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# Towards Delivery and Dignity: Community Struggle From Kennedy Road

Jacob Bryant  
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# TOWARDS DELIVERY AND DIGNITY: COMMUNITY STRUGGLE FROM KENNEDY ROAD

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South Africa: Reconciliation and Development  
Fall 2005

**“The struggle versus apartheid has been a little bit achieved, though not yet, not in the right way. That’s why we’re still in the struggle, to make sure things are done right. We’re still on the road, we’re still grieving for something to be achieved, we’re still struggling for more.” -- Sbusiso Vincent Mzimela**

**“The ANC said ‘a better life for all,’ but I don’t know, it’s not a better life for all, especially if you live in the shacks. We waited for the promises from 1994, up to 2004, that’s 10 years of waiting for the promises from the government. If we just sit and wait we’ll be waiting forever. We got tired of that, so we started *toyi toyi*.”  
-- Mnikelo Ndabankulu**

**“Now that we’re protesting, our voice is heard. . . our struggle is the voice of silent victims . . . we hadn’t been able to talk before” – System Cele**

**“We are not aiming at opposing the government, but aiming at providing a *real* platform of togetherness – business, the government, and the poor. We are not expecting the government to feed us like children, we are willing to contribute whatever we can, but we need to demand that platform” – S’bu Zikode**

**“I can’t say ‘yes’ that we’re going to stop, because the struggle is like education, and it just keeps going.”  
– Derrick Gwala**

**“From struggle we have learned that we are poor . . . but we are the masters” -- S’bu Zikode**

**“This is our country and it’s where we need to be free”  
– Thembisio Jerome Bhengu**

## Table of Contents

I.	Acknowledgements	4
II.	Abstract	4
III.	Introduction	5
IV.	Methodology	8
V.	Limitations of the Study	9
VI.	Background and Literature Review	9
	a. A brief history of Kennedy Road	9
	b. Kennedy Road in the new South Africa	13
	c. Theorizing Social Movements	14
	i. Political opportunity structure	18
	ii. Mobilizing structures	20
	iii. Framing processes	21
	d. South Africa critiques theory	23
VII.	Findings and Analysis	27
	a. Movement Origins	27
	i. Mounting Frustrations and Protest Motivations	27
	ii. Turning Frustration into Action	29
	iii. Mobilizing Structures – Legitimacy through Democracy	32
	iv. Initial Protest Goals	34
	v. From a Protest to Movement	34
	b. Movement Linkages	36
	i. Partnership and Solidarity amongst <i>Mjondolos</i>	36
	ii. Connecting with members of the Middle-Class	40
	iii. Involving the Media	44
	c. Movement Directions	45
	i. Engaging Institutional Politics	47
	ii. Looking Forward: negotiating the road ahead	48
	iii. Looking Back: Connections to the “first struggle”	48
VIII.	Conclusions	51
IX.	Recommendations for Further Study	54
X.	Bibliographies	55
	a. Bibliography of Interviews	55
	b. Bibliography of Written Sources	56
XI.	Appendices	58
	a. Survey Instrument	58
	b. Transcribed Personal Interviews	59
	c. Letters from the Youth	76

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Last, to Jeanette, for her love, encouragement and critical insight, I cannot thank you enough.

## **Abstract**

Since 1994, a number of new community-based movements have risen in protest of the economic policies of South Africa's new, African-led government. Among these is a movement of shack-dwellers in Durban that began at Kennedy Road with a defiant protest that recalled the protests of the "first struggle," that against apartheid. The movement has embodied many of the characteristics of its predecessor in the United Democratic Front, including its democratic organization, consultative culture, songs and tactics. But the extent to which these similarities are conscious or connected is unclear, for the movement has created much culture of its own.

This paper will lay out a "geography" of this movement through interviews with many of the people involved and around the struggle, trying as far as possible to analyze the movement and incorporate the analysis of the movement's participants. This analysis

will work on the base of social movement theory, assessing the oft-cited “political opportunities,” mobilizing structures and “framing processes” that the movement has exploited or employed. The paper will also situate Kennedy Road amongst social movements since apartheid, working as both a case study and offering comparative perspectives.

The paper finds that the work and concepts of social movement theorists – the political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing processes theses – are relevant here, but that the struggle at Kennedy Road offers more in human richness and expands theoretical insight in ways that scholars have yet to offer when writing on social movements, and the paper tries to capture this human angle as well. And as we find that the struggle is for service delivery – for housing, for electricity, and for water – connected to these things, it is very much a struggle for dignity where it has not been offered.

## **Introduction**

When it assumed leadership in 1994, the African National Congress and its ruling alliance partners encouraged a policy of demobilization for the very organizations that, via mass-demonstrations, had helped bring them into power. After a period of relative quiet, many of the same people who had fought against apartheid took to the streets again in the mass-movements that have emerged post-apartheid, protesting the policies of the new, African-led government. The grievances of these movements range from frustration with government inaction on HIV/AIDS to the evictions of the poor who cannot pay rent, but all express frustration with how little the circumstances of the poor have changed with the “new dispensation<sup>1</sup>,” and these movements bring these frustrations to the state<sup>2</sup>. One of the more recent “movements” began with large protests from Durban’s Kennedy Road informal settlement against their local councilor, which then inspired and grew into *Abahlali base Mjondolo*<sup>3</sup> (*ABM*), an organization of shack-dwellers. Scholars are only

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<sup>1</sup> South Africans use this phrase to describe the period since 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Ballard, Richard. *Globalisation, Marginalisation and New Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. 2003. These movements bring their grievances primarily to the state, instead of some other party. For contrast, take many labor movements, whose primary target is factory owners or company executive boards.

<sup>3</sup> Literally, “the people who live in the shacks.”

now beginning to research and write about these new movements and to date, most of what has been written about Kennedy Road has been journalistic, not formally research. Further, the topic is important because of what it represents: a dissatisfied underbelly to the “rainbow nation” pictures much of the world still holds of South Africa, and a thrust for “bottom-up democracy” in a country criticized for highly-centralized control.

This project explores the way that the people of Kennedy Road understand themselves, their movement, its goals and tactics, and its relationship to the state and to the struggle against apartheid, through personal interviews and participant observation. To understand this, it also explores the origins of this movement (and how these origins are remembered) and what it is that makes it a “movement” instead of an isolated incident of protest – that is, the sustaining culture and networks that the movement has spawned. Thus, the guiding questions to be answered are simply “why did a movement arise from Kennedy Road?” and “how has this movement been sustained?” But because this movement, as do most, are sustained by many of the same things that produced them, particular focus will be made on its beginnings – on people’s frustrations, on how these turned into action, and on the feelings and gains that resulted.

In explaining the origins of social movements, scholars generally cite the “political opportunities” afforded to movements by the state, the “mobilizing mechanisms” that movements employ, or the manner in which they “frame” their grievances as the critical factor in successful mobilization. With Kennedy Road and ABM, all three of these play a role in their successful mobilization, in line with an emerging consensus amongst theorists of social movements. Thus the task is not to identify *which* of these factors mobilized people, but the *way in which* their interplay gave rise to a movement.

