC. Kaiser Matanzima and Mangosuthu Buthelezi participated in homeland politics. After remaining in the ANC to try to counter what he viewed as communistic influences,

Frank Mdlalose eventually joined Buthelezi and Joe Matthews in the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Mbeki, Ambrose Makiwane and Thenjiwe Mtintso went in an opposite direction, joining the Communist Party of South Africa.

Clearly, because of the location of Fort Hare in the Eastern Cape and the political leanings of many of its graduates, the ANC influence at Fort Hare was strongest. Most Fort Harians remained with the organisation after leaving the university due to ties that had been created during their student days. But aside from the natural inclination for Fort Hare students to remain loyal to the ANC, there is little evidence to suggest that experiences in Alice impacted the diversity of political paths followed by the university's students. Indeed, as there were varied streams in the broader South African political scene, so there were among Fort Hare graduates. I asked Wycliffe Tsotsi why he, Govan Mbeki and Kaiser Matanzima, near-contemporaries at Fort Hare, traveled down different political roads. He says,



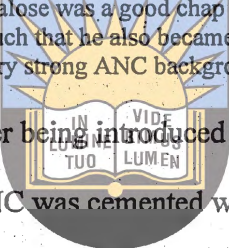
Matanzima grew up in a very conservative traditional way. Traditionally, we were ruled by chiefs and so on. He looked upon himself as a natural, almost divine ruler of his people. ... [W]hen Govan came to Port Elizabeth here and joined the Communist Party .... we were strongly against the Communist Party in South Africa. That is when the difference between us began to arise. ... I came under the influence of a group which was opposed to the Communist Party, they called it the Trotskyite elements. I was not myself a Trotskyite, but I came under the influence of this. They were in fact the leaders of the All-African Convention and the Unity Movement when it was born. It was that background. So the Mbekis and others were always saying that we were Trotskyites. And we turned back and said that they are Stalinists [laughter]. Those were the roots of our divergence. ... They were influences not from the within the college itself, the university, but outside the university.<sup>17</sup>

I asked Henry Makgothi how he remained with the ANC while classmates Frank Mdlalose and Mangosuthu Buthelezi ended up in the IFP? He replied, "isn't that normal?"<sup>18</sup> Makgothi's point was that there are always going to be different views in any group of people. Joe Matthews agreed, saying that any family will be

comprised of members who think differently.<sup>19</sup> Despite the homogeneity of a student group in terms of age and educational attainment, family background, coupled with experiences of students after leaving Fort Hare, often determined an individual's political course. Makgothi says,

Buthlezi, how he went to IFP, initially when he left Fort Hare ... he went to assume his duties as a tribal leader. It was with the ANC, he consulted the ANC. ... He was against it, but they said no, no, no, no, you must go. You must go and fulfill this role. So he went there and he tried his best. ... And then a new generation [began] springing up and there were conflicts and he ended up where he is today. But honestly speaking, I think he's an ANC person. ... Well, he's an IFP, but his education is ANC, you understand, and I think he can only go so far against the ANC. [Frank] Mdlalose too. Mdlalose was a good chap when we were at Fort Hare. ... But, well, circumstances were such that he also became IFP. Sobukwe became PAC. But these are people with very strong ANC backgrounds. Very strong.<sup>20</sup>

As for Makgothi himself, after being introduced to politics at St. Peter's and Fort Hare, his commitment to the ANC was cemented when he moved to Johannesburg following university. He says,



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I met the real guys. ... I was fortunate. After I left Fort Hare, I went to teach. I taught for only one year. Then I was thrown into the ANC. I met [Walter] Sisulu who made a hell of an impression on me. That is the kind of man who makes a lifelong impression on you. ... And Duma Nokwe was one of the best. So I was lucky in the sense that I was in the company of those people and I had the good fortune to develop in what I think is the right way.<sup>21</sup>

Students' backgrounds and the influences they came under upon leaving Fort Hare were the most formative factors in determining future political direction. It is important to note that most students got their start in the ANC tradition, and, according to Makgothi, people like Joe Matthews and Mangosuthu Buthelezi, though IFP members, will always be "ANC at heart."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Tsotsi, interview by author.

<sup>18</sup> Makgothi, interview by author.

<sup>19</sup> Matthews, interview by author.

<sup>20</sup> Makgothi, interview by author.

<sup>21</sup> op. cit.

Despite political differences among graduates, Fort Hare's *esprit de corps* lives on in the governing of the New South Africa. Joe Matthews says that party differences are tempered by the fact that so many politicians studied at Fort Hare: "I think if people have been, obviously to the same schools or the same universities, it makes personal relations easier." He compares the relationships between Fort Harians of different political parties to that of political opponents from the same clan:

If people belong to the same clan, they are supposed to find it easy to work together. So Minister [Steve] Tshwete who is the same clan as my mother, I can talk to him more easily because of that. And you get that kind of relationship among Africans especially because they have these totems, their tribal totems which they express when they meet. ... That makes it easier for people to have easy relations, even between people who are actually politically antagonistic. ... It cuts across politics.<sup>23</sup>

I asked Mangosuthu Buthelezi if the Fort Hare factor makes political debate in South Africa less contentious. He says,

[o]f course it does. It does, really. Even some of the senior civil servants here, some of them are from Fort Hare. They are not in politics but they are all graduates of Fort Hare as well and are working with us here. But there's always that sentiment that we are ex-Fort Harians.<sup>24</sup>

Makhenkesi Stofile of the ANC told me only half jokingly that whenever he gets into an argument with Buthelezi of the IFP, all he has to do is say the two words 'Fort Hare' and Buthelezi will change from his opponent to his best friend.<sup>25</sup> Zolani Ngwane notes that this spirit of fraternisation dominated the eightieth anniversary celebrations at Fort Hare, writing that "the past eclipsed the present." He writes that Professor Francis Wilson, the chairman of the Fort Hare Council, emphasised the "impressive manner in which the event managed to transcend political differences

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<sup>22</sup> op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> Matthews, interview by author.

<sup>24</sup> Buthelezi, interview by author.

<sup>25</sup> Stofile, interview by author.

among the alumni.” Wilson was particularly struck by the warm reception given to Buthelezi by his political opponents.<sup>26</sup>

Ngwane makes the point that the diversity of the alumni was “underplayed by a constant use of the homogenising pronoun ‘we’” throughout the festivities. He writes, “[they] talked about themselves as if they were all the same and had believed the same things.”<sup>27</sup> Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri of the ANC offers a partial explanation when she says, “Fort Hare experiences are unique experiences. Whenever you go anywhere, Fort Harians can find themselves in a group and dominate everybody because you share experiences that only Fort Harians had experienced.”<sup>28</sup> Fort Hare connections also helped ex-students in exile feel a warm and comforting bond. Thenjiwe Mtintso says, “when I met Chris Hani and told him I had been at Fort Hare he hugged me like I was his ... ~~One of his younger sisters. You’re from Fort Hare, yes. That’s why you are so good.~~”<sup>29</sup>

Though Fort Hare’s influence on South African politics is wide, the university did not only produce politicians. Fort Harians became freedom fighters, politicians, teachers, religious leaders, lawyers and doctors. The university offered a four-year education diploma that provided many graduates with a secure form of employment. Many ex-Fort Harian teachers led the fight against Bantu Education. The influence of Fort Hare as a producer of educators was particularly evident in Natal, where the Department of Education offered bursaries to students to study at Fort Hare and return

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<sup>26</sup> Zolani Ngwane, “The 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations at Fort Hare: Past as Symbol, History and Imagination,” a paper presented at the Govan Mbeki Research Resource Center Seminar, 25 February, 1997, University of Fort Hare Staff Center.

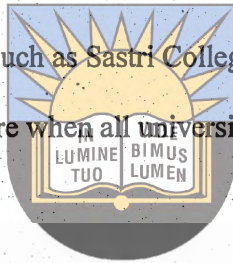
<sup>27</sup> op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Matsepe-Casaburri interview.

as science teachers. Among my interviewees, V.R. Govender became the head of the Natal Department of Education and Logan Naidoo and a group of Fort Harians worked to desegregate high schools in Natal. Rama Thumbadoo, who went on to teach at Sastri College and Springfield College, both in Natal, says,

I was doing research for a brochure for Springfield College and I found that no less than thirty-two members of the staff of Springfield College were ex-Fort Harians. The majority of them were science people. ... You must think of Fort Hare educating people who educated others.

In 1991, I.C. Meer, the President of the Natal School Grantees' Association said, "[w]e who deal with education ... in Natal are forever indebted to Fort Hare for providing community-built schools such as Sastri College and hundreds of others with graduate teachers trained by Fort Hare when all universities were practicing outright racism."<sup>30</sup>



## University of Fort Hare

Fort Hare's impact on Southern Africa is wide reaching. In this study, I

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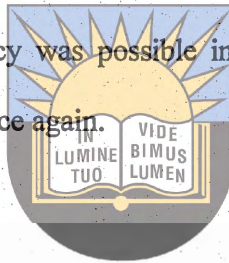
examine the importance of Fort Hare through the eyes of 32 of its former students. In the course of looking at the role the university played in politicising students, it quickly became evident that Fort Hare's importance stretches beyond its illustrious alumni. The institutional history of the university is vital towards gaining an understanding of the twentieth and twenty-first century African elite, the rise of African nationalism, the policies of the apartheid government, and the advent of various streams of resistance.

Despite the parallels between Fort Hare's history and that of South Africa at large, perhaps the most lasting image of the university over the years can be located where these two histories diverge. Prior to 1960 Fort Hare was a place where Indians,

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<sup>29</sup> Mtintso, interview by author.

coloureds, and Blacks mixed freely and happily, a space that was, as Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri suggests, powerful in that it showed “what was possible” in South Africa. A vibrant, non-racial society in the heart of apartheid South Africa, the university stood as a living testimony that the nation’s people could live and work together. Over the years, as Fort Hare changed from missionary to government hands, this unique multi-racial community was destroyed. The fight to preserve Fort Hare was really the fight to save democracy. The uniqueness of Fort Hare was dealt a severe blow by the university apartheid legislation, but Fort Hare already symbolised that the existence of a non-racial democracy was possible in South Africa. In 1994, that possibility blossomed into reality once again.



### *Epilogue*

## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

During an orientation to Fort Hare on my first visit to the university in January 1997, I heard the term *toyi toyi* for the first time. The university’s Director of Public Affairs told me that it was common for students to abandon their studies in favor of the traditional form of protest that had been the trademark of South African resistance to apartheid. I soon learned that it was customary for students to begin each semester by boycotting classes to protest against the exclusion of those who owed money to the university. One morning, about two weeks later, I woke up to sounds of voices singing in harmony outside my hostel room. I joined my classmates as they sang of the heroism of Oliver Tambo and *Umkhonto we Sizwe* soldiers, imploring the administration to allow all students to register. Over and over again, we sang “*sizo zabalaza*,” which I quickly learned means “we will struggle.” The *toyi toyi*s were particularly remarkable in that the students had no chance of having their demands

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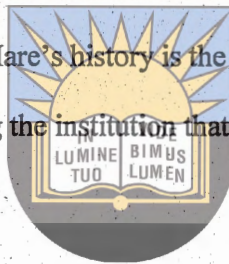
<sup>30</sup> Charmaine Pillay, “Fort Hare: Decisive Role in Uplifting Blacks,” *The Leader*, 25 October, 1991.

met. Yet with that knowledge, they continued to protest. The toyi toyis were as much a celebration of the past as they were a protest against present financial issues.

The toyi toyis also showed how the past can become a part of the living present. Though I did not know it at the time, the tumultuous state of affairs at Fort Hare upon my arrival in 1997 could be traced back to legislation of the late 1950s that resulted in the balkanisation of Fort Hare and the expansion of black university education. As I moved about campus trying to familiarise myself with the steps to the toyi toyi and the words and meanings of the accompanying songs, I was unaware that I was protesting because Ambrose Makiwane and his compatriots had been unsuccessful walking the same route forty years earlier. Indeed, the financial, academic, and organisational problems confronting Fort Hare upon my arrival were, in large part, a result of the 1960 government takeover that systematically tore into the fabric of the university.

Ralph Ellison wrote that “man cannot simply say ‘Let us have liberty and justice for all’ and have it.” He describes Americans as being afflicted with an illness that he describes as “historical amnesia.” This disorder results in us “filing and forgetting” certain parts of our past and thus preventing true progress from taking place. Much of Fort Hare’s history is in danger of falling prey to this Ellisonian disorder. The stories I heard from alumni and the documents I sifted through in the archives of the Fort Hare administration building were, literally and figuratively, filed away.

In a sense, this study is an attempt to comprehend the events that led to the toyi toyis I encountered upon my arrival at Fort Hare. Fort Hare has many, often contradictory, pasts. Its founding was intricately tied to policies of segregation and its very existence today is intricately bound with the policy of apartheid. In an open letter to alumni on the occasion of Fort Hare's eightieth anniversary celebrations, English lecturer Msimelelo Silinga wrote that the university "is a monument to both the failure and success of the human race."<sup>31</sup> Indeed, over the course of its history Fort Hare has illustrated both the depths of humankind's depravity and the height of its humanity. Understanding Fort Hare's history is the only way to grasp its present, and the only way to begin rebuilding the institution that once stood for all that was possible in South Africa.



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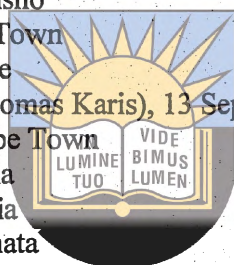
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<sup>31</sup> Msimelelo Silinga, "AN OPEN LETTER TO FORT HARE ALUMNI," November 1996.

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- PR4118 Records of the Governing Council, Senate and Committees including minutes, memoranda, financial statements and related papers, 1928-1961
- PR4148 Memoranda and notes on the history and development of Fort Hare prepared by Alexander Kerr, H.R. Burrows and others.
- PR4145 Records: minutes, memoranda, petitions and related material dealing with the Council and student activities, 1951-59
- PR4119 Letterbooks: letters about the Inter-State Native College Scheme and the establishment of the College
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- PR4088 Kerr, Alexander, Correspondence and related documents generated by Kerr and succeeding principals of Fort Hare: C.P. Dent, Z.K. Matthews and H.R. Burrows
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- Serial 87: SASO 3<sup>rd</sup> General Council

- Box 12

- Serial 108: Unity Movement Historical Notes 1987-89

**Series II**

- Box 1

- Serial 9: Committee For Fort Transfer, 1958
- Serial 12: Eluk Hostel, 1940-55

- Box 2

- Serial 13: Establishment of Interstate Native College, 1908-1912
- Serial 14: Extension of University Education Bill, 1958
- Serial 17: Fort Hare History, 1957-60
- Serial 18: Fort Hare Lecturer's Association, 1956-57
- Serial 23: Jubileum publication, 1916-1966
- Serial 24: Report on Native Education, 1947

- Box 3

- Serial 27: NUSAS VI, 1948-53
- Serial 28: NUSAS VII, 1954-59

- Box 5

- Serial 43: SRC, 1918-1946

- Box 6

- Serial 47-51: Establishment of Fort Hare 1909-1915



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- Devilliers Zilindie Galada
- Vincent Gobodo
- Vadival Ramsamy Govender
- Herby Govinden
- Helenard Joe Hendrickse
- Herbert Temba Hleli
- Isaac Mabindisa
- Stanley Mabizela
- Pumsile Majeke
- Sipo Makalima
- Henry Makgothi
- Andrew Masondo\*
- Ambrose Makiwane
- Kaizer Matanzima
- Ivy Matsepe
- Joe Matthews
- Zachariah Koederling Matthews\*
- Frank Mdlalose
- Dennis Merckel
- Jerry Modisane
- Billy Modise
- Marumo Moerane
- Clement Ntsu Mokhehle
- Justice Moloto
- Ntatho Motlana
- Thenjiwe Mtintso
- Robert Mugabe
- C.G. Muhoya
- Loganathan Naidoo
- Rosette Ndziba
- Duma Nokwe
- Ratinasabapathy Arumugam Pillay
- Godfrey Pitje
- Barney Pityana
- Kenneth Rachidi
- Sizwe Satyo
- Kelly Seseane
- Fred Simon
- George Singh
- Dennis Siwisa
- Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe
- Pelem Galazi Stamper
- Makenkesi Stofile
- Rama Thumbadoo
- Goolan Hoosen Suleman Tootla
- Wycliffe Tsotsi
- Picton Vernet
- Peter Vundla



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\*Matthews and Masondo were also on staff at Fort Hare and their student files are contained within their staff records in the staff room.

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  - A.C. Jordan
  - Andrew Masondo
  - Z.K. Matthews

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- Senate, 1952-1957
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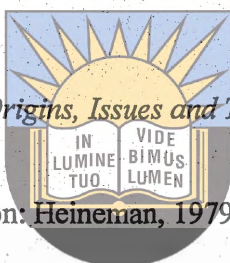
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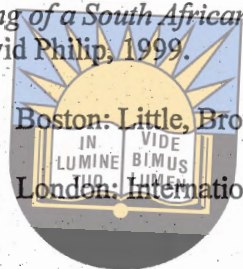
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### ***Audio Visual***

South African Broadcasting Corporation, "Fort Hare at 80," 1996.