For Kennedy Road, the movement began with a convergence of people’s frustration over a series of government’s broken promises. This frustration converged through the mass-meetings the community holds, and was mobilized through the elected formal leadership structure as well as through the informal friendship and kinship networks within and beyond the settlement. The movement has been sustained, though, not only by the power of people’s frustrations, but by a democratic, consultative culture that involves as many people as possible in its decisions – what some call “bottom-up

democracy<sup>4</sup>.” Interestingly, this bottom-up democracy couples with a strong culture of leadership, and some twenty or thirty committed leader-activists work hard to preserve the consultative culture of the community and of the movement. Additionally, important in the movement’s beginnings and maintenance was and is the “framing process<sup>5</sup>,” where the settlement has movingly voiced its grievances in contrast to the state’s promises. These framings have consolidated support for the movement within the Kennedy Road settlement, attracted the solidarity and partnership of other settlements, and have fueled sympathetic media coverage, taking the movement to a national audience. Critically, the movement has also linked fruitfully with academics and professionals, whose media-skills, facilitation and intervention have kept the movement alive, and have brought it broader audiences and access to networks of resources.

After a description of the methodology and limits of the research, this paper will give a background of the Kennedy Road community and its protests, reviewing also the contributions of movement scholars and social theorists with general theories of protest and mobilization. This background will situate the views people in and around Kennedy Road expressed to me in the context of all that has taken place there, and situate their protest in a comparative and theoretical perspective.

The body of the paper will present my findings from interviews and observation, sketching a “geography” of the movement. First, in a section on movement origins, we will turn back to reexamine the events charted in the background section through the eyes of the people living at Kennedy Road, trying to understand how and why they “broke with authority<sup>6</sup>” and took their grievances to the streets. Here too we begin to see the structures or “mobilizing mechanisms” that initially “got people out of their shacks<sup>7</sup>” and have brought sustained, broad-based support. As with the mobilizing structures, the ways that the movement framed their frustrations and cause has been important in gathering support from other shacks-dwellers, from academics, and from media, and this paper will examine the language of the movement and the support it has attracted. As language and culture are intimately intertwined, examining language will build to an evaluation of the

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<sup>4</sup> In contrast to centralized, “top-down” democracy, a criticism often made of the ANC and of President Thabo Mbeki’s administration in particular.

<sup>5</sup> Snow, David and Robert D. Benford. “Master Frames and Cycles of Protest.” 1992.

<sup>6</sup> This is Fanon’s term, quoted in Gibson, Nigel. *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination*. 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Personal interview with System Cele. 11 Nov 2005.



“culture of struggle” and its implications for the movement’s future and growth. The paper will conclude by exploring the direction of the movement and its members’ views of institutional politics, including recent negotiations with the municipality around toilets and housing. And because this is South Africa, engaging with institutional politics also asks the question of engagement with the “first struggle,” and the paper will thus explore people’s views as to the connections between the struggle against apartheid and the shack-dwellers’ movement.<sup>8</sup>

## **Methodology**

My primary methodology in conducting this research was through semi-structured interviews with almost every member of the community’s elected leadership council, as well as interviews with other residents of the settlement involved in the recent protests and negotiations. Where possible, I interviewed people twice, building on and exploring their answers from the first interview. I also interviewed a number of individuals connected to Kennedy Road but who do not live there – four residents of nearby informal settlements involved in *Abahlali base Mjondolo*, two activists who have lent their support from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and the councilor whose poor performance the community has been protesting. These interviews were supplemented with two done by email, one with a former UDF activist on the culture of the UDF, and another with an ANC policy expert on its demobilization policy. I chose to do so many interviews because, above all, I wanted to chart how the people at Kennedy Road themselves understood their struggle.

My research was greatly enhanced by the opportunity to observe and participate in meetings of the Kennedy Road Development Committee and of the leadership committee of *Abahlali base Mjondolo*. I was also able to attend a 2000 person rally that turned into a march at Foreman Rd. Additionally, I spent a great deal of time sitting at one committee member’s cigarette shop, and was thus able to gain some picture of the day-to-day life of the settlement beyond its meetings and marches.

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<sup>8</sup> Included also are a rich variety of appendices, including several transcribed interviews with movement leaders, in hopes to let their voices be heard in their own words. Because they are not directly transcribed, though, but rather reconstructed from my notes, much of what they say sounds like an American college student. Style aside, the content is a good approximation.

These interviews and meeting participation I supplemented by reading more theoretical work on social movements, reading and watching news media covering Kennedy Road and the *Abahlali base Mjondolo* protests, and with comparisons of other social movements in South Africa documented through the research of the Center for Civil Society<sup>9</sup>.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Besides the obvious limitations of time and energy, I suspect my research was most limited by my inability to speak much Zulu and, with that, to understand fully ideas and sentiments expressed in Zulu or within Zulu culture, even in translation.

As with any work centered on interviewing, my factual accuracy and ability to pinpoint causation is limited by people's memories, and by our human tendency to remember events and their causes in ways more convenient than they may have actually been. (This includes my own reconstruction of what people said from my notes.) With this, I suppose that I am limited by the natural bias of seeing what one sets out to see, and thus may have called some things "highly democratic" or "consensus-based" when in fact they were not. As far as is possible, I tried to check myself against this.

More practically, my research was limited by the incredible schedules that the leaders of Kennedy Road maintain, and by the limits of access I was able to achieve into the community and into the diaries of its leadership. And, though I tried as far as I could to interview people from different backgrounds within the community, I doubt that my "sample" was fully representative, especially in terms of age, income, and views of the struggle<sup>10</sup>.

### **Background and Literature Review**

#### *A Brief History of Kennedy Road*

Kennedy Road first vaulted into the public eye this spring, when approximately 700 people from the settlement blocked Umgeni Road for four hours on a Saturday

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<sup>9</sup> See [www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs](http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs) under "research" and then "social movements."

<sup>10</sup> Neither did I set out to get a random sample – my goal was to hear the views of those most involved in the struggle. These leaders tended to be between twenty-five and middle-age, slightly better-off relative to the rest of the settlement, and very much in favor of protest and struggle. (After all, they were the ones who have been instrumental in beginning and sustaining it).

morning, March 21<sup>st</sup>. Traffic was completely blocked as people burned tires they had brought with them and chanted and sang until the police dispersed them with teargas and dogs, arresting 14 on charges of public violence. Newspapers and television carried news of the protests and the arrests through the weekend, and for some, this was when Kennedy Road began, or at least when it came into view. In fact, the settlement has existed for at least thirty years, an entirely African settlement in the Indian neighborhood of Clare Estate, but most of this history is not documented anywhere outside of people's memories and the few newspaper articles<sup>11</sup> that have been written about it since the protests. It is thus difficult to review literature on the topic, but some understanding of the history of the community is critical to developing an understanding of the community in the present-day.

As with most informal settlements, many of the residents of Kennedy Road come from more rural areas to the city, and stay in the settlements, building a shack (on which there are no taxes) or renting one that someone else has built. This feature would paint the settlement as a transitional space, where people come only temporarily, in hopes of getting a job and then a formal house to which they bring their family to from more rural areas. But even a quick visit reveals that this settlement is full of families and thousands of children, not just adult migrant laborers. Many of these families talk of having come to look for better schools, and because their children can now attend schools in this (mostly Indian) neighborhood that have opened up to black children with the end of school segregation, some suggest that this precipitated the demographic shift in the settlement from mostly migrant laborers to entire families. For these things, the settlement is a hopeful place: near to town and to employment, near schools where children can learn English, and in a middle-class neighborhood where even casual employment out pays anything available in most rural areas.

But despite this access and the hope that it brings, the settlement is visibly filled with material deprivation<sup>12</sup>. In a project that I organized with System Cele, children and youth wrote letters to the mayor of Durban and to President Mbeki, and their letters

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Pithouse's "Coffin for the Councilor" is an excellent review of this year in the settlement. Pithouse has been the main author writing on the settlement, and so much of the literature to be reviewed is through his eyes. Nonetheless, better than most journalists I have read, he uses people's stories and quotes to let them speak for themselves.

<sup>12</sup> Pithouse, Richard. "Coffin for the Councilor." 2005.

always told of this deprivation. People do not have real houses, but cardboard and mud shacks built onto a hillside next to a dump that smells, they said, and when it rains the floors of the shacks are wet and muddy, and they slip inside of their own homes. Neither do they have water, or adequate toilets, they wrote, but most of all they wrote about electricity. Because they do not have electricity, they use paraffin lamps and candles to study and to see at night, but because their houses are made of cardboard and are built so close together that when one candle tips over fifteen shacks can burn. Cele decided that the pamphlet should be called “*We are Crying*,” and this tells the story of the rest of the letters<sup>13</sup>.

Not all of the conditions the children wrote of or people speak of have come directly from under-development, though. Micah Kweyama lamented that living at Kennedy Road was “like hostel-style, it’s not safe to bring your family here,” and many of the children wrote with fear of “big men” and rape. There are visible problems of alcoholism, and people report that they live in constant fear of crime<sup>14</sup> – both of which they attribute to the high rate of unemployment. But what people speak of most are the need for land and housing.

In their words, over the years, the municipality has extended all variety of promises to the community, to improve the conditions here – from simply promising to clean the toilets to promising to build them formal houses. One ANC bulletin from right after it won the province for the first time in 1999<sup>15</sup> lists Kennedy Road specifically as a place to target for housing upgrades, and another invites Kennedy Road specifically to come to a meeting to talk to Nelson Mandela in 1993 about their housing problem – “your problem is my problem, your solution is my solution.”<sup>16</sup> So the hope for housing here is nothing new. The stories people tell of this hope for housing and their relationship with the government are laced with words like “broken promises” and with feelings of betrayal, and these stories as motivation for their protests will be examined thoroughly in the body of this paper. Whether in the meeting to which he invited them Nelson Mandela planned to build houses where their shacks are now or anywhere in

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<sup>13</sup> Attached as the final appendix to this paper.

<sup>14</sup> Derrick Gwala and Themiso Bhengu were careful to include the government in some of the blame for the crime problem, saying that the police won’t come and do their job.

<sup>15</sup> African National Congress ‘ANC KwaZulu-Natal Victory Statement’, 4 June 1999

<sup>16</sup> African National Congress. ‘Southern Natal Statement on the Housing Crisis’, 9 November 1993.

Clare Estate, the neighborhood the settlement is in, is unclear. More recently, the municipality has told the settlement that “this place has been identified and prioritized for relocation. It is ringfenced for slum clearance . . . the city's plan is to move you to the periphery<sup>17</sup>,” as a part of a new slum-clearance policy they appear to have embraced in the run-up to the 2010 World Cup. That policy<sup>18</sup> is essentially to build current shack-dwellers housing in the more rural periphery of the city, but has enjoyed little popularity amongst the residents of the shacks themselves. The chronology as to when they have been promised the land that they occupy or pieces of adjacent land for the construction of houses versus when they have been threatened with forced relocation is unclear. Likely there have been both at different times. In short, though, people said that they took to the road to protest when they found out that land along Elf Road, a nearby road, which they had been promised in meetings with their local councilor and with the department of housing as recently as February of this year, was instead leased to a company to build a brickyard on<sup>19</sup> with no warning or consultation given to them. After trying to meet with the councilor and the owner of the company only for them not to come, the community met and decided to block the road.

After the road was blocked and the fourteen arrested, about 1200 people from the community marched again on the Sydenham police station, demanding that “if they are criminal we are all criminal<sup>20</sup>” – the police should either release the fourteen or arrest all of them. In Cosmos Ngocobo’s<sup>21</sup> account, the police met the marchers at the petrol station on Clare Road, the main road that Kennedy Road turns off of, and blocked them from going any further. A delegation of five were allowed to continue to the police station, of which he was one, but to no avail: the fourteen not be released. After ten days in Durban’s Westville prison and the *pro bono* intervention of a lawyer, then the bail on the 14 was reduced to zero and they were released to celebrations in the community hall. With the intervention of a second lawyer, the charges were dropped.

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<sup>17</sup> Deputy City Manager Derek Naidoo, quoted in Pithouse, Richard. “Obedience Doesn’t Pay: Inside the New Revolt.” 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Grimmet, Neville. “Slums Clearance Policy.” *eThekwini Online*. Available at [www.durban.org.za](http://www.durban.org.za)

<sup>19</sup> In fact the motivations and events surrounding the road blockade are more complex, and are examined at length in the “Mounting Frustration, Movement Motivations” section.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Pithouse, Richard. “Obedience Doesn’t Pay: Inside the New Revolt.” 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Interviewed 4 Dec 2005.

Two weeks later, on the May 13<sup>th</sup>, some 3000 people from Kennedy Road together with members of five other settlements marched on their councilor, Yacoob Baig, to “demand land, housing, and his immediate resignation.”<sup>22</sup> This march was granted a permit, and no one was arrested. The leaders from Foreman Rd. who I interviewed did report suspicious tactics leading up the event, though – on the morning of the march they received pamphlets that said it was an IFP (Inkatha Freedom Party) march from people they knew were ANC members. Kennedy Road leaders also reported a large, armed military presence at their settlement the night before they were to march. Nonetheless, the march went off successfully, and newspapers that billboards that afternoon read “Massive Protest Rocks Durban.”<sup>23</sup> From there, Kennedy Road began to form other further linkages with other settlements and *abahlali base mjonodolo*, a movement of shack-dwellers, began as representatives of these settlements began meeting together.

Several months later, on 14 September 5000 – some estimated as many as 8000 – people from Kennedy Road and its newly aligned partner settlements marched again on their councilor, Yacoob Baig, enacting a mock funeral to say, in Nonhlanhla Mzobe’s words, “Baig, you are dead to us<sup>24</sup>,” that their ward no longer recognized him as councilor. Like the marches before it, this insurgence won attention and access from the municipality, and this is explored in depth in the section on movement directions.

In some sign of the way that Kennedy Road has influenced other settlements, on 4 October 2005 Quarry Road, an informal settlement in an adjacent local ward, staged a mock funeral for their councilor as well.<sup>25</sup>

### *Kennedy Road within South Africa’s new Social Movements*

Even by watching the evening news, though, one would see that Kennedy Road is not alone in mounting protests, as at least a dozen organized, sustained campaigns of popular protest have risen across South Africa, taking the government to task on promises which the movements see as unfulfilled or broken. At the front of these new social movements

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<sup>22</sup> Pithouse, Richard. “Coffin for the Councilor.” 2005.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Interviewed 10 Nov 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Khan, Fazel and Pithouse, Richard. “Another Coffin for Another Durban Councillor: Quarry Road Marches on Jayraj Bachu.” 2005.