Appendix 1  
Student Statistics  
University of Fort Hare  
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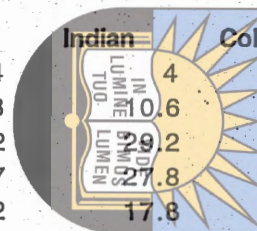
**Period Average number of students enrolled each year by sex, 1916-1958**

Period	Men	Women	Total
1916-1935	87.5	7	94.5
1936-1940	146.6	13.8	160.4
1941-1945	211	27	238
1946-1950	302.6	39.4	342
1951-1955	332.8	51.2	384
1956	317	51	368
1957	327	51	368
1958	378	60	438

**Average number of students enrolled each year by ethnic group, 1916-1958**

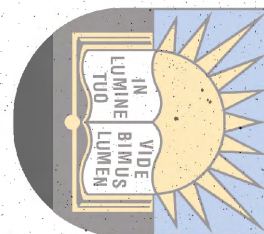
Period	Xhosa	Zulu	Swazi	Sotho	Tswana	Indian	Coloured	Others
1916-1935	47	11	1	16	4	4	9	2.5
1936-1940	72	14	2.2	33.2	8	10.6	13.8	6.6
1941-1945	88	24.6	2	51.4	2	29.2	18	12.6
1946-1950	120.8	35.8	6	56	7	27.8	38.6	30
1951-1955	148	43.8	7.6	46.2	2	17.8	34	64.6
1956	141	37	6	32	5	40	40	57
1957	140	35	6	36	7	47	48	39
1958	173	34	13	38	4	59	59	28

University of Port Elizabeth  
 Together in Excellence



**Number of students enrolled each year by race, 1960-1970**

	<b>Black</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>Indian</b>	<b>Total</b>
1960	245	49	66	360
1961	242	50	52	344
1962	195	26	21	242
1963	complete figures not available			
1964	264	5	3	272
1965	315	1	1	317
1966	401	1	0	402
1967	434	2	0	436
1968	450	1	0	451
1969	complete figures not available			
1970	483	0	0	483



**University of Fort Hare**  
*Together in Excellence*



Appendix 2

University of Fort Hare

Two Interviews

*Together in Excellence*

Andrew Masondo and Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri

## Danny Massey with Andrew Masondo, 25 May 1999, Armscor Building, Pretoria

DM: Can you tell me a little bit about your family background, where you were born?

AM: I was born on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, 1936. I was born in Sophiatown. Then I stayed in Sophiatown until I was about 8 years old. Then I left Sophiatown and went to Alexandra Township where we stayed at number 38 12<sup>th</sup> avenue for some time. Then around 1948 we left 12<sup>th</sup> avenue and went to 7<sup>th</sup> avenue, incidentally number 27. Then we left Alexandra and went to Jones Street. ... We went to White City, Jabavu. We got to White City, Jabavu, in 1950. From White City, Jabavu in 1961 we went to Mulapo and that's where my home is up to now, my family home. Presently I've got a home here in Pretoria. But I still keep the family home in Soweto. My eldest daughter and my nephew stay there and look after the place. I started my education at the day care in ... Sophiatown. Then I went to Albert Street Methodist School. There I did my kindergarten and my pre-school, primer, sub-a, sub-b. In 1946, I was 10 years old, I left for St. Agnes School, a Swedish mission boarding school. That's where I did my primary education. I started my standard one there and I was there for four years b/c I did my standard one in 46 my std 2 in 47 my std 4 in 48 my std 6 in 49. Then the late Father Huddleston, b/c my family was Anglican, suggested that I go to St. Peter's secondary school in Rosentenville. There I did my whole secondary school from form one to form five. That year when I was in form five, joint matriculation board examinations somehow were not passed very well. I actually happened to be the only one who passed in our school. 1955 I went to Fort Hare to go and read for the BSC degree. My mother was Elsie Seratke. Her maiden surname was Bowe. My father was Eloise Emmanuel Mtandane Masondo. My mother had gone to Standard Six educationally and my father had not gone beyond Standard Three. My father originates from Inkandla, a place called Etalene. But then they stayed there. My grandfather was Jopa Masondo. They were essentially, the family actually was Roman Catholic. It's only my father who later became an Anglican. My grandfather died, and my grandmother died when my father was still very young. I understand my grandfather and grandmother had 16 children. A number of ladies, but all of them died. Only about four of the boys remained that I came to know. My father's eldest brother was Solomon Masondo. He was a mechanic. He learned mechanics from the job and after some time he had his backyard mechanical workshop and later he had a garage there that he built after some time. But he died so the family, he had only one child and that was my cousin sister, but in Zulu I call her my sister. Her name is [inaudible] Masondo. She's now Mrs. Ntembu and she stays in Natal. Now the next brother, between the two, he was born in 1899, his other brother who survived was born in 1903. He was also a very interesting person. He also didn't go to school. Formal schooling was not that ... Rafael Masondo was I think the business genius of the family. He started his shop. He had a table in a communal place where you had a table, people came, there are many tables in that communal place. People came, bought food. That's where he started. He sold barbecued meat and porridge and all that. He ultimately became a very, very powerful business person. The number of butcher shops he had in Durban. He stayed in Claremont, his house is still there. He really

became big. After some time, apart from the butcher shops, he was like a I'd call a wholesaler for meat.

DM: This was the oldest brother?

AM: The one that came after the eldest. Solomon was the eldest.

DM: This is the one born in 1903?

AM: 1903.

DM: And what did your father do?

AM: My father was the third one. This man, the man 1903 was with him in Johannesburg. They ran a small barber shop before Rafael went back to Durban. We are Zulus. My father actually ran a barber shop. That's all he did. A hair dressing saloon as we liked to call it. He was the person who ran that. Then the youngest of them, at one time he stayed with us in Johannesburg. He was supposed to attend school. At the time when I was in Standard One or so he was doing Standard Five. But I think school wasn't their strong point. So he then left and went to work for his brother in Durban. They worked together for all the time to build that business of theirs, meat business.

University of Fort Hare

DM: Did your mother ever work? *Together in Excellence*

AM: My mother, yes. My mother has worked for many doctors as a receptionist. And from an educational point of view, she was a good student of arithmetic and things like that. She was good and I think at some point, I think she wanted to go further. But I intervened b/c she got me when she was 16 years old. She has worked for doctors. But she is the person who actually is responsible for my direction in education. She had a cousin, Dr. Makwena, who had an M.Sc. in maths and she wanted me to emulate him and become a mathematician. She's also responsible for my eels as a politician b/c she taught me politics I think when I was about 13 years. She made me read papers, every time when I was away she would stack the papers of the Communist Party of South Africa and when I come back I would read those things. Whatever material was to do with liberation, she tried. She bought me books, political books ... Somehow she thought I had a criminal mind because she took a very keen interest in trying to discourage me about that line. She bought me a lot of books about crime, real books, true stories about South African criminals. She was a very, very inspiring person. She was also a polyglot. She knew, she would talk most of the 11 languages of this country. That also made me interested in languages. I also began to love languages. She, maybe the reason is that I'm an only child, so for most of the time, I was with her. She never liked staying with me. I think I've been in boarding schools for most of the time. The first time I spent a full year at home since 1946 was 1958 when I was doing my honors degree at Wits. Now as I said, I went to Fort Hare in 1955.

DM: That was a tumultuous time at FH.

AM: Yes. Let me tell you something about St. Peter's. St. Peter's Secondary School was one of the elite schools among blacks. It produced quite a number of science students for a school at that time for blacks it's science facilities were very high. For instance, we actually did experiments in groups of four, sometimes groups of two, which wasn't common with some of these black schools. Some black schools you learn science without ever touching the apparatus. The teacher demonstrated. You never actually performed the experiments. It is also a school that produced quite a handful of leaders, I can just name a few of them. The former president of the ANC, Tambo.

DM: He also taught there.

AM: Yeah and he also taught there. The former secretary general of the ANC, Duma Nokwe, Henry Makgothi.

DM: I met with him.

AM: You met with him.

DM: Joe Matthews.



AM: Joe Matthews. Sometimes some of us are not too proud of that. [laughter] ... quite people who indeed made a mark in this thing. I think because it was an Anglican school, at least during my time, we had people who were in that school who could inspire you. During my time, the superintendent of the school, it was the end of my time, was Father Trevor Huddleston, a man, politically who was a giant. Politics in a different way, from a Christian point of view. You had people like Reeves, the bishop, Reeves, at the time when Huddleston was not yet a bishop, he was a bishop. And these were people who fought, particularly the education. You see I grew up at a time when Bantu Education was started in 1952, I'd been you know, missing it. It was a missionary. And the Anglican Church was proud of its institutions and particularly proud of St. Peter's. So when Bantu Education took over schools they could not accept that. And as a result they decided that they would rather close St. Peter's as a secondary school. But then it was changed to St. Martin's, which became a white school and is now a multi-racial school. So that school started to give you some political background.

DM: Was your mother ever a member of the Communist Party or did she just read the literature?

AM: No, she was a very admirer of Communists, but a very fanatical member of the ANC.

DM: While you were growing up?

AM: Yes, she was. Even, she died still very, very fanatical about the ANC in 1993. My father died in 197... he died in 1963 when I was just, I was one month in Robben Island

when he died. He was actually thrown out of a moving train. '93 when I came back, my mother was still alive, yeah '93 when I came back, she was still alive. And she was still a member of the ANC. She actually made me to pay for the subscription of the ANC. When I told her that I was a member of the ANC she says produce your card and I couldn't produce it. [laughter]. I thought being in the revolution was enough, but she wanted me to be a card-carrying member. She was that type of person.

DM: Was she involved in the defiance campaign when you were growing up?

AM: She didn't volunteer, because you had to volunteer, but she was an aching member of the ANC when I was growing up.

DM: And your father too?

AM: My father was strictly apolitical. He was more concerned about business. In fact, he thought that we were just being a nuisance with these politics and things. But he supported the organisation. If you asked him which organisation he supports, he would say the ANC because in his mind I think all of us were supposed to belong to the ANC. I was a little bit worried about some things. I was worried for instance that the church to me, although I saw these men who were very apolitical, but I was a little bit worried about the way the church portrayed the heroes of my people. Heathens. The other thing, when I was young, I thought the church pandered to apartheid. Because, for instance, at St. Peter's was a private parish for the school. There were two parishes in Rosetenville, St. Mary's and St. Peter's. And it looked like the church conveniently made St. Mary's a white parish and the domestic servants who were there came to St. Peter's. And in my feeling I felt that was pandering to apartheid and segregation. Because I'm not, from the start I was clear that the English actually started segregation in our country. Sometimes their attitude also was rather condescending. I was worried in the way we were taught history. It worried me. I was quite a good student of history because I managed to pass it and I'd be about the second or third best student and if I thought I needed the marks, I could even be the best student. But I didn't like it. I didn't like history because I thought the history we were taught was biased. You know I couldn't understand how people who came here and didn't have cattle suddenly talked about other people stealing their cattle and then they go in to recapture cattle. I was a bit worried. Now you see I belong to the Mtetwa clan of the Zulus. Now the Mtetwa clan is actually the clan that built the Zulu kingdom. ... Now as a Zulu child, you were taught to respect Shaka. You will notice among the older people, very few people have the name Shaka as a name given to them. And that is because he was revered. You couldn't take the chance of calling somebody Shaka and then tomorrow he turns out to be a coward or he turns out to be a nobody. But you see, I would read in history, people talk of Napoleon and they talk of Bismarck, great tacticians and political you know, people who could do things. But your builders of nations. In our history Shaka was a savage, the man who decimated people. Great men like him, his nation building, these were not acknowledged. Now for me, I didn't like that. So South African history, I didn't enjoy it. But as I say, for purposes of passing exams, I did well. The other thing I had a problem with saying yes when I mean no. Now time and again, I didn't agree with the way we were administered.

DM: At St. Peter's?

AM: Yes, sometimes. Particularly when we got a new warden, Father Rakane. We had a warden before. I felt all my life he knew the psychology of young people. So I found myself at one time being a little rebellious. And I thought the role of prefects was not one I liked. They tended to be more policemen than leaders. That's the role they played. That's why for instance when they asked me to be a prefect, in fact they wanted to make me a prefect when I was not yet eligible to be one, when I was in form three. I refused. And ultimately I actually was responsible for the demise of the prefect system at St. Peter's. I also was involved in some negotiations about hunger strikes and some things. I mean food strikes.

DM: Was there an ANC Youth League at St. Peter's?

AM: On the campus itself there wasn't an active youth league. But a man called Joe Molefe who was a former St. Peter's student, came to us in 1953, mobilised some of us. That's when now I got, in my own right, I became part of, conscious.

DM: In what ways did he motivate you?

AM: This chap came to fetch us and took us to the Indian Congress offices. Now 1953 I think a group of Youth Leaguers, amongst them was, Hutchinson.

DM: Alfred Hutchinson?

AM: Yeah, Alfred Hutchinson. I think Duma Nokwe had gone. He had gone overseas for a youth conference. And Lindy Nkane. Now, Hutchinson was a person who was coming to give us a briefing about his travels. I think it was in Czechoslovakia if I remember well. And Hutchinson started describing this conference. Now he was a master in the Japanese language. And then he described socialism for me, for us, you know, the way it works, why it is, what is the aim, what it is doing. And I must say, I was attracted, very much attracted. Because I couldn't, you see the South African system, I couldn't understand the vast differences between the impossibly rich as I put it and the diabolically poor. And I thought the system the way he described it was a good one. Well my mother continued to buy me books. I think when I was about 15, I read the biography of Stalin. And I kept on reading. But I think I was more attracted to the Communist Party.

DM: That was before you got to Fort Hare?

AM: Yeah, before I got to Fort Hare. I was more attracted to the Communist Party. But I was too young at the time. So I decided to, I loved to read Marxist literature. Now my mother was also a friend of Mac Shope, who was the general secretary of Sactu. Was always a member of the Communist party. And Mac provided some of the literature to my mother, who then gave the literature to me. And Mac also taught me a lot about trade

unionism. I would visit him and he would tell me, when I was at Fort Hare I would come home. Because he stayed at the same location. I went to Fort Hare, as I said. At first, when I was still in primary, I thought I was going to be a doctor. When I was in Standard Six I asked my principal and Standard Six teacher, will I be able to complete medicine before I became 27. I had a premonition that something was meant to happen to me when I was 27, so I wanted to finish this. But also there was the idea which I just got that maybe I could also become an engineer. But I didn't know much about what an engineer was, I just knew that it was somebody who built things, and I liked it. But maybe because of my mother's bosses, the idea of a doctor appealed to me. Now, when I left for Fort Hare, alright, then I tried to get a scholarship to go and study at Fort Hare. Now, at St. Peter's I think that the year I was in Form Five was a year that did my career a great deal of harm in that I was seen as a, Father Rakane thought I was a malcontent. Now the school used to give a scholarship for the best science student. And I was the best science student in the school. The school used to give a bursary for the best student. I was the best student. Then I applied for a scholarship, eight year city council scholarship. And the people came to see me and I was the only one who had passed. But I didn't get any of those things. I thought they didn't want to send a malcontent to university. I got to Fort Hare, my mother and father paid for me the first year. It was a lot. They didn't make much money. They sacrificed a lot. My mother also had a way of talking to her employers to advance her some money. By that year I then decided, no, at the end of the year, I tried a loan bursary. I got it and that some money I used for my junior degree. I was doing maths, applied maths, physics and chemistry. But the way I got to do applied maths, I didn't even know there was a subject called applied maths. Now St. Peter's, we didn't do biology. We rather were physical science students. Now, maths needed biology, at least one of the biological sciences because mathematics was alright, you could substitute one of them. So on the train, I'm asking the older boys, tell me what's up? So I asked one chap is there a subject akin to mathematics, because I started to teach myself botany and I also didn't like it. He said there's a subject called applied mathematics. So I decided I was going to do physics, chemistry, pure math and applied math. I did applied maths, passed my four subjects, was amongst the two best first year students. I wanted to do applied maths second year, but the professor wanted to discourage me and a friend of mine. But we persisted. So second year we did pure maths, applied maths, physics, we dropped chemistry. Passed. Was supposed to do applied-maths 3. Again it was, we were only 2 in applied maths two. And I think we were the first two to do applied maths 2. We pass, we get to applied maths 3. The professor says no, no, no, no. So we did. We used to get one lecture a week for our major. Then it happened that year I, no in fact the year before I met my wife. She was a first year student. When I was doing third year, she got pregnant. She told me about this in June. So I left for home. Now the rule at Fort Hare was the Christians'. If you impregnate somebody, you can only come back to your work if you either couch to marry her or you marry her. So I left, in June I went home and tried to arrange for this question of the marriage. And the result for about three quarters of the second semester, I wasn't there. I just came back to come and write. I wrote, I passed. I passed applied maths quite well. For somebody who was not there, I got a very high second class pass. And my friend got a first class. And then I was supposed to go to Rhodes because I now decided I was going to do applied maths honours. At Rhodes, the professor who was

supposed to teach us there left for America. So they transferred us to Wits and I think it was a good thing because I was taught by one of the best applied mathematicians this country has ever produced, Arthur Blacksley. We did our honors, did our honors course in 15 months. My colleague left. There was a time when there was an exodus of people to Nigeria, particularly the science teachers. So he left and I remained. I went back to Fort Hare to do the teacher's course, University Education Diploma.