are many of the same men and women who fought in the original struggle<sup>26</sup>, joined by their sons and daughters, the next generation of activists and movement organizers. Jon Jeter wrote of the rise of these movements as “South Africa’s new revolution. Seven years after voters of all races went to the polls for the first time, ending 46 years of apartheid and white rule, churches, labor unions, community activists and poor in all black townships are dusting off the protest machinery that was the engine of their liberation struggle. What most provokes South Africa’s defiance today are what they see as injustices unleashed on this developing nation by the free-market economic policies of the popularly elected, black-led governing party.”<sup>27</sup> From the Western Cape to Soweto to the Durban suburbs, citizens of the new South Africa are organizing themselves to protest everything from housing evictions and water cut-offs to lack of service delivery to the government’s inaction on HIV/AIDS, and these movements are only just beginning to be studied. Many of the features across these new social movements are similar, as well as their target – they are by and large making their demands to the state<sup>28</sup>. As they describe themselves, it is not that they are dissatisfied with the proposition of democracy but rather with the policies where the government seems *not* to represent their interests, what they see as the *undemocratic* workings of some state organs of policy. And, examined carefully, part of what gives rise to these movements is the unfinished business of democratization and of reconciliation. Because while Nelson Mandela has had tea with the architects of his oppression, residents of places like Kennedy Road still live in shacks without electricity, water, or sanitation and have received no material reparation for the dispossession of his ancestral land. And though they vote and follow politics religiously, it never ceases to feel to them as though few in the municipal, provincial, or national government actually have their interests at heart. So while their causes differ and they draw their support from townships as far apart as Cape Town and Durban, South Africa’s new social movements represent a thrust to finish the business of reconciliation and fully

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<sup>26</sup> The phrase ‘original struggle’ has become the common term of reference amongst those writing on the new social movements for the democratic revolution which culminated in the 1994 transition.

<sup>27</sup> *The Washington Post*, 6 November, 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Based on research on over a dozen new social movements sponsored by the Center for Civil Society. Referenced from [www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs](http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs). The demands of these movements are made to the state, locally, provincially, nationally, as opposed to another party – take, for instance, the labor-rights movements of migrant fruit pickers in California, who made their demands to orchard owners and later to consumers.

democratize the polity, putting the interests of the majority – who also happen to be the poorest – back on the table.

As Richard Ballard notes, this distinguishes South Africa where, unlike the United States and Great Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s in which the poor were ‘rediscovered’ by social scientists<sup>29</sup>, the poor have “re-entered the national scene because they have made themselves visible again by their capacity to fight and resist.”

Nonetheless, the body of academic literature on social movements offers relevant tools to analyze South Africa’s new social movement and, importantly, South Africa’s new social movements offer challenges to previous conceptions of how social movement formation and operation.

With the renewal of social movements and activism during the 1960s in the United States and Europe, an interest in the theorization of social movements and their formation arose as well. With academics and activists drawing from a diversity of perspectives, sociologists, political scientists, and historians produced a wealth of scholarship on social movements and revolutions.<sup>30</sup> As to the reasons that give rise to social movements, historical scholarship is of three general schools. In the first and the oldest, scholars place the emergence of social movements in a framework of political opportunity structure, arguing that social movements arise as a result of changes or perceived changes in the institutional political structure. In the second school of thought lie those who see the ability (or inability) to raise up a movement as resting in mobilizing structures, arguing that the collective vehicles through which people mobilize are what determine a successful or unsuccessful mobilization. In the last, theorists focus on “framing processes,” or the manner in which a group consciously fashions a shared understanding of a problem to motivate collective action<sup>31</sup>. From the limited research that has been done, the primary impetus for most of South Africa’s new social movements has been immediate, material circumstances, and that these movements have gathered solidarity via their ability to express these grievances’ contrast with the promises of the state, that is, their ability to “frame” them. All the while, a synthesis of these three perspectives is

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<sup>29</sup> Ballard, Richard. “Globalisation, Marginalisation and New Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa.” 2003.

<sup>30</sup> McAdam, et al. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> McAdam, et al. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. p. 3-6.



necessary to understand these movements fully, as they operate in dialectic with all three of these shaping factors.

Even views as to what constitutes a “social movement” are themselves diverse, and while few will disagree that South Africa has sprung several new movements of some sort, the question of whether or not they are productive, sustainable, good or even if they qualify as social movements at all is answered differently by different actors and commentators. Some have argued that these movements are characterized by a “reactive and spontaneous character and that they are, therefore, patchy uncoordinated, unsustainable sparks which [will] quickly die down”<sup>32</sup> thus never developing into sustainable forces wielding longer-term influence. Others, particularly those high up in the ANC’s own hierarchy, have avoided the question of whether or not these are social movements, arguing instead that the fragile period of post-apartheid reconstruction requires stability, and that these movements have a destabilizing effect<sup>33</sup>. For our purposes, we will use Charles Tilly’s definition of social movements, which he defines as “a sustained interaction between a specific set of authorities and various spokespersons for a given challenge to those authorities,” also emphasizing that these community spokespersons’ sanction “sustained interactions” comes via mass mobilization<sup>34</sup>. Tilly notes that one must not take this definition to preclude the range of tactics or strategic interventions, what he calls “action repertoires,” that movements might employ – whether or not each tactic requires or interaction with specific authorities or mass mobilization. Further, this mass mobilization is what distinguishes these community movements from political parties, pressure groups, and NGOs, who operate generally on a smaller, professionalized staff. And if one takes mass mobilization and sustained interaction between specific authorities and various spokespersons for a given challenge to those authorities, indeed the hypothesis appears confirmed: South Africa has spawned a series of new social movements, most spurring from some of its poorest urban residents.

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<sup>32</sup> Ballard, Richard. “Globalisation, Marginalisation and New Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa.” 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Take Thabo Mbeki’s reaction to the blocking of the N2 highway by protestors from informal settlements nearby burning tires, or when Minister of Public Enterprises Jeff Hadebe compared the members of the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) to a “gang of criminals” (*Sunday Times*: 2/12/2001). See also Adler, A., and Steinberg, J. *From Comrades to Citizens: The South African Civics Movement and the Transition to Democracy*. 2000.

<sup>34</sup> Tilly, Charles. “Social Movements and National Politics” in *Statemaking and Social Movements*. 1984.

Many of these movements, while carrying profound implications and effecting changes in social relations, might first characterize themselves as “community movements,” as their concerns rise (or rose) first from the location in which they are based. One prominent example of a community-based social movement is the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee, which protests the privatization of electricity utilities and trains “struggle electricians” to reconnect residents illegally. Other movements employ similar tactics, combining efforts to ameliorate the worst of government policy (by reconnecting water and electricity) with mass mobilization for protest against these policies and against others, including housing. Prominent among these is the Chatsworth-based Concerned Citizens Forum, which has networked with townships around Durban, the roots of which lay in citizens’ exposure to the concrete manifestations and impacts of the government’s economic policy, and not in any pre-theorized ideological critique or commitment<sup>35</sup>. As such, initial actions were largely reactive and sought to ameliorate the worst and immediate excesses of government policy, which then developed into longer-term, more organized efforts. In fact, these origins have characterized many of South Africa’s movements: arising out of immediate material need or hardships, which then bring people together to organize for more sustained, more ideologically articulated collective action. This was the case with the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, where residents of several areas assist bring appeals of police-evictions to the court system, training one another as in the legal procedures involved here<sup>36</sup>. Like the Concerned Citizens Forum and other groups working against the limited subsidization of basic services, what began as a shared effort to meet each other’s most basic needs has grown into a more universalizing, articulated commitment to pressuring for the subsidized provision of basic services across South Africa. Like these, other important movements include the Landless People’s Movement and Homeless People’s Alliance<sup>37</sup>, loose affiliations of groups pressuring the government for land redistribution and for housing. These too grew out of neighborhoods and communities where people

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<sup>35</sup> Desai, Ashwin. *We are the Poors: Community Struggles in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Oldfield, Sophie. “Building unity in diversity: Social movement activism in the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign.” 2004.