DM: What year was that? Was it '59?

AM: Yeah, that's '59 because I finished my honors in '59 February. That's why, I don't have a gown. I've never had one. I've never graduated in presentia. Always been in absentia.

DM: When you first got to FH in 1955, that was the year they had to close down the university.

AM: I was coming to that. So I came. We got the CSR scholarship. When I got to Fort Hare, it was 1955. At the time, Professor Matthews, you know Professor Dent was the principal. A regulation was passed that male students can not go to the mzana, eluk as they used to call it. When we went on strike, some people, I think some of our parents thought, what were we doing? Why do we want to sleep in mzana? But you see there was a principle that was involved. And the principle was that the senate had taken that decision to prohibit people going to mzana without consultation with the SRC. You know I still remember Scotty Weiner (sp?) addressing us and saying the SRC, the toothless bulldog. And that time was the time when things were going very, very wrong. People even used wrong methods, boycott. We stuck to our decision. And I was only three months in the university.

DM: A rude awakening.

AM: It was in April, during grad, that's when we started this thing. It was clear that it was political. The university attacked the SRC. They were not prepared to recognise the SRC as an important aspect of the college. So the college was closed. When we came back, some people were not allowed back. Among them were Kolake who is in Lesotho, this very chap I talked about, Scotty Weiner from Zambia. There was a chap from Kenya. ... . These were regarded as the people who were inciters. I think people like Butela. But what is interesting is the role of Joe Matthews. When the student body was one and he was no longer at Fort Hare, he came. Using his position as an ANC person. He came there to come and break the strike. And he used tactics because there you see you have the ANC. The PAC was not yet born, but the ANC and the Unity Movement, Soya. And he started to use that animosity in trying to break it. I think even the Youth League people saw through that. If you check I'm sure with people who were there in 1955, you'll find he was never respected by them.

DM: What was his motivation in trying to break up the strike?

AM: His father. His father was the principal so he was trying to break the strike. But I must tell you Joe, he's a brilliant person but he just doesn't have a backbone and also he's a spoiled child. But he's brilliant. You know I remember we were at the Lobathe Conference in 1962. One of the best analysis of the position of the Afrikaner in the Free State, I got from Joe at that conference. It was brilliant. But he's an opportunist. A bad one at that.

DM: And ZK, what was your contact like with him?

AM: I was unfortunate at one time. ZK wanted to chase me out of the university at one point. One day I and my friends, I didn't even have a girlfriend. So one day we decided we want to take some girls out to the cinema. So we go to Eluk, we reach Eluk, that's '56. We get to Eluk and we see some woman, Jafta, she's now at UNITRA. So she just refuses and says she's not coming. So apparently at one point, she wasn't very polite to other people also. As misfortune would have it, they lampooned her and by a conglomeration of circumstances, people look at me, I look naughty, they think I did it. So she goes and reports and ZK calls me and says, Andrew you must know about these things. I said I might do everything but I've always had fight men, but I've been taught by my mother not to fight women. The only time I beat up a woman, my mother thrashed me very badly. So I told him no...I have never been to the DC. They were taking chances, hoping that maybe I would tell somebody. Later I came to know actually who did it. It was some Northern Rhodesian Chap.

DM: Where did this reputation as a trouble-maker come from? You said it was there in high school also.

AM: Yeah, you see, you know when you are an only child, I mean, point number one, I am a person who when if I don't like something it doesn't matter if you are my boss, I just tell you. Also, the problem, you see, being born alone, I grew up having to defend myself. So once you learn to defend yourself, sometimes, you fight time and again and people fought that. And I had a problem with my voice. You know at St. Peter's, every time there was noise, Father Rakane believed I was making noise, even if I wasn't. And also, you come from the ghettos of Sophiatown and Alexandra. People think that decent people don't originate from those places. It was just, and then my department, I was a happy go lucky person and people would feel that I'm so noticed to do anything.

DM: And you were a weight-lifter at the time?

AM: Yeah, I was a body-builder and a boxer.

DM: People were telling me that they used to see you in the gym and that you were a champion weight lifter

AM: [laughs]

DM: 55 was when the government first started looking into taking over Fort Hare.

AM: We then had a problem. The question of the SRC actually even after we came back, the question of the SRC was a problem. You know that when we came back we took a decision that we shall not play sport, physical sport. Now that lasted. [end of tape] The question of the SRC was a problem. They did not want us to, they gave us a constitution for the SRC and people were not happy about it because it was not discussed by the student body. Now, another year, now you know we sort of went through the years, '56, '57, then '58 I was at Wits, then I came back '59. '59 I was the senior student at Beda Hall. We were busy now, there was now the Transfer of University Act. We really went to town to try and go against it. There was also another problem. Whilst I was away, '58, there was a strike by the nurses at Lovedale, Victoria East, and the student body was involved. And people like Gumbo [Ambrose Makiwane] were there. Now Gumbo when I came was the leader of the Youth League. He was a charismatic leader, but I think I also had the feeling that he was also a bully. But, he led the ANC. He's the type of leader you'd want if you are fighting. You wouldn't want him to be your leader when you are strategising. And the question of this strike, the Unity Movement, with its boycott tactics, when it even boycotts the very people. I had a problem. Now '59, the SRC, yes that's when we took the decision that we're not going to play sport because when we had that strike in '59 the admin suspended some chaps. Now, we came to '60. I had a problem. Whilst I was doing UED I was assisting in applied maths tutorials. So they offered me a post for '60. Now you know in '59 I was part of the people who were fighting against it. So I wasn't happy about accepting the post. I got in touch with Govan. [Mbeki] Govan then said to me, alright, no, you must take it. Yeah, I must take it. So I obeyed instruction. So I took the post. Coming to think about it, I think Govan was right.

DM: What was his rationale for telling you to take the post?

AM: He said to me, look, Andrew, because also I was beginning to be interested in organising the peasants. you know whilst I was still a student, sometimes I would go alone, go to the villages, visit the villages. And so I was beginning, '59 actually I was beginning to get involved with organisation of the peasants. So he said no I must take the post. And also applied mathematics didn't have actually a teacher. Professor Davidson taught us applied mathematics, but he was actually a physics teacher. So he said no, go for it. I went for it. And without being modest, I did a good job of it. Although I was teaching with two fascists. Linday and Van Rensberg. That's where sometimes politics could come in. I was a lecturer. There was a chap who was with me at Wits. Now I did my honors effectively in one year. He did his honors in two years. When he came back, he got a post in Afrikaans. He was not married. But you see, his salary, where his salary started, mine stopped. But status was the same, only because I was black. That was a bit of a problem for me.

DM: And there were separate councils at that time as well.

AM: Yes, there were also separate councils. I was in the advisory senate. I didn't like it.

DM: Were you forced to participate in it?

AM: No. I could have refused, but by then I had now decided that I was going to fight it. So I wanted to be. They put me in the senate. I became a member of the senate, advisory senate.

DM: At one point in '61 Stanley Mabizela was there, he was expelled for calling Kaiser Matanzima a sellout and a dog.

AM: Yeah, what had happened actually then, now in '61, the question of the SRC again came very sharply. Now I'm saying I was in a fix. I was a Youth Leaguer. I knew some of these chaps were with me in the Youth League. I was a lecturer and part of the administration. But I believed that the students were right. The only time I was unhappy with them was when they, in the dining hall I think, Professor MOM Seboni was there and they threw a knife and things like that. And they turned the situation, whereas all the time they were right. And I told them, I said it's not good. By the way I think I was the only lecturer allowed to attend secret student meetings. I used to go there and attend. So I found myself actually moving with the students, advising the students about tactics and things like that, but I was a member of staff. Now one day, the late Griffiths Mxlang, he is with Stanley Mabizela there, standing Matanzima, who was the advisory council chairman, passes by. And Mxlang says, he's a sellout, in Xhosa, nhwage. And he is moving with Mzamane. Mzamane has been having problems with Stanley Mabizela in the hostel because he was the warden of the hostel. So when they asked him, who's that boy, Matanzima, he says, no, it's Mabizela. I'm in my house, no no, that day, it was actually over the weekend. I'm going towards my office. Just in front of Stewart hall, I meet Sizakele Sixashe. And Sixashe says to me, 'they've expelled Mabizela.' I said, 'for what?' He says, 'for being, for saying that Matanzima is a sellout.' But I say, 'he is so why do we expel somebody for that.' So I say to Sixashe, he must tell him that he musn't go. I go and organise the staff members, the black staff members. On the basis that we are members of the advisory council and senate and the law says we must be consulted and they didn't. They just expelled him. So I meet Chris [Hani]. I said to Chris, 'Chris, come here. I'm going to organise the staff, you go and organise the students.' We meet in the morning at the rector's office on Monday. Now Chris was a good organiser. So he goes and organises. When I come, they are there.

DM: En bloc!

AM: En bloc! So I come there and I say to them, alright, dismissed. They go away. So I go into the meeting to discuss with the Rector. That gave me a lot of moral strength because I told the students to go away and they did. So Professor Ross tells us, reads all these powers, because according to the Transfer Act, the rector had ... powers. So ultimately I said to him, I said, look, you can't expel that person. In fact I'm even surprised that Matanzima even took this up with you. He knows that. And then you take the decision to expel somebody. How is that? Not even punish someone. And you've been reading me the powers of the rector. I said to him, the rector must, yes, he's given such powers, but it is supposed that he'll use them responsibly or else it would just be

destroying and building nothing. And I said you read me the transfer act, what does it say on other things? You didn't consult us. So ultimately Stanley did not go home.

DM: He was very courageous in taking the blame. He knew that the people would support him as a popular student leader.

AM: That's it. We had a little bit of a crisis at a certain point. Now this time the SRC was led by Choabi, Seretse Choabi.

DM: IS this after 1960?

AM: Yes, it is after 1960.

DM: I was told that the SRC was disbanded after the takeover. Was it kept in place for a few years after the takeover?

AM: No you see we then resuscitated. I actually asked the student body to resuscitate the SRC. And also to stop the boycott. The reason why, I found that drunkenness in the campus was escalating greatly and that we couldn't actually control the student body properly. So there would be a vacuum. So I discussed with our Youth League chaps and our other students that they should start the sports, stop boycotting. In fact I offered myself to be the president of the Athletic Union. So that was taken up. And then one of the students, the SRC, I also told them, I'd also fight it at the Senate and advisory council that it must come back, and that happened. But we had a crisis, after you see that throwing of the knife. The student body was asked to sign a declaration that they will not use violence or anything. And the aim was that we are closing the school if they don't. So we had meetings, I was advising them that they should sign it. People were strong. I remember one girl, she was saying they shouldn't sign. Then Choabi said if we don't sign then we don't leave this place, even if the police come. And this woman asked, 'do police also arrest women?'

DM: Who was that? Do you remember.

AM: It was Ms. Mzane. So ultimately everybody signed and they avoided a crisis.

DM: Do you remember 1959, before the takeover, I interviewed Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, she was talking about the new regime that came to visit the university.

AM [Interrupts] Yes, Yeah. Ross and the registrar. Who was it?

DM: Du Prez

AM: Du Prez. Yeah, they came there in '59 during that time and the chaps threw egg on Du Prez [laughs loudly] and he never, he never really, he never forgave the student body for that. That's why when he came back, he was furious. One of the difficulties we had politically was the lecturers. The Unity Movement chaps like the ultra left they are,

they'll put a very strong position, but when you have to follow it the end, they can't go. I was watching the situation and I found that we can make the senate, advisory senate have some teeth by forming a black lecturer's association so that from that association we'd get certain mandate to go and put before the administration. But you see, then they came with their ultra thing and said, unity movement chaps said, no, no, no, no, no, we can't form it, it's racist. And I said no, it's not racist, it's pragmatic. It's created for a purpose. So we went on, on, on. They actually sabotaged that. But when they had a problem later they called me up to try and get them out of it. But we also had a problem of some of our senior lecturers and professors. Professor Seboni was the new regime's man. And the person who supported him was the registrar. The late Ndamse was Ross's man, not the regime, but Ross's, because they worked together in the Free State, Kroonstad, when Ross was an inspector and he was the teacher. So we then have two people trying to vie for the favor of the administration. Ross pushing Ndamse, the registrar pushing MOM Seboni. That even came to a head. Both men you see were not really, they weren't leaders of people as such. They were, you had elements of egotism. They were egotists. Because ultimately the fight became between the two of them. They started even challenging one another's degrees. Ndamse had actually given himself an MA degree from UNISA. He had a b-admin UNISA, but he didn't have an MA. And in the meantime, Seboni was checking on that and he found out so he challenged him. There was a court case. It was a terrible thing, but for some of us, we were not impressed. We knew that it was two opportunists. But I preferred Seboni to Ndamse because Ndamse was a slick man. Ndamse, even at the beginning, thought he was with us in our politics. But what worried me one day, Mbete, who worked at the library, you see that double story house there which, I think at one point, at the time, it was used for the librarian or something like that. Now Mbete was just a library assistant who lived there. He had a big family. That was Baleka Kgositsile's father. I come to learn that they want to remove him from that house and I don't understand. So, I'm surprised. So one day, a friend of mine, Makanya, you remember was the deputy librarian. Makanya comes to me and says, you know, Andrew, Ndamse is behind this. In the meantime, I'm talking to Ndamse about what these Boers are doing and this. Until I found that out. Now even whilst I was talking about this organisation, Black Staff, when I called MOM, MOM said to me, I can't come to that meeting. We were in that meeting, Ndamse was there and I thought he's the man who is with me. He actually went to MOM and told, when they were not friends, told him Andrew wants to destroy the senate. The next time, by then I was the rural area organiser and Chief Mabantla, I went to him. Chief Mabantla says to me, do you know that your public administration man is assisting the government to draw up urban councils. And then later it didn't become surprising that he left and went to join the bantustan and joined the wrong party, Matanzima's party. So we had that situation in the campus.

DM: Would you say that you politically matured while at Fort Hare?

AM: Yes, well you see when I was a student, I used to believe that students don't make good politicians because they don't have responsibility. So it was a decision I took that I'm going to be active after '60. And I was very active. I learned a lot. I organised. I even organised, you see, we had a strike of the workers there, I assisted in the strike, not

organised it. The workers were being strangled. You see there was a group of workers who came from headquarters here and they were supposed to get a certain rate and the registrar and the contractor were actually strangling them. So they went to strike. They called me, they told me about this, they said I must go and interpret for them. So I went there. That's when the police started to go after me. Because unfortunately there was one of them who was a system agent. So he went and told the police that I was responsible. Oh yeah, by the way, we also had, the three day strike, when the ANC called the 3 day strike, I think it was '61, fighting against the republic.

DM: Was Chris Hani expelled during that strike? I've read where it says that he was expelled during that strike, but everyone I've talked to says he received his degree from Fort Hare and wasn't expelled.

AM: No, no, he wasn't expelled. Chris got his degree and then went to Cape Town. No, he wasn't expelled.

DM: What are your memories of him as a student?

AM: He was a good student in terms of his Latin and things like that, English. He was a good student. I worked with him very close.

DM: Was it all underground after 1960?

AM: Yeah, it was underground. I worked with him very much. I'll give you an example of what he did. Chris and I, '61, we go to Ntselamanzi. The police are combing the area and we wanted to put in leaflets. Govan had asked us to do that, to mobilise the people for that area. So the two of us go to Ntselamanzi. The police are combing the area. We move behind the police, as they are going that way, we are putting leaflets in the houses. He was a very courageous person. He was still small. But also, he had an unorthodox method of doing things. During the three-day stay at home, the unity movement wanted to boycott that. So I went to discuss with their leaders and persuade them that no, the student body must do this thing. And I decided that I can't work when the ANC has called this. So I told my students that whether you like it or not, you won't have a lecture. Now I am actually getting agreements. Chris goes and organises younger chaps of the unity movement to attend their own chairman. So the chairman comes to me and says, 'but what is this?' I say 'oh gosh, it must be Chris again.' So I go to him, I said, 'Chris, why did you do this?' He says to me, 'no, I started organising when you were busy and you didn't come to report the results to me, so I took this [path].' He was a hard-liner, a real hard-liner in terms of people, even within the movement, who didn't toe the line. Then he was also very young. But he was very influential. We also worked together in the organisation of the schools, Lovedale, because he was at Lovedale. So I worked with him to mobilise the students. Even when I went to Healdtown to organise the students, I used to take him. He was a very serious reader of theoretical works. So I became a member of the communist party in 1961.

DM: While you were at FH?

AM: Whilst I was still at FH. And the ANC was banned.