<sup>37</sup> Khan, Firoz and Pieterse, Edgar. “The Homeless People’s Alliance: Purposive Creation and Ambiguated Realities.” 2004.

stuck in shacks looked out over vast swaths of open land and, frustrated with the government's inaction, took to the streets to make their demands more felt by local officials, later linking up with other community's who were doing the same. While as yet it has not been researched thoroughly, the same characteristics would seem true of Kennedy Road and the surrounding informal settlements, which are not a part of Homeless People's Alliance. Instead of mounting frustration giving way to mass-demonstrations in parallel to one another, however, Kennedy Road's initial protest has inspired solidarity from a dozen or so other settlements, and they now act together, coordinated amongst their leadership committees.

### *Towards a theoretical perspective*

But how can one explain the rise of these movements? In most of the cases, what McAdam<sup>38</sup> calls the "strain" condition that brings people together for collective action is consistently present – a cut-off from electricity or water, an eviction notice from one's home, or the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Nonetheless, to cite the manner in which movements arise as simply "strained" conditions would neglect to notice the billion-some other slum-dwellers<sup>39</sup> in the world, the starving, and other homeless people who have not brought their concerns to "specific authorities<sup>40</sup>" in any organized, collective way. Neither would it be realistic to present these movements as the work of one charismatic individual who somehow disseminated his or her idea or frustration to thousands of people with no obvious mechanism, the way that history is often written. Here, then, the body of academic theorizing of social movements bears important insight into the way that social movements form and take shape, in South Africa and around the world.

### *Political Opportunity Structure*

Do social movements ebb and flow solely in reaction to changes in the institutional political structure that allow them to make their demands more felt? Many in the intellectual tradition now known as "political opportunity structure" would point to these political opportunities as the primary impetus for the rise or fall of collective

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<sup>38</sup> McAdam, et al. Introduction to *Comparative Perspective on Social Movements*. 1999.

<sup>39</sup> Davis, Mike. "Planet of the Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat" 2004.

<sup>40</sup> Recall Tilly's definition cited previously.

action. Though not termed “political opportunity structure” at the time, the tradition is thought to have agreed with Lipsky, who assumed that the ebb and flow of protest activity was a function of changes that left the broader political system more vulnerable or receptive to the demands of particular groups<sup>41</sup>. In a related article, Eisinger used the term “structure of political opportunities” to help account for variation in “riot behavior” in forty-three American cities, agreeing that the “incidence of protest is . . . related to the nature of a city’s political opportunity structure,” which he defined as “the degree to which groups are likely to be able to gain access to power and to manipulate the political system.”<sup>42</sup> (Importantly, this definition leaves open the prospect of groups obtaining power through the election of their own leaders, a tactic towards which leaders of new community movements in South Africa are highly skeptical, given what they perceive as the ambivalence that the ANC and COSATU’s elected leaders have towards the needs and sentiments of their own constituencies.)

Soon after, there arose the “political process model,” an entire school of social movement theory that saw the timing and fate of movements as largely dependent on the opportunities afforded insurgents by the shifting institutional structure and ideological disposition of those in power. Since then this central assumption and the concept of “political opportunities” has become a staple in social movement inquiry<sup>43</sup>. Movements of collective action as varied as the American women’s movement, liberation theology, peasant mobilization in Central America, the nuclear freeze movement and the Italian protest cycle have been attributed to the expansion and contraction of political opportunities<sup>44</sup>.

In all of this, the underlying conviction rests in the idea that social movements and revolutions are shaped by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities unique to the national context in which they are embedded. As one may already see, this model leaves little room for ideological content, and this is the discontent most commonly expressed towards it. It does place the success or non-success of mass-

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<sup>41</sup> Lipsky, Michael. *Protest in City Politics*. 1970.

<sup>42</sup> Eisinger, Peter. “The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities.” *American Political Science Review* 67: 11 – 28.

<sup>43</sup> McAdam, Doug. “Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, Future Directions” in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*.” 1999.

<sup>44</sup> McAdam, et al. Introduction to *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. 1999.

mobilization in the hands of the institutional political system (and changes in it), but one should not read it as totally negligent of the ideologies or grievances that movements hold. Rather, it takes these convictions on the part of a group as given, and then hypothesizes the success that these given ideologies will have in being communicated to those in authority in the opportunities that the political system allows. Another critique would be that the focus on institutional politics fails to account for those movements which place their demands primarily on other actors, but in the case of South Africa, where groups are focusing their grievances on the state, the perspective remains highly relevant.

Understandably, the people at Kennedy Road do not see their protests as a function of political opportunities, but speak instead of the frustration that they felt and the way that they wanted to make that frustration known. They do have a much stronger sense, though, that their protests and the upcoming elections have created political opportunities that make the municipality more receptive, at least to meeting with them.

### *Mobilizing Structures*

A second general school of social movement theorization puts the emphasis on the structures by which people are mobilized for collective action. McCarthy defines this as “those agreed upon ways of engaging in collective action which include particular tactical repertoires, particular social movement organizational forms, and modular social movement repertoires . . . [that] also include the range of everyday life micro-mobilization structural social locations that are not aimed primarily at movement mobilization, but where mobilization may be generated,”<sup>45</sup> such as families, networks of friends, volunteer organizations, and work groups of colleagues. A prime and oft-cited example here would be the role of African-American churches in the American civil rights movement, all of which existed prior to the movement and did not function simply as networks by which people were mobilized, but carried on with their church activities throughout.

Understood this way, mobilizing structures are those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action. Where political opportunity structure focuses on the institutional political system, this

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<sup>45</sup> McCarthy, John. “Constraints and Opportunities in Adopting, Adapting, and Inventing”. 1999.

perspective understands the driver of social movement mobilization to be in the meso-level groups and organizations, including the “social movement organization” (like the Concerned Citizen’s Forum, etc.) itself.

As such, this school sought to break with grievance-based conceptions of social movements and focus instead on the mobilization processes and the formal organization manifestations of these processes<sup>46</sup>. For these authors, social movements, while perhaps not synonymous with formal organizations, were nonetheless known by and became a force for change primarily through the social movement organization they spawned.

Within this school of thought, the political process model of Charles Tilly, mentioned earlier, contrasts with this resource mobilization theory, as it documents the critical role of various grassroots settings – work and neighborhood, in particular – in facilitating and structuring collective action. Here then, Tilly moves towards a perspective of synthesis between the three distinct schools that later becomes the trend of social movement research.<sup>47</sup> For our purposes, the networks through which Kennedy Road mobilized its own residents were clear – the committee that they elect into leadership and the mass meetings that it holds, and these will be examined more closely.

### *Framing Processes*

If the combination of political opportunities and mobilizing structures affords groups a certain structural potential for action, they remain insufficient for collective action in the absence of another crucial factor. Mediating between opportunity, organization, and action are the shared meanings and definitions that people bring to their situation<sup>48</sup>. At a minimum people need to feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting together, they can redress that problem. This perspective David Snow pioneered, calling this the “framing process,” or the “conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that

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<sup>46</sup> McCarthy and Zald. *The Trend of Social Movements in America: Professionalization and Resource Mobilization*. 1973.

<sup>47</sup> Tilly, Charles. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. 1978. Recall that Tilly’s work was originally cited under the political opportunities discussion. Considered by many to be at the vanguard of the discipline, his work combining studies of political opportunities and grassroots mobilizing organizations synthesized perspectives long before anyone else did.