DM: Were you and Chris, I know that Chris Hani and Dr. Mabindisa have all spoken of the influence of Govan Mbeki at the time...

AM: Yes, yes. Yeah, Govan was in fact our mentor. Govan was our mentor. Because he was a member of the National Executive in the Eastern Cape. He was also in the eastern cape executive. And he was in charge of us, both from the ANC and the party point of view. I liked him very much. I liked working with him. He's one of the best administrator's I know. But the problem is he can be patient with people who fool around. He can be extremely patient. And he is the type of person, you can't go to him and say, this thing can't be done, until you've actually tried it. He doesn't believe in that. I was also in the Eastern Cape rural areas organisation of which he chaired. So I attended those meetings with him. And I found him a very, very inspiring person to work with. And I was also with him in Robben Island for a long time.

DM: When did you first get sent to Robben Island?

AM: In 1960 the Communist Party and the ANC agreed to form *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. And then Govan was in the high command. Now the late Vuyisile Mini (sp?) was also very close to me because we worked together in the rural areas. He was also in the high command of the Eastern Cape. I was about 26 years old at the time, and it was in my nature to want to join MK. Govan gave me an instruction not to join MK. He had good reasons. He didn't want me meddling. I was also doing a good job as the rural organiser. In the meantime, I wanted to be. So I talked to Mini and said I wanted to be and Mini said no, he can't understand why people can say I shouldn't be a member. So I actually became a member by default. I think the top leadership will give you the fait accompli. But Mini said to me, we've got this problem, if anything happens to you, we'll be in trouble. So your task is to organise the MK units, but not to act with them. So I actually organised them and then started to act with them. In fact I acted with every unit that I established. I would establish a unit and go and act to make sure it was a unit. Then I was arrested in 1963.

DM: Were you finished lecturing at the time?

AM: I was lecturing.

DM: You were working for MK and lecturing at the same time?

AM: Yeah at the same time. I was lecturing, rural area organiser, commander of the MK in that region. So one day, I then with my unit went to sabotage the pylons, but by this time, the police were preparing to ban me. And on the day we acted, they were there at my house. And when I came back, they arrested me for that. Then I went to Robben Island. I was arrested on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March '63. I was ultimately sentenced to 12 years on

the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April. I think I was among the first ten MK people on Robben Island and ultimately Mandela followed me there. Govan and them they followed me there. That's where, and whilst I was there, I did quite a lot. I actually developed the ANC structures on Robben Island.

DM: And when did you get out?

AM: I went for a further charge. I had about 7 sabotage charges and then 2 membership charges but then seven they reduced to 3. So they put me in the trial. Mabizela and others were arrested from Fort Hare now for political reasons. I was put in there and sentenced to three years, one year, two years running concurrently with the twelve. So I served my 13 years full. Then I got out in 76.

DM: And went to Angola?

AM: I left. I was banished to Umlazi. So I stayed at Umlazi for about three months. Then the MK chaps came to fetch me. Because the old man Oliver [Tambo] thought that I might, in fact he was right because I was already in touch with the underground and he saw that I was going to be arrested. So they collected me and I went out after three months. I went outside. I went to Tanzania. In Tanzania I went to the Soviet Union to do my military training. When I completed my military training, then I went to Angola. When I came back out of Fort Hare I met Mzamane who was then the rector and tried to assist them in trying to raise funds from military industry people. Because I believe that Fort Hare should not be a dead symbol, but it should be a living monument. Fort Hare has made a very great contribution to Africa. Let me say Central and Southern Africa in terms of the leaders there. People like Mugabe himself. Many of these people. And also some of them, some of the people, when I was in Lusaka, they assisted me a great deal. Because there was an interesting thing about Fort Hare, you remember in the early period, you have the ANC of Southern Rhodesia, the ANC of Northern Rhodesia, the ANC of Nyasaland. Now some of these chaps were actually, when they were at Fort Hare, they were members of the Youth League. Yes. I remember one time I asked Scotty Weiner, when did he leave the Youth League. So we actually were politically the same. Now, the other thing at Fort Hare, which I think I should mention, Fort Hare, in terms of university students, though it was a relatively small university, it was very powerful. For instance, there was a time when NUSAS, people didn't like NUSAS, even I myself didn't like it. When I was at Wits, I couldn't understand how they allowed convict labor to be used there. So time and again I myself used to attack NUSAS for not being revolutionary enough. But when I was there at Fort Hare, then NUSAS was banned on the campus. So the student body joined it underground. Then at a certain time the idea of, now the PAC had broken from the ANC and therefore you had a problem in terms of the student body. It was divided. So the students, Youth League people, decided to try and form an organisation, student organisation, which would include both PAC and ANC students on the campus. That's when the idea of ASA came. The African Students' Association came up. It was mobilised. People came, Masilwa and others came to explain to some of us. That we should accept. Because at the beginning, I wasn't very happy about joining with the PAC chaps. But ultimately we agreed. The late

[inaudible] then decided to renege from the PAC. He was with us at Fort Hare. He was in the Youth League. Then they decided to form an organisation here in the Transvaal called ASUSA. It was African Student Union of South Africa. We'd done so much work on the ground that ASA was viable. In fact, the last meeting that I addressed was an ASA meeting in Lovedale. Now you remember I told you about the African Lecturer's Association. The Unity Movement then came up with an idea that we must call for something called the Progressive Lecturer's Association. So I said to them, alright, I know you'll sabotage that, but I'll go along with you. Cause I knew if we did form it, one they wouldn't get the whites in. So if they formed it, it would still be the same organisation I wanted to form, just under a different name. And I would take it over b/c I was more popular than all of them put together in the campus. So again, Ndamse played a very funny role. Now, for us in the youth league, point number one, the Coloured students and Indian students were members of the Youth League. Actually at Fort Hare, you were never a member of the [racial groups], we were all just members of the Youth League. Then within the Youth League, the coloureds and Indians said, if you chaps from an organisation called ASA and it's for black Africans, what is going to happen to us? You want us to form Indian and Coloured organisations? So we had this problem inside the organisation. At that time, the group of Cape Peninsula Student Union Leaders, it was a unity movement organisation. It was Neville Alexander, Wilcox, Mafede (sp. ?) Sigile Bam (sp.?) . Most of these chaps actually were graduates or were students at Cape Town University. So they came to us to discuss the idea of a progressive national students' organisation which would include everybody. It tallied with our idea. It would solve the problem. So we then went to that meeting and said the Youth Leaguers are not required to follow Youth League lines. Everybody is free. We actually agreed to form that organisation, PASO, but we had a lot of discussion, who's going to control it? So ultimately whilst we were busy, I was arrested. I attended those meetings. Then it was that discussion which made it easy for Barney [Pityana] and them who were aware of this to then form SASO. Because the Black Conscious ideology was amorphous enough to include everybody. You could be Black Conscious and still be ANC, Black Conscious and still be.... That's how I think, the moment, it became easier for them to form it. When it was formed, the leadership on the Island were not sure what to think of it. They thought actually this was an organisation formed by the government. I then explained to them what I'm explaining to you and that I'm not surprised.

[Masondo's schedule does not allow for further discussion]

**Danny Massey with Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, 25 February 25 1999,  
Bloemfontein**

DM: Can you start off and give me a little bit of information on your background? I know you were born in Kroonstad.

IM: I never give such information.

DM: You never give such information.

IM: I usually just tell people that I was born in Kroonstad.

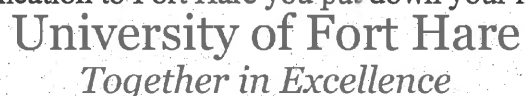
DM: What did your parents do for a living?

IM: They were in the education field, I guess. Both were teachers.

DM: Were they ever involved in any political organisations when you were growing up?

IM: No.

DM: I noticed on your application to Fort Hare you put down your home language as being Afrikaans.



IM: I did?

DM: Yes you did.

IM: I didn't know I did that.

DM: You did that, or someone else filled out the application for you. I just wanted to find out a little bit about that.

IM: I'm not so sure what you want to find out about that.

DM: How did it come to be that Afrikaans was the predominant language spoken in your home?

IM: It was actually not unusual in my area. Lots of people like me had Afrikaans as their major language because we lived in, excuse me [she is interrupted] No, it was not unusual. Lots and lots of families in the Kroonstad and also Free State, Bloemfontein area, were Afrikaans speaking families because we were very mixed families. So it wasn't unusual.

DM: Was that the only language spoken in your home?

IM: No we spoke two or three languages. Predominantly in the area was Sesotho. In the

house, I mean it was also the language of my grandparents, let me say my maternal grandparents, it was the language of the house. So it was not surprising that it was our language since we lived close to my maternal grandparents. So I guess that would explain part of it. But my father was also an Afrikaans teacher in the high school.

DM: Your formative years were spent right after the Bantu Education act was passed. How did it effect your schooling early on before Fort Hare.

IM: No, I didn't go to school under the Bantu Education Act. No. So I wrote what we called a Junior Certificate Examination in my hometown and then went to Marianhill in Natal and that's where I learned Zulu. And I think Bantu Education became operative only around that time. Only around that time.

DM: When you got to Fort Hare, it was right before the authorities were about to take over the university. Were you aware of this before you got to Fort Hare or was it something that you became aware of once you got there?

IM: Well, I'm not so sure whether I became aware of it only after, it may have been something that one was aware of only before. But certainly from the first year of Fort Hare, it was a period of great activity around this act. I was then in the SRC. I was the only woman I think at the time and this was a very burning issue.

DM: Was your first year 58 or was it 59?

IM: I think it was 58, I'm not so sure.

DM: The records they have at Fort Hare are kind of slipshod and it says that you applied in 58, but it's not clear as to whether you started in 58 or you started in 59.

IM: I'm not quite sure about that either.

DM: Can you remember the first time that you became aware that South Africa as a country was a peculiar situation, that things weren't all right here?

IM: You know one was aware of that very early. Although my parents were not people who were politically active, there was a social consciousness around the place. For example, I remember as a young, old Mahabane, who was once the ANC president, used to be a minister in Kroonstad and active in his politics there. Although Kroonstad as a town may not have been that active. But I mean the discrepancies, how your own principal was marched off by police for having not carried his pass on him. And this was a respectable citizen, the most educated person in the community. And that made a real mark on many children, that something is wrong with a system that would denigrate someone who has such a high standing in the community. But also the fact that people were being moved. My parents had moved once from closer to the river. The town is now located. We also moved, just about my going to Fort Hare we were again forcibly removed to another area. One was already conscious of the discrepancies and so on.

DM: I was watching a video where you said, if you weren't active when you came to Fort Hare, then you became politically active. What was the atmosphere like when you got to Fort Hare?

IM: Well Fort Hare was really politically active. You had really very impressive people in terms of political understanding, the readings that they did, knowledge that they had. And of course some of them were older. And the debates that they entered into. So it was a real hive of political activity and debate. Marxist within Marxist and the left and the right. It was very, very active. I think one was in a sense immediately catapulted to take one's social experiences and begin to look at them in a slightly different context. And I think that is where one's political formation in not only asking questions, but seeking answers.

DM: Was this through lectures or mostly through student involvement?

IM: Student involvement, really, in the main. The lectures really were not very political. But student activity was really very, very active.

DM: What types of courses did you take when you were there?

IM: I majored in English and history, although I did Afrikaans, Nederlands, Psychology, Anthropology or something like that. I majored in English and history.

DM: You speak about debates and meetings. Do you remember any of these debates and meetings in particular?

IM: Oh yeah. I mean, the student union called the CU was an active area where there were meetings of students and debates taking place. But also in forums outside the university there was all this activity. Because you had for example students who belonged to the Unity Movement, to the PAC, to the ANC. In fact, it's only then that I got to really understand what the Unity Movement was all about. I mean I just used to hear about it and really not understand. That's when one began to pick up the differences between the different strands of politics and got a better understanding of that. And there was quite a great deal of passion about it. But then you also had a number of students who were coming from other African countries, from Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Namibia, and Botswana and some of them were very, very sharp politically and also made their mark in their own countries. I think one of the people I remember became the attorney general for Botswana. Another one became the head of the agriculture department in Zambia. Another one became very much involved I think somewhere near the top of World University. One became the director of communications in Malawi and so on. So people of standing in their own communities and very active politically. But I also came at a time when some of what you call the older generation of Fort Hare was about to leave. The Makiwanes, who were very, very active. The Kozwangese, who went to Namibia, who is a Namibian. I was sort of the new student when they were leaving.

DM: You spoke a little about the Unity Movement and I spoke with Dr. Mabindisa who is the registrar now and he was talking about an intense rivalry between SOYA [Society of Young Africans, the youth brigade of the Unity Movement] and the ANC Youth League. Do you remember any of that?

IM: Yes I do. Maybe not as clear, but SOYA was really quite active. And I think I still have a good picture of I think, I may be wrong, and I think he may be a judge now, I'll think of his name because I think I met him the other day. I think he was Somyalo, if I'm not wrong, who was active in SOYA, but I might be wrong. But SOYA was very, very active and really there was an intense rivalry between the Youth League and SOYA. Yes there was.

DM: So how did one become a member of one group as opposed to the other?

IM: Well, I don't seem to remember that there was a contestation for membership. For me it was like a contestation of ideas which you then would say that ideas that win over the time would win over. But maybe I say this in retrospect, I'm not so sure. But it was a university where those different strands articulated themselves very, very well. But there was also a sense that some were very group-oriented already and stuck to the groupings that were existing. And the others were in a sense almost like, recruitment also new, new members also being then. And the ANC was very good, I think. I don't know whether it was because then it was a strategy and also recruitment because a lot of young people who came into the university getting recruited and becoming part of the ANC seemed to maybe have been part of the thing. But the others, it seemed as if, don't think they had a way of going out. It was simply debates and maybe people aligned themselves then according to the debates.

DM: He was telling me that the ANC people used to call them beans and the SOYA people used to come back with this or that. And there used to be a lot of flinging around of words.

IM: Well that's certainly true. Name-calling was not just between parties. It was also between the different houses in which the male students lived in particular. Between Beda and Iona and Wesley. And depending also on where you were in terms of that, your politics sometimes also got shaped by that. Because people who were at Beda were Anglicans, many of them Youth Leaguers, very much in the Tambo tradition. And there I think the ANC was quite strong. So too was the ANC Youth League at Wesley because a lot of the Africans, especially the ones from certain parts of the Cape, the then Cape, meaning the Eastern Cape, would be people who come from that Methodist tradition. And therefore you tended to find certain strands stronger. So the naming, you know of one another, of calling names of one another was also part of that tradition.

DM: Where did Eluk fit into all of this?

IM: Eluk was in a strange category. Although there were situations where you'd find

that political homes of some of the women were not necessarily the political homes of their boyfriends, although sometimes there might have an influence there and so on. Some members of Eluk, not a large number, would be where you'd say, were politically active. The others really were just a sense of consciousness about activity, had a social consciousness, but I'm not so sure whether you could say a large number of them were active in politics. But there were some that were. Others were simply in support of particular positions rather than being actively in the fray. There was also across the river with the nurses, those that were quite, a small core that were quite active. Others whose influence probably could have been an influence also by whom they had relationships and so on. But there was a core that was actually a very important core because in the activities that the university did and its support and who seemed actually politically quite in tune, especially from the Eastern Cape at the hospital.

DM: Yourself, you said that you were a member of the SRC. There were only about 30 women at the school at this time compared with 4 or 5 hundred men. How did you get involved with the SRC. Was it politically motivated?

IM: No it was mostly, I think out of, first of all it was, which seems to be my problem always, is that people choose you. You don't run for office. You get chosen. And I seem to always run into these kind of things. I'm not sure why I do. I got chosen by the women to say, no we want you to sit on the SRC. I'm not so sure why they shoe one, but that seems to have followed me up in my life forever and ever. [Matsepe-Casaburri was asked to be the president of the South African Broadcasting Corporation in much the manner she describes above. I believe that's also how she became the Premier of the Free State]. I was politically not as astute as I'm sure many other women that were there, but I suppose there's a sense of just simply honesty and a commitment to those things that were right that maybe also just pushed one forward. I don't know. I was relatively small so it had nothing to do with size. I mean it's not as if one had an imposing stature and so on. So I can't really say why I ended up there. But the other is that sometimes one also, I think that maybe explaining the things that happen in one's life is that when you are given responsibility or you are asked to rise to responsibility, you accept responsibility. And maybe that's how I got there. People just said no we want somebody to do this and you sort of rise to the occasion to accept responsibility and that could have been it. I don't know.

DM: I recently spoke to Ntombi Dwane, who was at Fort Hare starting in 61, so just after you left. She said that there were only a couple of women who would speak out at these political meetings. Was this something you had to deal with as an SRC member? Were your views listened to?