<sup>48</sup> McAdam, et al. Introduction to *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. 1999.

legitimate and motivate collective action.”<sup>49</sup> As Mayer Zald described it<sup>50</sup>, what Snow did was not to offer an entirely new perspective, but to reemphasize the role of ideology in mass-mobilization, thus crystallizing what were growing frustrations amongst activists in particular with how little emphasis political opportunity thinking or resource mobilization theory gave to ideas, feelings, sentiments and grievances. Snow further emphasized the role of culture in the way that grievances are framed. In his emphasis on the conscious strategy with which groups frame their grievances for outside consumption, however, Snow neglects the importance of the manner in which individuals and groups “frame” things in their own minds, to motivate each other and themselves. What Snow did bring to light was the growing consensus that the centrality of cultural elements, including the culture that movements themselves spurn, differentiates the “new social movements” (those since the 1960s) from the “old.” Again, one only has to look as far as the civil rights movement, or the anti-Vietnam war movements to meet resounding evidence for this claim – they breed their own culture, and this culture then motivates further struggle. As far as I was able, I tried to examine the particular culture that the movement at Kennedy Road has spawned, what it consists of, where it came from, and how it operates and legitimates.

As Snow himself acknowledge, however, the importance of “framing” could not exist in a vacuum outside of an understanding of political opportunities or mobilizing mechanisms, as they all crucially depended on one another. In fact, as Gamson and Meyer<sup>51</sup> elaborate, even the way that groups “frame” the existence or non-existence of political opportunity plays a crucial role in their ability to motivate people to bring their grievances to authorities collectively. So while scholars have tended to study only one aspect of a movement – for example, the effect of expanding political opportunities or the organizational dynamic of collective action – Snow and a growing chorus of voices shift the emphasis on understanding the role that all of these three factors (political opportunities, mobilization structures, and framing processes) have on the emergence of social movements.

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<sup>49</sup> Snow, David. “Master Frames and Cycles of Protest” in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. 1992.

<sup>50</sup> Zald, Mayer. “Culture, Ideology, and Strategic Framing” in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. 1999.

<sup>51</sup> Gamson, William and Meyer, David. “Framing Political Opportunity” in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. 1999.

The problem, as McAdam describes it, is that there exist many relationships between these three factors, and which ones become relevant depend on the focus of a given scholar's research<sup>52</sup>. And in sketching the relationships between these three factors, many have sacrificed some of the analytical precision that they offer, using "political opportunities," "mobilizing structures" and other terms to refer to concepts too broad or too poorly defined. Nonetheless, the necessity of incorporating all of these perspectives, and examining each of the elements that they focus on, has become the "industry standard" in the discipline of social movement analysis, and all three come to bear on the movement at Kennedy Road.

### *South Africa critiques theory*

In this vein, examined closely, the new South African social movements should force scholars to further abandon the analytical divisions between these three schools of thought, as they rose via a combination of them all. At the same time, a look at these new movements should also force scholars to turn back to critique and expand the theories designed to analyze these movements – unseating the *a priori* position of theory in the study of social movements, and perhaps in turn unseating the position of scholars as commentators rather than activists. All the while, one must recall that the South African movements are themselves diverse and a one-size-fits-all theory or description would neither do them justice nor be analytically useful, and we will not attempt that here.

One striking commonality amongst the South African movements, however, is the importance in each of them of "strain" or material conditions that become their grievances, and the manner in which these have served as the primary impetus to bring people together for collective action. An illustrative picture, more or less the picture that painted in Ashwin Desai's *We are the Poors*, might be as follows: because you are unable to pay, your electricity has just been cut off and, stepping outside to check the meter and the wires, you see other neighbors also checking theirs, all dismayed that they will be unable to cook that again and unsure of what next to do. Calling out to one another across the street or down the block, you decide to hold a meeting to discuss what to do. This meeting grows, and a retrenched electrician tells of how he reconnected his own

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<sup>52</sup> McAdam, et al. Introduction to *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. 1999



wires illegally, and teaches youth how to do the same. In this way, the material condition brought people out of their homes and into community associations. This would seem to give emphasis to ideological components of mobilization, but in fact, at first, this picture would only illustrate anything ideological by implication, and this is where it differs with Snow's notion of the importance of ideology. Instead, what brought people out of their homes was first the fact that they would not be able to cook or see anything inside their homes that night, an immediate, material concern. Only later did this take the form of ideology – “government should provide basic services for free or for reduced rates,” or “the ANC should fulfill its promises too the poor.” With Tilly's conception, these movements gain sanction through the far-reaching support that they garner amongst members of the communities from which they arise, and then from others located elsewhere via the media-exposure that their mass-mobilizations for protest usually garner.

This then *creates* a political opportunity where one did not necessarily exist before, another potent challenge to the existing body of social movement theories. These movements rise in a formal political environment that does not seem especially opportune: the apartheid struggle has finished, and political elites sound unsympathetic to those who would unsettle or even question the new democratic order, having even shown a willingness to employ apartheid-era-like police tactics to quell any uprising or insurgence. And while the political environment is certainly more amenable than was the previous state's openness to protest against apartheid, the opportunities that these new movements have seized have largely been created themselves. This ratcheting-open or creation of political opportunities is not an especially complicated process – communities mobilize thousands internally and are then joined by supporters from outside the community to march on public officials. Because thousands more in town at least heard their songs and chants, word of this spreads and footage often plays on the evening news. In turn, government officials, often out of embarrassment, are suddenly willing to hold discussions with movement leaders, and political opportunity is born<sup>53</sup>.

In terms of mobilizing structures, the new South African movements employ forms so diverse and heterogeneous, even within the same movement, that they generally defy any simplifying typology. Movements like the recent protests from Kennedy Road

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<sup>53</sup> See the minutes of Kennedy Road's November 9<sup>th</sup> 2005 meeting with the Mayor of Durban.

and nearby informal settlements are based first in the residential community and its democratically elected leadership structure, which makes decisions as to what tactics they should employ. Even in some of the informal settlements where this democratic structure is weak or does not exist, however, people have mobilized through networks of word-of-mouth and meetings between representatives of the different settlements. Last, they have also formed linkages with other movements around Durban and as far as Cape Town, with some assistance from sympathetic academics and lawyers, whose sympathy was piqued initially by media reports of their protests. In this way, the success of these mobilizations rests on a diversity of structures, and it would be nearly impossible and generally unproductive to separate the importance of one structure from the others. This diversity would issue a challenge to those theorists who see “mobilization mechanism” as a singular phenomenon, when in fact a number of mechanisms have been necessary here for successful mobilization.

On the question of “framing,” these new South African social movements offer important insight and challenges to students and scholars of social movements. When one reads Snow’s definition of “framing” as a conscious, strategic process, and then reads the slogans of Cape Town’s Mandela Park’s banners as they protest against evictions, it immediately feels as though these organizers have not had to try hard to frame their grievances. Instead, one is struck with the feeling that they are simply telling the truth about their conditions, and that the power of truth-telling seems somewhat neglected in Snow’s definition. The same goes for the Treatment Action Campaign, with many of its demands so simple as “the government should provide ARVs to pregnant mothers” or, more simply, “keep our babies from dying”, and the strategizing, conniving feeling of Snow’s definition is called up for critique. Nonetheless, the expression of these grievances does take specific form – i.e. “no land, no housing, no vote” and there is a conscious effort within the organizations but it is not to “frame” so much as “get the truth out,” and thus Snow’s work is highly relevant, even as these new movements challenge its oversights.