IM: As an SRC member, one is actually almost not schizophrenic, but ambivalent. One, you had the responsibility that your parents had sent you there. They were paying for that. You didn't really understand if at all you got involved and had to be expelled. Because those are the things that you had to deal with. How would you cope with that? You're young and you have this enormous sense of responsibility that you owe it to others. And there were some who were very adamant about that, who were very strong in

their convictions and I think it was because it arose out of their, not so much out of their social conviction, but a lot out of their political conviction. And I can remember people like Seretse Choabi who was sitting with me on the council, Stanley Mabizela, who is now our ambassador to Namibia, Tommy Mhlambiso, who was also on the SRC. Those came with the political conviction about what it is that you do. With us, it was the correctness of any action that had to be taken and whether it was the best possible solution. So in a way you were caught in between being this responsible citizen, is it the responsible thing that you let every student now suffer expulsion. So it was always kind of these two opposing forces within one. I remember I was with C.K., we used to call him C.K., from Durban, a young Indian guy who also came from a working class Indian family. And under the circumstances felt that he would have to resign from the SRC because he didn't think he could take those kinds of political decisions that the time required. Indeed, as I say, some people were very much in a dilemma. For others, it was quite clear cut, there was no either here or there for them. They were quite clear and I think it came out of those political convictions. So some students who were in this quandary, it was not for lack of, maybe I would say, political conviction, but it's people who were caught between both the social responsibility and political responsibility.

DM: So did you get actively involved in the politics at Fort Hare?

IM: Well, not for example in the day-to-day politics of, for example, the Youth League and all those things. As I said, friends were very much people who were very much involved in that. I think with me, I arrived at politics a bit later than many people arrived at politics. As one's experiences began to shape and you made your connections with the roots that had been formed at Fort Hare. That once you got into those politics, your commitment was not ambivalent at all. The groundwork had been done for you. You had gotten those things that perhaps made you not really say, should it be here or there as you were. You came to a position where you now said I may have come here later, but I have come with convictions that clearly say, backwards I cannot go. From here this is where I go. And mover therefore very comfortably into politics when I did move into politics. But I came late into politics.

DM: You spoke a little bit before about the Makiwanes. There was a protest march in 58. I don't know if you were there. Ambrose Makiwane was the SRC president and he organised a march against the Fort Hare Transfer Act into Alice, with the support of the staff. Do you remember such an event?

IM: Yes, I seem to remember that in 58. I was new, I think I must have been quite new and sort of wondering in a sense what this is all about when they were all talking and doing that. And I think one's images about these knowledgeable men, so to say, was precisely those kinds of things. Yeah, but for me I was not involved in the, as you say, political whatnot of the time.

DM: Do you have any recollections of Makiwane?

IM: Well, the fact that he was called Gumbo, I think. Everybody called him Gumbo.

Yes, Gumbo. Then the Billy Modise's who were I guess, well, not really the next generation. Somehow, they loom very large in one's memories because they were people who could debate politically in a manner that you had never really heard people engage in debates. And Gumbo stands out very much as far as that. Lovemore, Tambinangue, is another one, who was from Zimbabwe. Kosinguise is another one. One from actually my hometown, Asha Danga, who is now a lawyer in Durban, was also another one who sort of looms in these debates that used to take place. Really larger than life in the politics.

DM: A lot of people I've talked to have talked about these debates and meetings and discussion, but I haven't gotten a clear picture of what is exactly going on. I mean are students meeting in the CU Hall and actually debating these politics? How do these debates occur, or is it just a part of daily life?

IM: I think the CU and the life of the CU was part of the daily life. You had student meetings, but then you also had lively debates. I mean from the time we arrived, you were asked to participate in debates between the freshers and the freshettes and the students that existed. And I remember I was one of those that was chosen. And I'm glad there were no tapes at the time because I think about some of the quotations I heard out of Shakespeare and it was quite clear other people had a very different understanding of that and I would be mortified if anyone remembered what I did say. But I'm sure I said it with conviction and whatever. But that was a I say, one of my first learning experiences. I also came from a very protected family in some way. Because the school I had gone to was a Catholic School and although it was a good school, there was always the sense that Fort Hare was the first place where one was sort of throw into the real world of adult people that seemed to be so knowledgeable and so educated about certain kinds of things and here you were a scholar. I was also active in sports, so I was not the traditional scholar. But those are the things that you did, because politicking was not the kind of thing that you did in school. It was something that belonged somewhere else. And you were thrown into this when at the time, when as you say, there's also a focus on you because you're a smaller grouping of people as women. So you stand out in a crowd. But dancing, CU meetings, and sports were just part of student life at Fort Hare. Whether it was those who were into soccer. Of course, rugby was played. And then, of course, tennis. I was a tennis player. And a net ball player, but there was not really much net ball at Fort Hare. So those are the things that preoccupied people's lives. But people also socialised by drinking, as students would do. But it was just something that I never thought about doing and was just shocked [laughs] at students that were drinking. I mean so one was rudely awakened to the normal things of life because one had come from such a protected life as a child.

DM: Fort Hare was a missionary institution until it was taken over in 1960. Some people have written that it was a very conservative place and that the students were the ones that made it into this bastion of politics. So what was the response of the authorities to all of your debating and meeting and stuff like that?

IM: You had some lecturers that were very active in the politics of students and followed. You had a professor like Zaccariah Matthews who was there and of course as much, I mean he was much older and not in to the day-to-day politics, but lots of people had known about his contribution and his involvement. But I think it is those that were also actively involved in the ANC politics that would have had the kind of access to people like him. But then you had people who were, I mean in their relationships with students, people like Masondo who was lecturing in mathematics. The economics professor, I'll remember his name just now. And maybe one or two of the younger ones who had come in and maybe themselves been Fort Harians. But the majority really were not into those kinds of politics. They were much more straight-laced, just academics. Some were in a situation where actually they were not really keen to be involved in politics given the times. So one cannot say, I suppose in retrospect if you say Fort Hare was conservative, you have to place it in historical context. Fort Hare was actually politically active if you look at what were the politics of South Africa at the time. You could never come out with a statement that Fort Hare was conservative. Fort Hare is where activity took place in every, in comparison with every tertiary institution. If there was politics at the institution, Fort Hare was where that politics was. In looking back though, you can say, in many cases, you look at the professorship that was there, and so on. And you could say it was relatively conservative in that sense, very you say, rooted in religion. The very fact that you had your students, people went to church in large numbers, and so on. It had a religious base. But you also did have a few sort of, I guess for the time, progressive lecturers, both white and black. There was a husband and wife team, I think it was in biology, how can this name escape me now? One of the registrars who was sort of very liberal in the old English tradition. Then you had your English professor who was very British in origin, very sort of straight-laced. The registrar was Agnew. Ms. Darrell was the English teacher.

DM: She was spoken of very highly by some other students, especially after the government takeover. They said she was one who was still going to teach her students and was still very involved in student life.

IM: As I say she was sort of very upright, not very active politically. But there were certain principled positions that she would feel that she's going to take and then stuck by those positions. I'm just trying to think about the economics lecturer, was from Natal. The name is on the tip of my tongue. I knew him for so long. I know his children also. Then you had Ncobo, who also was in economics, but it's not the one, he was junior to Ncobo. Then you had the one from Natal, Professor Nyembesi, Don Mtimkulu, those were all people there when I was there, Ndamse. And then of course there was a difference between people like the Ndamses, who also did not come with the political tradition of Z.K. Matthews.

DM: Was Z.K. kind of out of the limelight by the time you arrived or was he still actively involved?

IM: Well Z.K., I can't say he was out of the limelight. I mean he was a nationally known figure already in that sense and I guess from the police's side, he was probably a

focus. And therefore if he stood in the background, he was, he always loomed somewhere without you seeing where Z.K. is, but was there. And it's probably now when you look back, you say he probably was meeting with student leadership without meeting with you, the masses. And being able to have engaged those who were the leaders and when they came and discussed with you. For some reason, besides just being physically big, he also looms large in one's memory about Fort Hare. But the position he then took when things were demanded of people to do were the principled ANC positions. They had to be sustained and maintained and that's when you knew this one is taking a political stand. He'd rather go.

DM: You said that Fort Hare was a political hotbed. In terms of the Transfer Act and the Extension of University Education, do you think that the government looked towards Fort Hare? A lot of their justification for these acts were, you know, we want to quell this political agitation. A lot of their justification for their act seems to be indirectly pointed directly, if you will, at Fort Hare.

IM: I think that is actually a correct perception. Fort Hare was a hotbed because yes, you had that. But you also had a core of a cross-section of the population. I mean if I look back at universities like Natal University and so on, Fort Hare had Indians, Africans, Coloureds, even one or two Chinese from Johannesburg, who were all part of this pot. And it was Coloureds from various parts of Africa. And you all had to live together, eat together, dance together, play together. There was nothing that you didn't, drink together. And what I have dreaded most about the loss of Fort Hare was that microcosm of South Africa that was not allowed to become and be able to reproduce itself into a totally new. Because the only grouping that was excluded from Fort Hare was white. No other group was excluded. Everyone who was regarded as not white could come to Fort Hare. And it was a wonderful sense that one has of how people lived together. I remember people exchanging stories about some people who had never seen Indians and then having to experience Indians. It's quite a cultural shock. How do they eat? What do they do? The myths that you have to then get over. And Fort Hare was able to do that. And you didn't hear about fights between Indians and Coloureds and Africans. It wasn't there. And for me it was a good thing that, as a person who eventually ended up studying sociology, to say that these things are possible if the atmosphere is created for people to live. Because I remember that our rag days, the days when we had what we called the court of injustice, who was being charged for what, people collaborated together to make the best of the charges whether you were Indian or Coloured. And sometimes you had something to do with that, with what you were charged with. And so I think it was a wonderful sense of bringing people together. But because you then became so active politically across also racial barriers was I think also very good for Fort Hare. And no other institution in the country had that. And therefore really, I do have a feeling that this extension, besides anything else, it may have had other reasons, but that was also to break that kind of thing down. And probably with, I shouldn't say success in that way, in that this coalescence was not allowed to as I say reproduce itself over time and therefore create a core of intellectual elite or of people who could then go out into the world and lead in this manner.

DM: Do you think it was legitimate of the government to look at Fort Hare's perspective?

IM: Legitimate from whose point of view?

DM: [laughs] From their perspective.

IM: From their perspective. I mean if I had to be in their boots and said what would I do, I think that would have been the one thing that you would do because you knew if you broke that you would have done quite a bit of damage to this. So it makes quite a bit of sense to say they would have used that. They thought about other things too. I mean I had grown up for example, you asked me about speaking Afrikaans. I was just in Hebron the other day seeing someone who would be much older than me who had gone to the same school that I had gone, primary school, went to the same high school. He's teaching in Hebron, was a headmaster of a Coloured school there. But what he told us is that you move from a Coloured school, the only high school that existed in the area was in what you call the African area. But it was not strange because you all went to church anyone. Because there was one Methodist church until you started sort of a sub branch of a Methodist church so that it was nearer people. And so on. People crossed across those kinds of lines too. So that the separation went into schools, to then say you are going to go to a Coloured school and no other school, you are going to go to this school, and physically separate people now, to say you're going to have this Coloured community, which had never existed in true sort of supposedly pure form before. Because what they called the Coloured area, or the Coloured location, what we called Cairo, was a mixture of all kinds of people, surnames that are mixed. But when they created Bran Park, was to say anyone who's not classified Coloured, and it really began to cause splits in families which were very painful. And I think many of us have very, very painful memories about that. So Fort Hare seemed to be as part of that chain in order to wring more and more out of existing relationships that could have consolidated people.

DM: And in terms of student reaction, from 1955 they knew that this bill was a possibility. You were there right up to when it actually happened, that the school was taken over by the government. Obviously, the students didn't let it go easily. Can you remember some of the sentiments and some of the actions that the students took in the years and months leading up to the takeover?

IM: Well in particular I think what stands out is a number of things that were happening. And I'm not so sure which year it is that it happened. When the whole university found itself waking up in the morning with flags up and flagpoles cut, things written on top of Stewart, the library etc. I still have pictures of that which are very good memories about this. And posters and lampoons all over the place, very methodically done, with precision. And there was not a single student around you who knew how that happened. I think that was very, very striking. It was quite clear that there had been those who had been organised to do this, did it well, and nobody talked. Now and then, you hear a few

of them who were knowledgeable about that being able to say how this happened. And it stands out in one's memory that the skull and crossbones that was right in the center of, you know in the flagpole, that used to be between three buildings, the library, Stewart, and then the science lab, Henderson. And the struggle, because they had also oiled the pole, so nobody could go up this pole at all. And the frustration of the rector was just, to me, I guess set it in one's mind that you can outwit them, you don't have to succumb, there is another way that you can do things and make it uncomfortable. And I think I really remember that with great, but there was as you say, the constant talk, sometimes hot air, but sometimes really quite adamant, intimidating talk and so on. But I suppose one also has to judge some of those things in the context of what was possible at the time. I mean if you look back you say surely you could have done more, you could have done this. The issue of, for example, you know just after I had left, that is when the armed struggle sort of started and the pylons down, which some of the Fort Hare lecturers were involved, etc. But I think it was those other years that had sort of become the formative years.

DM: Did you leave Fort Hare at the end of 61?

IM: I think so. I didn't spend four years because I came already having gotten a teacher's certificate. So I didn't have to go through UED. So I must have spent 58, 59, 60, or 61.

DM: There's some talk in the records about classes taken at Rhodes in 61.



IM: I was one of the people who graduated from Rhodes, because when I came in, we were still under Rhodes. So I graduated, my degree is a Rhodes degree.

DM: Do you remember the reaction to Sharpeville at Fort Hare?

IM: No, I don't. Sharpville was 19?

DM: 60

IM: I don't seem to clearly remember Sharpeville. Sharpeville also happened in March, isn't it?

DM: Yes.

IM: And usually Fort Hare opened in March. It must have been after we opened. I don't seem to have great clarity as to what activity was around that. But you see also because it was something that had been by PAC, it's a march that took place under the flag of PAC. The strength of Fort Hare was also, in terms of numbers, there was a strong PAC presence at the time, well it was however ANC. Maybe that had something to do with it. Because I can't seem to have a clear picture of what we did.

DM: After the takeover, obviously 1960, all these organisations, ANC, PAC, they're banned. Do you remember how that affected student politics at Fort Hare? Because the Youth Leaguers probably couldn't come out as much in the open.

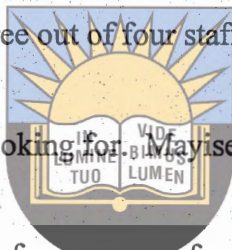
IM: I'm not so sure it dampened what was happening at Fort Hare. It probably just happened under a different guise, just ordinary student politics, without saying who is who. Within the SRC, I know those debates were continuing. There was very strong demands for people to take a stand and so on. I remember when, as you say, when did the banning take place if you remember?

DM: I don't know what month, but it was 60 after Sharpeville.

IM: Cause 61 I was no longer there I think I was already in Natal at the time.

DM: Once the takeover took place, three out of four staff members were either forced to resign or quit or were fired...

IM: Mayisela, that's the name I was looking for. Mayisela was economics lecturer. Mayisela.



DM: So with all these lecturers and professors being forced out, how did that affect the students? How did that affect the quality of education?

## University of Fort Hare *Together in Excellence*

IM: Well my sense was that one's trust in the people who would then stay was a bit shaken, the perception that other people were not about to resist the system and so on. And some of your very good quality blacks were removed. But also some of your whites. I think you should just check the name Izzelstrom. Izzelstrom or Israelstrom or something like that. It was a husband and wife team.

DM: The biology?

IM: The biology, I think they were in the biology or chemistry, but certainly in the sciences. Some of them I think the issue of Burrows who was liberal who was under great pressure then and then this, I think I left at the time when Ross came. Yes, I left, that was my last year under Ross. The Afrikaans and so on teachers that had been there. So there was a feeling that this was a weeding of the blessed African minds from an institution and therefore you're going to be made to be second class citizens, a second class education, and that was very, very, very strong. But I suppose if one looks back at it and see what kinds of things students did under even worse situations, they were able to achieve. You begin to also now become humble about that which you achieved in that the later generations of students were able to take on much more against apartheid than we had actually done, but probably our own formative years were years that were rooted in this liberalism. Whereas I think that apartheid created a different student. We had been trained in the old tradition of scholars, of missionary work, etc. etc. These ones were produced under very different circumstances and therefore when you look at that student, my sense is that they were almost more radical than the Fort Hare student and yet

the memory of Fort Hare stands so strong. I think it's just that it is two different times with two different circumstances.

DM: Do you have any memories of Chris Hani as a classmate?

IM: No, it's funny, we sort of caught up with one another strangely in Maputo. [She is interrupted by her secretary.] We caught up in Maputo and he had much clearer memories of me than I had of him. But it's not surprising because I think I was a year ahead of him or something like that, but also we were fewer women and therefore you stood out in a crowd compared to men. But as we talked, we then remembered. And he had been a very kind of, I remember him in a big heavy coat that he used to wear. It probably was winter because I never could understand why I remember him in this coat. He was almost very priestly. [laughs] And he always smiled when I said that. I said, well I remember you, this serious person, how did you get where you are? And it was good to reminisce about that because we used to talk about how each one of us has really arrived at politics and our commitments through very different paths. And little things that catapulted us in directions at different times. And convinced me that not everybody gets there by the same route. That's an important lesson I've always said to my students. We don't all get there by the same route, but you always have to understand what is that route and what shaped that route. And so when I saw him so active already, it was like there was, almost like there was a contradiction in my mind. Because he had not been one of those that when I left I knew where they were leaving the country, this is what they are going to do. Because I had seen them sort of active already. And when I met them in exile, I thought they had actually died. Cause I hadn't seen them. And people would spread all this news about so and so had died. And when in the seventies, I met some of them in Zambia, I just broke down crying because it was like they appeared from nowhere. People had said well, so and so died in the snow of the Soviet Union. And I guess you wanted, you sort of almost accepted that until you saw them, and said, you mean you're alive!

DM: This same Mrs. Dwane that I met last week, she told me that Chris Hani once came up to her in the library. She was very religious. And he just quietly came up to her and he said, it's time for you to get involved. There's more to life than just religion.

IM: [laughs] And he knew better.

DM: Did he ever try to get you involved more?

IM: No, no, not really. My close involvement with him really was when we were both out. That's when we sort of came to terms with, well, sort of actually reestablished our knowledge of one another. And so my involvement with him was really in exile. And by then I had been already overseas in a way when I had caught up with him again. And he had made quite a few strides when I first met him, I think it was in Maputo when we first met at the airport. And at that time, you're not so sure whether you're supposed to recognise someone because you don't know who's who here and so on and find safety

somewhere else. But he was bold to walk up and greet. And I thought, I can't believe this, is it really him. Incredulity.

DM: You said that many people arrive at politics through different paths, but it seems like for so many of them, the path has included a stop at Fort Hare. And Joe Matthews told me, he said, what if this is all one great historical accident? And that very well might be the case because so many people didn't have any other choice and that's why they ended up at Fort Hare. But then the fact of the matter is that so many of these people were at Fort Hare. So how do you explain that even though people do take different routes, so many went through Fort Hare?

IM: Well, there are lots of others that did not go through the route of Fort Hare, so I wouldn't ascribe it, that it was only the route of Fort Hare. But at the time, really those that were actively involved, and very rooted in the struggle, did come out of Fort Hare. But I think the reason that it was Fort Hare was precisely because of circumstances under which you lived. You lived in a close community, in a small town, it was a university town, activities of the town had all to do with Fort Hare. Whereas if you were at Natal University, you were disparate groups, living in your own. Even those that were at Wentworth as medical students, you were also preoccupied with the kind of field that you were studying, which demanded a great deal of your work and your time in very different ways. So Fort Hare simply gave an opportunity which other universities were not able to do. If you were at Wits or Cape Town University, it just didn't present you with the kinds of circumstances that Fort Hare did. But indeed, as something that was part of the social engineering of the time, to have all these black students there, created the atmosphere. They created that atmosphere. So in that sense, I'm not so sure whether you can completely say it's accidental, but indeed, many people, certainly of my generation and the immediate cohort of students that came out of Fort Hare, there's no way you could have passed through Fort Hare completely unpoliticised. I don't think it was possible. Politics touched you in many different ways.

DM: I know that time is running short. I just have a couple of more questions. You spoke before about Stanley Mabizela and I was told of an incident where after the takeover, he was overheard badmouthing Kaiser Matanzima, who was then on the Fort Hare Senate. [IM starts laughing] He was expelled and it caused a big student uproar. Do you remember that situation?

IM: Well I don't remember that, but I do remember, I wonder whether it was, when did Stan get arrested? It must have been the year after I had left. Because Stan did get, you know he got involved also with those blasts that were at Fort Hare with Masondo and them.

DM: And Zola Skweyiya.

IM: Yes, they all were involved in that. And Stan had, he had a very quiet, but wonderful sense of humor too. And a generosity of spirit also. He was very, very generous in his way. Whereas you had a person like Seretse Choabi who was a

philosopher, very staid, very how do you put it, very serious about things. Which was very different from Stan. Tommy Mabizela was very intense. So each one had a different characteristic to him. But Stan was also, sometimes almost naïve in his politics. He was capable of being able to say those things without even thinking who was around you. Almost as you say, put your foot into things. Very much like Stan.

DM: So many people who were at Fort Hare ended up in politics. Does that affect the running of the country at all today?

IM: Well, I'm not so sure whether it affects the running of the country. But one of the things I think, the influence of people like Tambo, people like Mandela, whose views became the dominant views. But also the views of people like Sobukwe shaped one in a special kind of way. But I think there were additional experiences that added onto those. Because for example, for those that left into exile earlier than I went into exile, and there were a couple of women, Monto Shabalala for example. There were two of her friends that also went in exile. Others then went and worked in Swaziland which is what I also then did, before becoming active, really involved in politics. The experience of Fort Hare was really quite a good experience. You see for women, for example there were people who had become political and then when things got tough, they were unable to stand up to, and almost people would say deserted, but you were always there as somebody and someone that people could fall on. And then it proved to be that in exile. Where when people came out and you needed to have people either hidden or people have to find a place to stay, you became one of the first sources to say, where is so and so? She should be able to help out with this. So you're always there and in a way I've always been happy that maybe even if I was not that actively involved in Fort Hare that the politics did shape me in such a way that when I got into it, I was ready to get into it, and therefore never looked back. And therefore could make the contribution that I did not in fact find myself in a situation where I had to go against my comrades or my friends in the pressures. I always think, gosh, what if this had happened with me, where would I, how would I feel today, where would I be today? And it's one thing I don't have to deal with but other people have to deal with. And there were lots of women who as I say went out into exile who actually, some cases of course they were going with friends or people that they were ready to marry or something of the sort, but then charted their own work and course in exile. And so when you meet, it's not just your Fort Hare experience, it is both the Fort Hare and all the other experiences over time that seem to shape your discussions. So you are not just drawn together by the Fort Hare experience. But Fort Hare experiences are unique experiences. Whenever you go anywhere, Fort Harians can find themselves in a group and dominate everybody because you share experiences that none Fort Harian had experienced. But there was something about Fort Hare that took things from one generation to another generation. I found much younger generation of Fort Harians when I was in exile and I was amazed at the things that they thought were just theirs. And you say, but you mean you did that too? So it was quite clear that the culture was reproducing itself even when in different circumstances it took a while I think to sort of disappear.

DM: I think it's still there a little bit today too.

IM: I think so too. I still think so. The one that I found was missing and I think it comes out of physical constraints, some people had even forgotten how integrated a community Fort Hare was. I found students not knowing this, By the way, you mean to tell me you lived as Indians, Coloureds and everybody? Because in their experience it was a Xhosa university. And that for me was just absolutely shocking, that that can be the memory of any Fort Harian about Fort Hare. But then when you look back you say it's because that was their experience. There were no other people around there except this group which, and people who tried very hard to make it there. And I was wondering whether the apartheid government had succeeded or whether this is just a strange phenomena because of the experience of those that are currently there. And for me, if anything you need to do, is to really revive the memory of Fort Hare as this cosmopolitan, because it tells us what was possible and therefore why shouldn't it be possible again?

DM: That's what I'm trying to do. You know the food is still bad at Fort Hare. I can tell you that much.

IM: [laughs] Oh, magile, oh magile, awe, I can imagine. There were those that complained about magile. At Eluk we didn't have a problem. At Eluk the food was relatively good. I had a lot of Indian friends. I had whatever food they ate. And having been a student in Marion Hill, was an Indian area, it was good food for me, that was cooked for them. So I had



University of Fort Hare

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DM: When did you join the ANC? I know you said you arrived at politics later in life. Do you remember when?

IM: Gosh, I don't remember when I formally joined. Because you see somehow when you were in exile, you sort of just gravitated to do the work and there were no, in some places, no formal structure where you said there were ANC meetings and things like that and you were brought together. But a lot of the work that I did with a lot of ANC people started already in Swaziland; but there's nowhere where you could say in Swaziland, I formally joined the ANC. But all your work around, the people you associated with, the things that you were doing, was a lot involved with it. But I couldn't say I was formally ANC at that time. So that formally I think one would say I joined ANC when I was now in the States.

DM: At Rutgers?

IM: Yes, in Rutgers. That is when I would say I formally joined because then you join a structure. And because even in the States, you came in, you were all people who were the ANC, it's later that you began to formalise, that you'd have a branch or a region and you actually have meetings. Because people were always just known as ANC exiles without this formal whatnot. So really I would say the formal thing was something that was in New York. ...



Appendix 3  
University of Fort Hare  
After Fort Hare: The Post-University Lives  
of 32 Fort Harians



Immediately after graduating from Fort Hare in 1945 **Thelma Appavoo** was offered a teaching post in Port Elizabeth. She did not accept the offer, explaining, "I'd already got engaged and those were the days, there wasn't so much women's lib, although I had my degree, my husband to be said, no, no, no, don't you start go and teach now. We're getting married." Appavoo was married in 1946 and had two children. Her East London home was a frequent meeting place for Eastern Cape activists. She says, "we had a lot of people coming in and out, staying overnight. It wasn't unusual for someone to knock on the door at twelve at night, give them a meal, then before sunrise they're gone." When we met, Appavoo was in East London in the house she called home for over fifty years.



After obtaining a B.Sc. degree in 1971, **Jeff Baqwa** abandoned study towards an honours degree in biochemistry in 1972 when he walked out of Fort Hare, along with forty-one others. He immediately began to work full-time for SASO as Literacy Director and Community Development Projects Coordinator. Baqwa also served on the SASO Executive Committee. In 1973 the National Party government served him with a banning order restricting him to the village of Mzimkulu in the Transkei. In 1974, following the assassination of Abraham Tiro, he was sent to Botswana to begin developing strategies and training. He was active in the establishment of Black Consciousness Movement guerilla training camps in Tripoli, Libya, and Beirut, Lebanon. Baqwa traveled throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, and Africa on behalf of the Black Consciousness Movement and the All African Students' Union in an attempt to build solidarity for the South African cause. He graduated from the University of Saarland medical school in West Germany in 1988. He then did a diploma in tropical medicine and hygiene and earned a master's degree in community health at the University of Liverpool in England. He returned to South Africa in 1991, where he did research into community health elements of the country's health system. In 1994 he was the first black South African to be made a professor in the faculty of health sciences at the University of Cape Town. Baqwa worked on various committees and presented papers at dozens of conferences detailing how South Africa's health system could be improved to serve the majority of its people. When I met him, Baqwa was Head of the Department of Primary Health Care at the University of Cape Town Medical School. He died suddenly after a brain hemorrhage in August, 2001.



After receiving his B. Juris degree from Fort Hare in 1972, **Selby Baqwa** left the university before completing his L.L.B. degree. He finally received his L.L.B. from the University of South Africa in 1975. Baqwa began his legal career in 1976 as a Professional Assistant in the Durban firm MP Mbuli & Company. In 1978 he opened his own law firm, Baqwa & Company, in Durban, specializing in civil and criminal litigation. In 1986 Baqwa became senior partner in the firm Baqwa, Moloto, Nzimande, Webster & Mbuli. In 1988 he was admitted as an advocate of the Supreme Court of South Africa. In 1993, Baqwa was named Assistant General Secretary of the National Executive Committee of the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADEL). A year later he was named President

of the organization's National Executive Committee when Pius Langa was named to the Constitutional Court. Baqwa achieved notoriety for his investigation as part of the Browde Commission of irregular promotions and corruption in the Ciskei and Transkei governments prior to the 1994 transition. He taught in the University of Natal Mercantile Law Department and at the university's School for Legal Practice. In 1995, Baqwa was named National Public Protector of South Africa, nominated by Members of Parliament in a joint sitting of both houses by a 75.9% majority, and appointed by the President. In that position, he earned praise for his hard-hitting report on the Sarafina 2 disaster in 1996. When we met, Baqwa was still making headlines as the nation's Public Protector.



**Devi Bughwan** graduated from Fort Hare in 1944 and began a long career as an educator. She taught at a grade school, a high school and a teacher training college. In 1952 she was awarded an MA from the non-European section of the University of Natal. Bughwan continued to work and study part time while raising three children and she ultimately obtained a Ph.D. Her dissertation was on Indians and the English language. She says, "I as an Indian learned to speak English. When it came to research, this is what I wanted to do. What are we doing with this language? How come we are saddled with it?" After receiving her Ph.D. Bughwan worked at the University of Durban-Westville, where she was the second woman Professor to join the staff. She was the first Indian woman Professor of English on the entire continent. Bughwan was Professor of English for eleven years and then Professor of Drama for 10 years. She also taught at the University of Natal.



After being expelled from Fort Hare in 1950 following the boycott of the Governor-General's campus visit, **Mangosuthu Buthelezi** wrote his examinations at the University of Natal and graduated from Fort Hare. He served as a clerk in the Department of Bantu Administration for a year before resigning to work for a Durban law firm. In 1953 he returned to his place of birth, Mahlabatini, to take up the position of chief of the Buthelezis. In 1970, when the KwaZulu Territorial Authority was established, Buthelezi was named its Chief Executive Officer. In 1972 he was made head of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly and in 1976 he was appointed Chief Minister of KwaZulu, a position he held until 1994. He emerged as the most outspoken bantustan leader, arguing that fighting apartheid from within the system was the best way to defeat it. He supported federalism and encouraged foreign investment in South Africa on the grounds that it created jobs for Africans.

In 1975 Buthelezi founded Inkatha yeNkululeko yeSizwe, a black liberation movement that advocated non-violence. During a meeting with the exile leadership of the ANC in London in 1979 he broke all ties with the organization, refusing to accede to its use of the armed struggle. Though Buthelezi worked for the release of Nelson Mandela from jail, from the 1980s, Inkatha was involved in a virtual civil war with the United Democratic Front in KwaZulu-Natal. This developed into a conflict between Inkatha and the ANC in the early 1990s, resulting in the loss of as many as 10,000 lives. In 1991 Inkatha was converted into a political party named the Inkatha Freedom Party. Buthelezi was elected its leader. Having rejected the interim

constitution negotiated at the World Trade Center in 1993 because of its rejection of federalism, Buthelezi threatened to boycott the April 1994 election. At the last minute, he was persuaded to participate and his party won 10% of the election, including control of KwaZulu-Natal. After the 1994 election he became Minister of Home Affairs in the Government of National Unity, a position he held when we met.



**Ismail Dada** graduated from Fort Hare in 1961 and was immediately accepted into the University of Natal Medical School. He received his medical degree and has a private practice in Durban. In his spare time, Dada serves as chair of the Durban Fort Hare Alumni Association.



After graduating from Fort Hare in 1964, **Ntombi Dwane** taught in King William's Town and at her alma mater, Cicirha, in the Transkei. She married Siggipo Dwane in 1967 and they moved to London, where he studied. Upon returning from London, Dwane taught at Lovedale, in Alice, and at Jabavu Secondary School, located adjacent to the Fort Hare campus. In 1978, she returned to London, where her husband was studying for his Ph.D. Back in South Africa, Dwane became Principal of Nombulelo Secondary School in the Grahamstown township Joza. When we met she was Kuilsrivier area manager for the Western Cape Department of Education.

## University of Fort Hare

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After graduating from Fort Hare, **Siggibo Dwane** remained in Alice to study at the Federal Theological Seminary. After two years at Fedsem, he went to London to study. He returned to South Africa in the middle of 1973 and was appointed to a position as Lecturer at Fedsem. He also served as Anglican Chaplain to students at Fort Hare and was involved in the fight against the expropriation of the seminary. In 1978, he returned to London to study for his Ph.D. Back in South Africa he became President of the South African Council of Churches. When we met, he was Bishop of the Order of Ethiopia, a semi-autonomous element in the Anglican Church in South Africa.



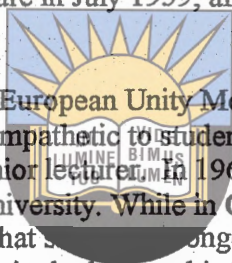
After graduating from Fort Hare in 1959, **V.R. Govender** went on to lead an almost forty year career as an educator in Natal. He worked as a teacher, a principal, and a chief inspector of schools before moving on to head Natal's Department of Education. When we met, he was recently retired from his post as Director of Education in Natal.



Upon graduating from Fort Hare in 1949, **Herby Govinden** wanted to pursue a career in medicine. He says, "I finally never did [medicine] because of lack of finances. ... I decided to ... get into teaching. Which I should have done at the beginning." Govinden

took an historic detour before beginning to teach. On the advice of Professor Galloway, he enrolled at Rhodes University to do an honors degree in chemistry. He says, "Now that was unheard of in that time. We stopped with simply a degree and teaching certificate. ... I was quite possibly the first person to go there for post-graduate chemistry." Govinden, who was not allowed to stay in the hostels, lived with an Indian student in Grahamstown. After completing his honors, Govinden received a scholarship to do an M.Sc. He says, "And then I didn't complete my M.Sc. because my supervisor thought I had enough to get a Ph.D., which I did. So I finally got my Ph.D. in physical chemistry." He was the first Indian student to get a Ph.D in Chemistry at Rhodes. Govinden applied for a job with an oil firm in Durban, but was turned down because there were no toilet facilities for non-whites. Govinden worked in a technical laboratory at Fort Hare for six months before starting a job as a research chemist with a Swedish firm in Durban. He was there for about twenty-one months when offered a junior lectureship in chemistry at Fort Hare by Professor Galloway. Govinden began teaching at Fort Hare in July 1959, after a six month delay due to permit problems.