As for theories of the shaping role of culture on movements, South Africa has an abundance to offer, both now and in a study of the movements against apartheid. In fact, much of the social movements before and after apartheid feel strikingly similar, and if the

policemen with the teargas were not black, one might even forget which side of apartheid one was on. These movements have employed many of the same methods of protest, songs and slogans that were employed in the struggle for democracy. At this point, it is unclear whether movement organizers do this in order to liken the present struggle to the previous one (an idea of the first against “racial apartheid” and the second against “class apartheid,” an idea fashionable on the academic left), or whether these songs, chants, and tactics are simply *what it means to struggle* to them.

In fact, it is probably both, but the shaping role of culture – whether it is the culture forged in the United Democratic Front or whether it is Zulu, Xhosa, or another ethnic culture – is overwhelmingly clear. And as with the struggle against apartheid, the new social movements bring cultures together – “Coloreds” from Wentworth marching in solidarity with whites against the relaxation of environmental regulations, or Zulus marching with Indians, Coloreds and a smattering of whites for land, housing and sanitation. Here too, conceptions of “cultural framings” prove imprecise. How can all of these cultures frame common grievances, and can different frames exist alongside each other? South Africa would seem to say that they can.

Last, South Africa issues a challenge to the more conservative commentators on civil society and popular movements<sup>54</sup>. Unlike causes that are largely ideological and legal that operate within entirely legal means – say, for instance, gay rights in the United States – these movements are willing to employ extralegal means as they are deemed necessary for people’s survival (like the water and electricity reconnections). Further, they challenge the very economic power-relations on which South African society is constituted, and thus differ from movements that simply try to propagate a new “principle” or view. As Richard Ballard writes, they add to the “cast many new actors” associated with the play of politics in South Africa, and they put the voices of the poor back into the picture of the ANC, of civil society (however conceived), and of public discourse. This happens beyond just the news media, as they bring their concerns to the thousands who might see or hear of their marches or rallies. And this way, “the poor are not just involved in recognition, or the discovery of the right policies, or the creation of the right administrative framework, or even the goodwill of power-holders. They are

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<sup>54</sup> See Putnam, Robert. *Making Democracy Work*. 1996.

challenging the very distribution of power in society and are doing so in ways that do not stick to the gradualist, corporatist, and nation-building script.”<sup>55</sup>

This paper then serves as a case study of one such movement, but my goal is to explore the movement on its own terms – analyzing the movements origins, linkages, and directions critically, but also understanding how the people at Kennedy Road experience these things.

## **Findings and Analysis**

### **Movement Origins**

When they talk of why they first took to the road in protest, the people at Kennedy Road tell first of the years that they have lived at the settlement and the ways their frustrations have grown. The point at which they place the beginning of the community’s anger with the municipality and the reasons they give for turning this anger to action are varied, but together they give a strong sense that, in the eyes of its members, this movement is driven by grievances – with years of promises unfulfilled, with the material deprivation of life in the settlement, and by the indignity of being relocated away from all the things that they need and want. But the “frame” that they have employed to tell of this is simply trying to tell the truth – that their councilor Baig has lied, that this is what it is like to live in a shack, and that land, housing, basic services, and respect are what they want and will demand.

### *Mounting Frustration and Motivations toward action*

In interviews, it was interesting to see when people placed the beginnings of the community’s frustrations and where they placed these frustrations – with the councilor, with the municipality, etc. – and the people I interviewed each responded differently. What every interview revealed, though, was that frustration with their councilor, with the municipality and the departments of housing, water and sanitation were nothing new.

Asked when the community first became frustrated with the municipality, different people gave different answers – of those who had only been in leadership for a year or

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<sup>55</sup> Ballard, Richard. “Globalisation, Marginalisation and New Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa.” 2003.

two or who had not lived at Kennedy Road as long, most said that the people simply became angry on the day or the week leading up to when they blocked the freeway. In their words, until then, the community had tried to make their voice heard via meetings with municipal authorities; when it became clear that they had been “bluffed” by their councilor over a piece of land they had been promised, they got angry. For those who have been around and involved longer, the day when they blocked the road was a major turning point in terms of attitudes and tactics. But these people’s answers drew from more history and painted a picture of mounting frustration – over the municipality’s failed promises, but also over the manner in which the community was treated, and how decisions were made without consulting them.

Nonhlanhla Mzobe, who has lived in the settlement since her childhood, spoke of the hope that people felt initially for getting houses after the new government came to power in 1994. Around that time, “you could go and meet the housing officials . . . and the first time, all the comrades [in the housing department] were disciplined, but then they would say the next time that you went that the man [you met before] wasn’t there<sup>56</sup>.” As she tells it, frustration with the unwillingness of the local government to hear their concerns began there.

Mdu Ngqulunga<sup>57</sup>, now the deputy chairperson of the development committee, speaks of different events around the same time. Asked when and why he first felt motivated to go and protest the councilor, he recalled all the way back to “when I first came here in 1993, the Urban Foundation<sup>58</sup> came here and promised us that we can just stay here and showed us [how to upgrade] the places that we had, all these measurements and things. They insisted that we shouldn’t accept it if anyone else might come to say that this land is for someone else . . . when we stayed here the housing department used to come and promise us that they’re going to build us houses, this year, then this year, then they came and told us that the land is unstable for building, and that the [closeness to] the dump sight might cause harmful effects on people,” extending his frustration beyond just

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<sup>56</sup> Personal Interview with Nonhlanhla Mzobe. 10 Nov 2005.

<sup>57</sup> A twelve year resident of Kennedy Road. Interviewed through Thembiso Bhengu, 16 Nov 2005.

<sup>58</sup> An NGO set up by South African businesses to show that private sector-led development would be more efficient. Pithouse, Richard. “Coffin for the Councilor: A report on the emergence of a shack dwellers movement in Durban, South Africa.” 2005.

the local councilor and his recent failures to the whole municipality and the Department of Housing.

Anton Zamisa<sup>59</sup> puts the beginning of the committee's frustration with the municipality as more recent, in October of 2003, when the Kennedy Road development committee under S'bu Zikode's new leadership organized a clean-up campaign, only for the Department of Health to give them no financial or logistical support. Mdu Ngqulunga also remembered this as a turning point in our second interview. Here, they implied, they were not waiting for the councilor or for the municipality to come and bring development, but they were organizing themselves to address problems in the community<sup>60</sup> – in this case, trash – and all they needed the municipality to do was to come and collect the waste they collected along with that of their neighbors. And when the municipality gave nominal support to the project, but then refused to collect the bags they had collected because they were not in the proper sacks (given only to taxpayers), said Ngqulunga, “this was what mobilized us to voice our concerns to the waste department<sup>61</sup>.” From there, he said, the committee had meetings with the municipal housing department, who told them that they would build in the areas around the settlement, emphasizing that “they came here and made all these promises!”

Words like “promises” and “betrayal” from the councilors and from other members of the municipal government became themes in all of the narratives my interviewees told, while the number and the scope of these promises and betrayals depended on how long the person had been at Kennedy Road and how much they wanted to talk about it. As the people of Kennedy Road tell it, these promises, especially around the time of elections, have been a theme in the life and hopes of their community, but after votes were tallied, the promises remained unfulfilled and hope gave way to disillusionment and then frustration.

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<sup>59</sup> A professional marathon runner and 12-year resident of Kennedy Road, interviewed 28 Nov 2005.