While lecturing, he joined the Non-European Unity Movement and played an important role as a staff member sympathetic to students in the wake of the takeover. Govinden was then promoted to senior lecturer. In 1963, he received a post-doctoral fellowship in Canada and left the university. While in Canada, Govinden received a letter from the rector of Fort Hare that he no longer had a position at the university because an Indian university had opened in Durban. Upon returning from Canada, with his position at Fort Hare then vacant, Govinden began teaching at the University of Durban-Westville. When we met, he was retired and living in Durban.



University of Fort Hare  
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After receiving his U.E.D. from Fort Hare in 1962, **Isaac Mabindisa** taught English and social studies at Kwazakele Secondary School in Port Elizabeth for two years. While teaching, he was also involved in underground organizing work for the ANC, which had been banned in 1960. In 1964 he was arrested and charged with membership in a banned organization. He went into exile in Zambia, where he continued to work as a teacher. Mabindisa lived in Canada for more than twenty years before returning to South Africa after Nelson Mandela was released. When we met, he was the Registrar at Fort Hare, a position he relinquished in the face of adversity in 1999.



**Stanley Mabizela** received his U.E.D diploma from Fort Hare in 1961, but because of Bantu Education, never put his teaching degree to use in South Africa: "My conscience would not allow me to go and be a teacher where I was going to destroy my own people. So I never taught in South Africa," he says. Mabizela found work as a lorry driver in Port Elizabeth and later served articles at a law firm. Mabizela's law career was short-lived because early in 1963, he was arrested and charged with membership of a banned organization. He was sentenced to a year in prison, which he served in East London. Mabizela would have spent more time in prison, but a technical error resulted in his release and he wasted no time in going into exile. He says, "fortunately they made a mistake. I was due to be released on the 16<sup>th</sup>

of December, 1965. But the 16<sup>th</sup> of December is a special day with the ... Afrikaners. That is the day they defeated the Zulus in the Battle of the Blood River. ... I was released on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December instead of being released on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December. And that enabled me to run into exile."

Mabizela was in exile for 24 years and became active in ANC structures abroad. He moved from Swaziland to Tanzania, where he headed the ANC exile operation, to Zimbabwe, and finally to Zambia. During his time in exile, Mabizela was elected into the National Executive Committee of the ANC. He returned to South Africa in 1990 and in 1991 lost his seat in the National Executive. Following the elections in 1994 Mabizela was nominated for parliament, but he declined to serve. He traveled to Britain and to the United States, where he was trained in diplomacy and administration and was named High Commissioner to Namibia by Nelson Mandela. When we met, Mabizela was recently retired from his position in Namibia.



After receiving his BA from Fort Hare in 1938, **Sipo Makalima** studied towards his MA in history. But, as he explains, "the committee that was testing me my dissertation, said the dissertation is all right, but we don't agree with your standpoint. ... [I]n my thesis I brought in new attitudes which were not accepted by the missionary historians then." Finding fault with his emphasis on stolen land as

the main reason for conflict between white and black in the Eastern Cape, the committee did not accept Makalima's dissertation. In 1947 that he received credit for the work, but then, he received a BA honors degree and not an MA. Makalima taught briefly in the Transvaal and then returned to Alice, assuming a post at Lovedale. He taught at the secondary school for 32 years and six months. During that period, Makalima studied towards his Bachelor of Education degree, receiving it in 1960. He was also active in the Cape African Teacher's Association and then the Cape African Teacher's Union. In 1973 he left Lovedale for Fort Hare where he trained teacher and taught history for 19 years. In 1982, he received an honorary doctorate from Fort Hare. I found him at home in Alice, retired, but still a keen observer of events at Fort Hare.



**Henry Makgothi** taught for a year after graduating from Fort Hare in 1951. He was dismissed in 1952 for participating in the Defiance Campaign. He briefly took up law, but did not finish his studies. In 1953 Makgothi attended the Bucharest World Youth Festival, and in 1954 he was elected President of the ANC Youth League in the Transvaal. He was a defendant in the Treason Trial until released due to illness in 1958. With the ANC banned in 1960, he tried to leave South Africa, but was arrested and imprisoned on Robben Island for eight years. He was released in the early 1970s and restricted to Mabopane outside Pretoria for two years. Makgothi fled to Botswana in 1977 where he was co-opted onto the ANC National Executive Committee. He was elected to the National Executive Committee at the Kabwe Conference of 1985. For the majority of the 1980s, Makgothi was Secretary of Education of the ANC with oversight of the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (Somafco) in Tanzania. In 1987 he attended a three month course at the Lenin School in Moscow. A year later he became Assistant Secretary General of the ANC under

fellow Fort Harean Alfred Nzo. Makgothi was also a member of the central committee of the South African Communist Party. He returned to South Africa in 1990 and was elected to the Senate in 1994. When we met, Makgothi was the Chief Whip of the ANC in the National Council of Provinces. He has since retired.



After graduating from Fort Hare in 1958, **Ambrose Makiwane** went to Port Elizabeth to serve legal articles. “[T]he government there expelled me from PE. And I went to East London. The same thing happened.” Hampered by bannings, Makiwane could not pursue his legal studies. “And meantime, [Kaiser] Matanzima was attempting to get the government to keep me in my father’s farm. But he didn’t have any power. He tried to use Chief Sabata, who was then the paramount chief of Thembuland. And Chief Sabata refused. In fact, he quickly sent a letter to my father to tell me that there was this move by Matanzima. So I could hardly work because they were following me everywhere.” Makiwane went into exile, where he was commander of the Kongwa training camp in Tanzania. He then worked for nearly ten years for the ANC in Cairo.

In 1969, he was suspended from the National Executive Committee of the ANC for six months due to dissident activity. He was also expelled from the South African Communist Party. Upset by the Party’s role in the 1969 Morogoro conference that opened ANC membership to non-Africans, Makiwane and a group of seven others moved increasingly towards African nationalism. In 1974, at the unveiling of the tombstone of veteran ANC leader Robert Resha in London, Makiwane made a speech that labeled the Morogoro conference as “disastrous.” In September 1975 the eight were called “traitors” and expelled from the ANC by the National Executive Committee. Makiwane rejoined the ANC in 1986 after the declaration of an amnesty for those who had been expelled. When we met, he was semi-retired, living in his hometown, Cala. “I’m very busy,” he repeatedly told me, tending to cows and working for the ANC in places like Elliot and Cala in the Transkei.



After graduating from Fort Hare with honours in 1959 **Andrew Masondo** began working as an applied mathematics lecturer at the university in 1960. At the same time, he was a rural area organizer for the ANC under the direction of Govan Mbeki. Against Mbeki’s wishes, Masondo also became a commander of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* in the Eastern Cape when it was founded. In 1963, after sabotaging pylons in the vicinity of Fort Hare, Masondo was arrested. “Then I went to Robben Island. I was arrested on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March ‘63. I was ultimately sentenced to 12 years on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April.” Another year was added to Masondo’s sentence and he ended up serving 13 years in prison. “I was among the first ten MK people on Robben Island. ... [W]hilst I was there, I did quite a lot. I actually developed the ANC structures on Robben Island.” Masondo was tortured and beaten in prison and was finally released in 1976. He was banished to Umlazi, where he stayed for three months. Masondo left the country following the Soweto Uprisings. “[T]he MK chaps came to fetch me. Because the old man Oliver [Tambo] thought that I might, in fact he was right because I was already in touch with the underground and he saw that I was going to be arrested. So they collected me and ... I went outside.”

Masondo joined the ANC leadership in exile. "I went to Tanzania. From Tanzania I went to the Soviet Union to do my military training. When I completed my military training, then I went to Angola." Masondo served as the National Political Commissar of the ANC from 1977-1985. It was in this capacity that he was responsible for abuses of suspected informers in ANC camps abroad. Upon returning to South Africa, he appeared before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to apply for amnesty. When we met, Masondo was Chief of Defence Corporate Communication for the South African Defence Force, a position he has held since 1998.



**George Matanzima** went to Fort Hare with the intention of becoming a doctor. However, he quickly changed courses. He says, "in the location there was a fight amongst the boys and one boy died. A doctor was called to perform a post-mortem. I was there when I saw a doctor with his scalpels performing post-mortem and opening up a human being. I said no, this is not for me." After graduating from Fort Hare, Matanzima taught geography at Lovedale for one year. He then took articles of clerkship in law in Engcobo and, after returning to teaching for two years, began to practice as an attorney in 1952. He interrupted his legal practice in 1959-1960 when he acted as chief of the Emigrant Thembuland. His brother Kaiser Matanzima says, "my subjects went to him in advice in everything. He was a leader of his people in everything." According to Wycliffe Tsotsi, George Matanzima joined the Unity Movement, frequently attending meetings in the Umtata area. Matanzima says he was "only an observer."

In June, 1963 Matanzima was struck from the roll of attorneys for misappropriating trust funds and making a false statement before the Eastern Cape division of the Supreme Court. The matter became public when it was reported in the 12 January 1964 *Sunday Times*. Aside from a brief statement by Kaizer Matanzima, who accused the *Sunday Times* of acting maliciously, the incident passed. George Matanzima survived politically, though his reputation was somewhat sullied.

In 1963, when his brother was named Chief Minister of the Transkei, Matanzima entered the assembly as an elected member for Emigrant Thembuland. From 1971-78 he was the Minister of Justice in the Transkei. During the early days of independence, he was hostile towards the ANC and PAC despite his brother's more open stance. In 1977, he was awarded the title of Deputy Prime Minister of the Transkei; a year later he added the title of Minister of Defence to his resumé. In 1979 when his brother became President of the Transkei, George Matanzima automatically became Transkei Prime Minister after being elected head of the ruling party.

In May 1987, as a result of a power struggle with his brother, George Matanzima banished Kaiser Matanzima to his home district of Qamata. In September, George Matanzima was ousted from office in a military coup led by Major-General Bantu Holomisa, who installed Stella Sigcau as President. Three months later, Holomisa charged Sigcau with corruption and took over. In December George Matanzima unsuccessfully conspired with his brother and Chas Sebe in an attempt to oust Lennox Sebe. In August 1988, charging that he had pocketed large amounts of money, the

Holomisa government issued a warrant of arrest for embezzlement on George Matanzima. Matanzima fled to Port Elizabeth and disappeared. He resurfaced in Austria before returning to South Africa penniless. He was extradited from South Africa to Transkei and in 1989 was convicted on three counts of bribery and sentenced to nine years in prison. He was released in December 1991 and died in 2000.

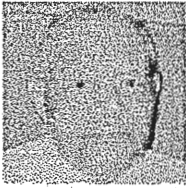


**Kaiser Matanzima** graduated from Fort Hare in 1939 and began legal studies in 1940. His articles were interrupted when he was appointed to succeed his father as Chief of the AmaHalas. In 1942 the South African government appointed him to the Bunga, the historic Transkei representative council. He resigned from that body in 1944 to resume his articles and in 1948 passed the Attorney's Admission Examination. In 1955, after the Bantu Authorities Act was passed, Matanzima returned to the Bunga. He was installed as Regional Chief of Emigrant Thembuland in 1958, a controversial appointment as it was opposed by the Paramount Chief Sabata Dalindyebo. However, Matanzima accepted the government's Bantu authorities policy and continued to rise through its structures.

In 1961 he became Chairman of the Transkeian Territorial Authority, succeeding Paramount Chief Botha Sigcau, and in 1962 was elected Chief Minister, having received the support of the majority of government-paid chiefs despite losing the popular vote. In 1966, contrary to tradition, the government named him paramount chief of the Emigrant Thembu. In March of 1974, his party voted to move towards independence. Later that year, he obtained an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, the government-controlled Fort Hare. Leading up to the pre-independence election, Matanzima increased repression of dissident voices. In 1976, independence was celebrated and he became Prime Minister of Transkei. In 1979, following the death of Chief Botha Sigcau, Matanzima became President of Transkei. His brother George became Prime Minister. The Transkei government banned 34 organizations, including the ANC. When we met in 1999, Matanzima, then 83, was at home in Qamata, suffering from an inability to remember many of the details of his life. (See also George Matanzima).



**Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri** went into exile shortly after leaving Fort Hare in 1961. After a period in Swaziland, she traveled to the United States, where she received an MA and Ph.D. from Rutgers University in New Jersey. She taught and worked for the United Nations Institute for Namibia in Lusaka, Zambia until her return to South Africa in 1990. She formalized links with the ANC Women's League and participated in defining the ANC's position on gender issues. In 1993, she became the first black and first woman to head the South African Broadcasting Corporation Board. When we met, Matsepe-Casaburri was serving as the first woman Premier of the Free State. In June 1999 she was appointed to Thabo Mbeki's cabinet as Minister of Communications.



After graduating from Fort Hare **Joe Matthews** taught briefly at Newell High School in Port Elizabeth before moving to Johannesburg to study law at the University of the Witwatersrand. In 1952 he abandoned his studies and, as National Secretary of the Youth League, returned to the Cape to participate in the Defiance Campaign. In September 1953, he was served with banning orders and was forced to undertake political work underground. While banned from 1954-56 he completed his LLB degree by correspondence with the University of London. He then completed legal articles from 1957-8 in Port Elizabeth. Matthews joined the South African Communist Party in 1957 and served on its central committee from 1962-1970. From December 1956 to late 1958 his legal career was interrupted by the Treason Trial, where he and his father were among the 156 defendants. Matthews practiced law in Durban until 1960. Following Sharpeville he was arrested and imprisoned without trial. He was released and escaped into exile Basutoland (now Lesotho), where he became involved in local politics and worked as a lawyer until 1965.

He moved to London, where he served as editor of *Sechaba*, completed an MA in History with the University of London in 1968<sup>1</sup> and was an ANC representative. After 1970 he moved to Botswana and gave up his active involvement in the ANC. He became secretary in the office of Prime Minister Seretse Khama, an ex-Lovedale student. He was Assistant Attorney General Botswana from 1972 to 1976 and then opened a private practice, where he worked until 1984 when he returned to the United Kingdom. He was expelled from the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1976 after he rejected the armed struggle and expressed doubts about the ideology in an interview given to the Johannesburg *Sunday Times*.<sup>1</sup> In the late 1980s he lived in Canada and the Netherlands where he wrote articles for journals and engaged in academic work.

Matthews returned to South Africa in 1991, still an ANC member after thirty years in exile, and settled in Durban. He renewed contact with his Fort Hare classmate and friend of more than 40 years Mangosuthu Buthelezi, and in 1992 was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Inkatha Freedom Party. In the April 1994 general election he was elected to parliament. In May of that year he was named Deputy Minister of Safety and Security, a position he held when we met.



**Govan Mbeki** taught at various schools, including Clarkebury Institute and Adams College after leaving Fort Hare in 1937, but was eventually dismissed for engaging in political activity. He then opened a cooperative store in Idutywa. In 1939 he published his first essays in book form, *The Transkei in the Making*. In 1940 he earned a B.Econ. in Social Studies by private study through the University of South Africa. He was editor of *Territorial Magazine*, later renamed *Inkundla ya Bantu*, from 1938 to 1944. In 1941 Mbeki became secretary of the Transkei African Voters' Association, and in 1943 he was elected to the Transkei Bunga, representing Idutywa. He was also a Director of the *Guardian* newspaper. In

<sup>1</sup> J.H.P. Serfontein, "I Believed: Why a Black radical has rejected the path of violence and opted for peaceful change," *Sunday Times*, 18 April 1976.

Health and Welfare. In 1990 Mdlalose became Minister of Education and Culture in KwaZulu.

In the early 1990s, Mdlalose worked with the ANC to try to stop the violence between ANC and IFP supporters in the Transvaal and Natal. In March 1991, he was relieved of his portfolios to enable him to focus on his position as National Chairman of Inkatha and stopping the violence. In December 1991 Mdlalose headed the IFP delegation at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa). In 1993, he served on the 10-person planning committee of the Concerned South Africans' Group (Cosag) and became co-leader of the IFP's delegation at the constitutional talks at Kempton Park, until the IFP withdrew from the meetings because they did not provide for the federal system, and because Buthelezi rejected the principle of "sufficient consensus" for adopting an election date in April 1994. After Buthelezi decided that the IFP would participate in the elections, Mdlalose stood as the leader of the IFP's list for the KwaZulu Natal Legislative Assembly. In May 1994, he was elected Premier of the province. When we met, Mdlalose was the South African Ambassador to Egypt.



**Marumo Moerane** is Govan Mbeki's nephew. His father, M.T. Moerane is the brother of Govan's wife, Epainette Mbeki. After graduating from Fort Hare, Moerane studied at the University of Natal, where he was a member of the underground PAC. He went on to lead a ~~supervisory~~ <sup>supervisory</sup> ~~committee~~ <sup>committee</sup> in Durban and is often mentioned as a prospective member of the South African Constitutional Court.



**Thenjiwe Mtintso** was expelled from Fort Hare following student protest in 1973. She immediately began to travel around the country, meeting with parents to explain the causes of the unrest. Having joined SASO while at Fort Hare, she moved to King William's Town and became involved with the Black People's Convention. She worked for a political prisoner support group and helped found the Zimele Trust Fund, a self-employment program for ex-political prisoners and detainees. In King William's Town, she also came into regular contact with Steve Biko, who had a major influence on her political growth. In 1975, at the suggestion of Biko, Donald Woods hired her as a newspaper reporter for the *Daily Dispatch* in East London. Mtintso was arrested in 1976 and following her release, was restricted to Orlando East. She spent most of the next two years in detention, where she was physically and psychologically tortured.

In December 1978, Mtintso left the country with her son, crossing through the Transkei and into Lesotho, where she joined the ANC. She became active in the Lesotho Front under the leadership of Chris Hani, editing political publications, recruiting people, and handling underground political structures in the Orange Free State and the Cape. She received military training in Angola and East Germany before returning to Lesotho in 1982, where she worked in the political-military structures until 1982. After a year of political training in Cuba, Mtintso again returned to Lesotho, where she worked in the ANC military command until 1985.

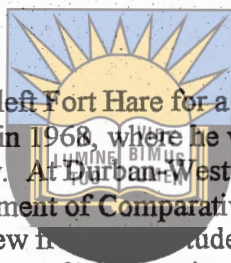
That same year, she became head of the Regional Political Military Council of the Botswana Front, the first woman to head a front. In 1989, she was transferred to Uganda where she oversaw the opening of the first ANC mission in Uganda. Before returning to South Africa, Mtintso joined the South African Communist Party in Lesotho in 1990. That same year, she traveled to South Africa to participate in an ANC Women's League Conference. She remained to tend to her mother and enrolled for a BA in Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand. In 1991, she was elected to the central committee and politburo of the South African Communist Party. Mtintso was part of the SACP negotiating team at the Codesra. In 1994, she was elected to parliament as an ANC member. When we met, she remained in her position on the SACP executive committee and was Secretary-General of the ANC.

**Logan Naidoo** (Photo not available) was an educator and activist in Natal following graduation from Fort Hare.



**G.C. Oosthuizen** left Fort Hare for a post at the University of Durban-Westville in 1968, where he was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Divinity. At Durban-Westville he was instrumental in founding a Department of Comparative Religions. Over the years the department grew from 10 students in its first year to over four hundred students. Oosthuizen resigned in 1984 to concentrate on

work with the African independent churches. He worked part-time, from home, for the University of Zululand and when we met, he was semi-retired, but still involved with research on the African independent churches.



**R.A. Pillay** remained at Fort Hare as a Junior Lecturer in Chemistry after graduating in 1954. He was forced to resign his position after a year because, as an Indian, he needed a permit to travel to the Cape and the government would not provide him with the document.

Pillay returned to Durban, where he taught for two years to fulfill the teaching requirement of his bursary to Fort Hare and to earn money to pay for medical school. He attended the University of Natal Medical School and taught in the evenings to augment his fees at M. L. Sultan Technikon, a technical college. Pillay quit his teaching job in the wake of the introduction of university apartheid and started a job as a medical researcher at the university. After qualifying as a medical doctor, Pillay opened a general practice, which he kept for seven years. He says, "It was too busy for me so I decided to go and do specialty. Back to medical school. I specialized and then I've been now in a specialist practice and private and still do hospital and teaching."

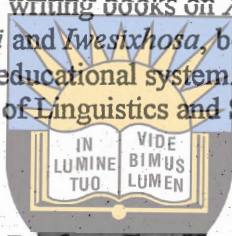


**Barney Pityana** never graduated from Fort Hare. He was expelled following student unrest in 1968. As Regional Director for the University Christian Movement, Pityana spent most of the early months of 1969 traveling around the country meeting with students on college campuses. In July 1969, with energy and enthusiasm on bush college campuses growing, SASO was founded. In 1970,

Pityana became SASO's second President, replacing Steve Biko. In 1973, the government's crackdown on SASO resulted in Pityana being banned to Port Elizabeth. In 1978, after five years of bannings and 12 months in detention, he went into exile with his wife and daughter in Lesotho. Pityana then fled to Botswana. He spent 16 years in exile in England and Geneva. An ordained priest and qualified attorney, Pityana worked in Geneva for the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism. He returned to South Africa in 1992. In 1995 he received a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the University of Cape Town. That same year he was appointed to chair the Human Rights Commission, a position he still held when we met.



**Churchill Sizwe Satyo** began teaching at Lovedale after graduating from Fort Hare in 1970. He then continued to pursue his interest in African languages, writing books on Xhosa grammar such as *Ingrama noncwadi* and *Westichosa*, both of which are widely used in the South African educational system. When we met, he was Head of the Department of Linguistics and Southern African Languages at the University of Cape Town.



After receiving his BA from Fort Hare in 1971, **Makhenkesi Stofile** continued at the university, studying toward a Theology degree, which he received in 1974. He completed his BA Honours in 1975 and his BA Honours in 1977. From 1976, Stofile served as a Minister in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. In 1977 Fort Hare awarded him an MA in Theology. From 1973-79, Stofile worked as a senior lecturer in Theology and Philosophy of Religion. In 1981 he completed his post-graduate Diploma in Theology at Tubingen University in Germany, and in 1983, he received an MA from Princeton University in the United States. He then returned to Fort Hare, where he continued to lecture. From 1969, Stofile had been involved in sports administration and he rose to national prominence in 1985 when, as general secretary of the Border region of the United Democratic Front (UDF), he was sent to New Zealand to campaign against the proposed Kiwi rugby tour. In 1986, while lecturing at Fort Hare, he was detained by Ciskei security police during protests surrounding recognition of a trade union on campus. He was again detained by the Ciskei security police in October, 1986.

In March, 1987, he became the first UDF member to be associated with the armed struggle, and was charged with terrorism, possession of arms and harbouring terrorists. After a controversial trial, Stofile received an 11-year sentence on the main count of promoting the activities of the ANC. He was also served a one year sentence to run concurrently for possessing a Soviet-made pistol and ammunition. He resigned from Fort Hare saying "It was impossible to be there and in prison."<sup>2</sup> In December 1989, he was released by the Ciskei government on humanitarian grounds. A month after his release, Stofile was active in the campaign against an English cricket tour of South Africa. Following the release of Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC in 1990, Stofile helped the ANC to set up structures within South Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Anc.org.za/people/stofile

Later that year he was elected chairperson of the Border region of the ANC. He held that post until he became a Senior Lecturer in the Religious Studies Department at the University of Transkei in 1991. From 1992-94 Stofile was Director of Public Relations and Development at Fort Hare. In the 1994 election, Stofile was elected a member of Parliament and was then appointed Chief Whip of the ANC. Considered a favorite of Nelson Mandela, he was late that year elected the organisation's treasurer-general. When we met, Stofile was Premier of the Eastern Cape.



After graduating from Fort Hare in 1948 **Rama Thumbadoo** went on to a long career as a teacher in Durban first at his alma mater, Sastri College, and then at Springfield College, where he was joined on the staff by many other ex-Fort Harians. When we met, Thumbadoo was retired, living in Durban.



After graduating from Fort Hare, **G.S. Tootla** went to medical school at the University of Witwatersrand, where he qualified as a dentist. When we met, he ran a private practice in Durban. In addition to dentistry, Tootla runs an institution for youth in Changa, outside Durban. He says, "It's a religious institution. I've got over 250 children that I take care of on a daily basis. I got 150 children staying in my dormitories and hostels. I put up a structure for 1.75 million rands, raised the money and we sent the kids to school and teach them religious education. Trying to empower them. I work in the townships." Tootla credits Fort Hare for instilling in him the desire to help others. "This is all basically the grounding I had from Fort Hare. I don't think if I trained from Natal Medical school, I would have been this way," he says



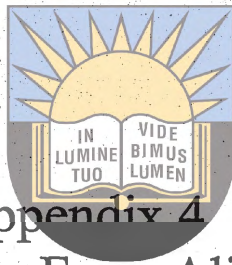
After graduating from Fort Hare in 1935, **Wycliffe Tsotsi** worked as a teacher and lawyer in Lady Frere. Upon leaving Fort Hare, he became involved with the All-African Convention (AAC) and was instrumental in bringing the Cape African Teachers' Association into the AAC in the 1940s. In 1948 he was elected to replace D.D.T. Jabavu as President of the AAC. In the early 1960s he moved his law practice to Basutoland, but left in 1966 when it gained independence. He moved to Zambia, where he worked as a lawyer for the Zambian government. When we met, Tsotsi was a lawyer for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

**A note on the sources for the appendix**

The main sources for the sketches in this appendix are the interviews I conducted with Fort Harians. Except where noted, all quotations come from these interviews. Volumes 4 of *From Protest to Challenge* and Volume 5 of *Who's Who in South African Politics* helped me fill in gaps in the personal and political lives of my interviewees. Sketches prepared for a forthcoming volume of *From Protest to Challenge* were also helpful. Much useful biographical information was found on the ANC's web site, located at [www.anc.org.za/people](http://www.anc.org.za/people). Chris Barron's 12 August, 2001 *Sunday Times* article, "Academic helped pioneer health reform," written upon the untimely death of Jeff Baqwa, provided details of the former SASO leader's life. *Render Unto Kaiser: A Transkei Dossier* helped with information of the Matanzima brothers.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*



Appendix 4  
Images From Alice  
University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*



Frieda Matthews graduating from Fort Hare in 1950. When admonished in Parliament for capping a black woman, Fort Hare Chancellor A.J. Van Ryan said, "but I didn't touch her."



Professor Z.K. Matthews



Students board a train in Alice for the long journey home after the university is shut down, May 1955



A student sits with his luggage after being sent home following protest May 1955.



Principal C.P. Dent, right, at the East London airport on his way to discuss the closure of Fort Hare, May 1955.



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*



C.P. Dent



With university apartheid on the horizon, students use the annual college rag to make a political statement, 1958



Fort Hare Students take out their frustration over the Broederbond infiltration on campus. Here, workers remove the expressions of student protest. September 1968.



Student protestors urging the Rector to meet with them, May 1972.

University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*



As J.M. De Wet looks on, M.C. Botha signs the document that granted autonomy to Fort Hare, 1970

Here, DUM reporter Stanley Argue goes back of the universities and tell how the initial protests into massive confrontation between student and the



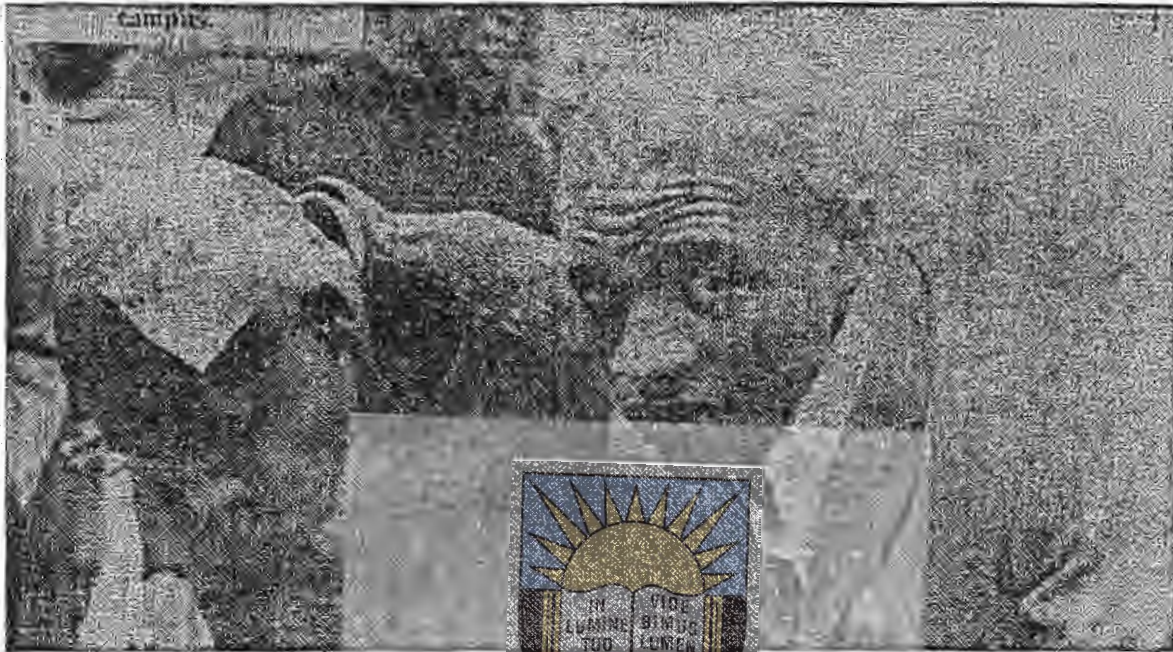
Students forced from campus following unrest display the raised fist that came to prominence with the emergence of the South African Students' Organization, May 1972.



Students meet on campus before the police arrive, August 1973  
**University of Fort Hare**  
*Together in Excellence*



Students find refuge from a police baton charge at the Federal Theological Seminary,  
August 1973.

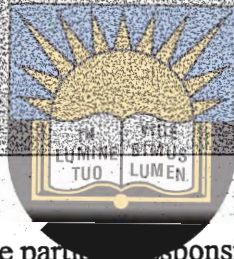


Police interference results in student injuries, September 1973.

University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*



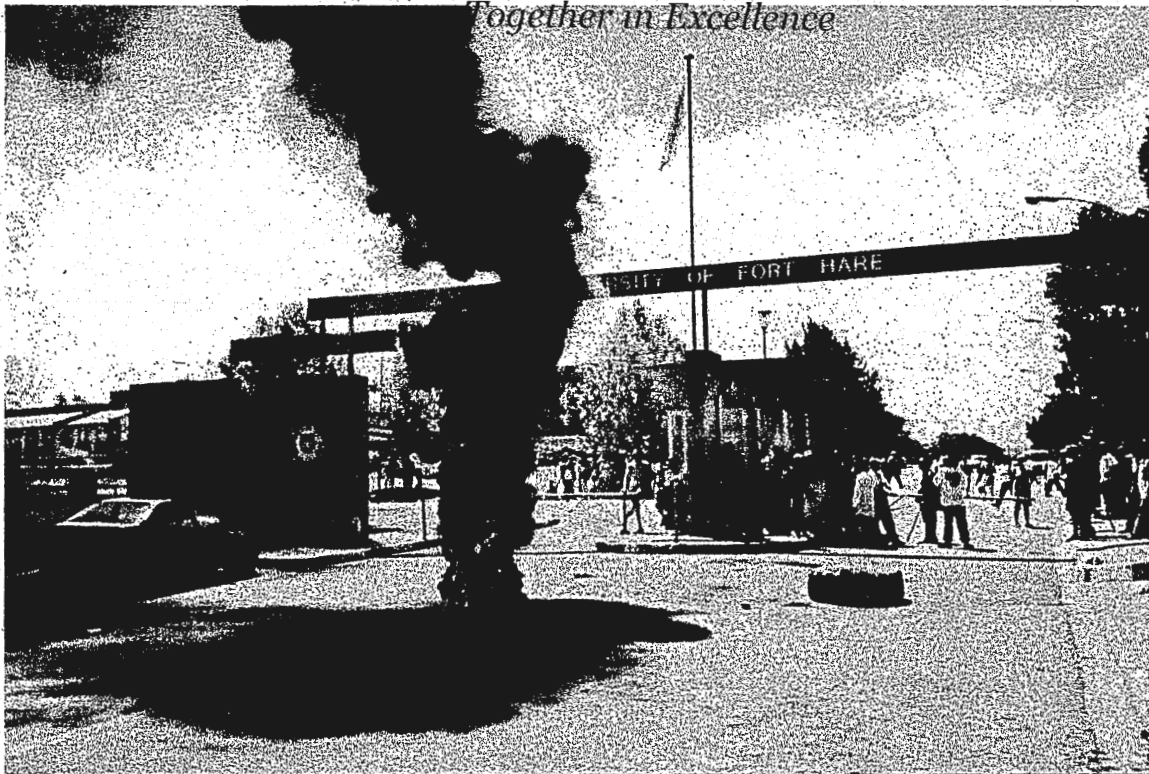
Students injured by dogs, September, 1973.



Remnants of the apartheid system were partially responsible for student protest against registration restrictions in 1997

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

*Together in Excellence*





Unrest at Fort Hare in 1999 has its roots in earlier struggles at the university.



appavoo

baqwa

bughwan

buthelezi

dada



dwane

gmatanzima

govender

govinden

jbaqwa



kmatanzima

mabindisa

mabizela

makalima

makgothi

University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*



makiwane

matthews

matsepe-casa...

mbeki

moerane



mtintso

ndwane

oosthuizen

pillay

pityana



satyo

stofile

thumbadoo

tootla

tsotsi