<sup>60</sup> This was not the only time that the community organized itself to address problems. In her Nov 8<sup>th</sup> interview, Nonhlahla Mzobe tells of the crèche that she started because she saw so many children at home alone, and later the drop-in center that cares for child-headed households and people living with HIV/AIDS. Both of these programs have enjoyed some government support.

<sup>61</sup> Mdu Ngqulunga, interviewed through Thembiso Bhengu again on 24 Nov 2005. Note he did not include all of the people working for the waste department, though, or for the municipality. He qualified his criticism by adding that some from the waste department had borrowed trucks secretly and come to pick up their trash.

It is also worth noting how carefully many of the interviewees remember the names and affiliations of each of the people who had promised them each thing and how they remember the exact dates that these things were promised, even five or six years later. This exactness lends veracity to their recollections and thus to their grievances, but it seems also to show the direction of their frustration – towards each of these individuals, and not to a system as a whole.

*From frustration to action – and how we talk about it*

While such promises left unfulfilled were nothing new to the community, people often said to me, disillusionment gradually gave way to frustration and then to anger until, this past March, everything changed. Frustration spilled into anger over a piece of land along nearby Elf Road which the community had been promised for the construction of homes, when it became clear to them that their local councilor was not only slow to fulfill his promises, but that he had lied to them outright.

A few weeks before, their elected councilor, Yacoob Baig had promised them in a meeting with the development committee and with officials from the municipality that the adjacent land would be used for developing land. So, says Mzobe, “when we saw the *ganja ganja*<sup>62</sup> working down there, we were first happy, but then we thought, if they were building houses for us, why wouldn’t they tell us?”<sup>63</sup>

In interviews I questioned people thoroughly on what exactly had happened in the days leading up to when they burned tires and blocked the road, and what it was that they were hoping this would accomplish. Where other events in the history of the settlement were described differently and even in contradictory terms by different interviewees, it was striking how completely similar their recollection and descriptors were for that week in March.

In the recollection of Derrick Gwala<sup>64</sup>, S’bu Zikode<sup>65</sup>, and of Mondli Mbiko<sup>66</sup>, and nearly every other person that I interviewed (though it was in these interviews that I

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<sup>62</sup> Zulu for bulldozers.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Nonhlahla Mzobe, 10 November 2005.

<sup>64</sup> A shopkeeper, gospel singer, and committee member. Interviewed 24 Nov 2005 through System Cele

<sup>65</sup> Chairperson of the Kennedy Road Development Committee. Interviewed 1 Dec 2005

<sup>66</sup> A print-maker and development committee treasurer (though he jokes that this isn’t a difficult job as they don’t have any money). Interviewed 25 Nov 2005

pressed this point the most) the week went exactly this way: Seeing the men working down on their “promised land<sup>67</sup>,” just one month after it had been promised to them, they were initially excited but then suspicious – as Nonhlanhla Mzobe put it “why would they build us houses without telling us anything?” After walking down to talk to the men operating the bulldozers down the hill and finding out that the men were building a brickyard for the Greystone<sup>68</sup> company, the community became outraged at what they saw as a complete betrayal. After the committee met to discuss things, they decided to hold a mass meeting, and announced with a loudspeaker that there would be a meeting in the hall. In Mbiko’s words, “we [the committee] asked the people, ‘what are you thinking about the councilor?’ and the community said ‘we must march!’ The committee then held a caucus meeting and gave the go-ahead for the march.” When I pressed him, Zikode said that the people most strongly in favor of the march were the youth, but that the community had reached the decision together, and that it was the voice of the community that was being followed. Putting the same question to others that I interviewed, no one could remember who had originally suggested that they demonstrate, instead saying that the community had decided together. Committee members emphasize that this decision was taken only after their councilor, municipal officials and the owner of the company that was thought to be building the brickyard did not come to a meeting they had scheduled, after they called them repeatedly, perhaps to emphasize just how far they followed all of the proper channels, before creating a channel of their own.

Considering why people’s recollection of the events of that week were so similar, even to the point of using the same wording and emphasizing the same points when other events were remembered differently by different people, my thinking has evolved. Initially, I suspected that they might all tell the same story and emphasize so carefully that the community made the decision together – that it was the “voice of the community” – because if they were to pinpoint any one individual or even group and my report were to be published, he or she would be at risk of prosecution or targeting from the police. Indeed this may be a part of the reason, but two more salient explanations have occurred to me since then. The first centers on the importance of this week in the

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<sup>67</sup> Members of the community also use this phrase consistently, referring to the land on Elf Road.

<sup>68</sup> It turns out that while initial reports were that the Greystone company was building there, it was in fact someone else. Noted in Patel, Rajeev. “Fairytale Violence.” 2005.



life and attitudes of the community. Every person whom I interviewed, from high school students more interested in boys to seasoned community leaders to grannies unable to even attend the marches, pointed to this week as when everything changed for Kennedy Road – when the community finally made its voice heard. In this explanation, because this week was so important to them it is etched firmly into people’s minds, and they thus recount it more accurately than other events that fade and blur. But even here people probably would not use so many of the same phrases and emphasize the same events – this, I think, reveals something about the way that the community functions. As the decision to demonstrate was taken so carefully with meetings held twice by the committee and once with the whole community, so were the events of that week reviewed carefully. After a recent march at Foreman Road, I witnessed Zikode lead a meeting evaluating the entire day, what had gone right and what had gone wrong. My guess is that the day blocking the road was even more carefully reviewed and discussed, in meetings and in conversations – because the people I met at Kennedy Road talk about the struggle all the time – and that through these meetings a common understanding was reached.

### *Mobilizing Structures – Legitimacy Through Democracy*

If the way that people speak in similar terms of the process leading up to their blocking the road gives glimpses of the participatory organizational culture of the settlement, hearing the story of one of their community meetings confirms what these glimpses hint: the community is thoroughly democratic, at several levels. These democratic organs brought people’s frustrations together for a unified action, and served to mobilize the community towards a common goal.

Most obviously democratic is the way in which they elect their development committee every year, calling anyone in the community who would come for what they call a “mass meeting,” to nominate people for different positions on the committee and then to vote. Mzobe said the committee began years ago, with “my granny and the old *babas* calling a meeting under the tree to talk about things<sup>69</sup>,” but has adopted its current form only under the leadership of S’bu Zikode. Without fail, everyone I talked to in the

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<sup>69</sup> Interview 10 Nov 2005.

community held the committee in deep respect, and admired individually the people on it – especially its main three leaders, Zikode, Mzobe, and Mdu Ngqulunga. Zikode and Derrick Gwala, among others, said that they had not even wanted to be on the committee, but when the people nominated them in the meeting they felt like they had a duty to serve the community.

The internal workings of the committee also struck me for their formality and for their consultative, participatory character. The meetings I observed usually began with a report from the chairperson, but on any given point, the floor would be opened up to the questions and feedback from every person who had something he or she wanted to say. People would give reports back on their portfolios – health, safety and security, and others – and no decision I saw was even put to a vote, as they usually arrived at a consensus. Asked what they have learned from being on the committee, members talked a lot about these things – about the importance of listening to others’ ideas, about leadership, and about the importance of “being together.”

Probed closer, though, things were not always this way. In the 1990s, people joked that the committee was run by an *induna*, or a traditional tribal headman, who would make people pay him twenty rand before he listened to their problem. For those who remember the time, people said that the committee was timid and poorly run – that they made no protest when the municipality told them they would have to be relocated, that they would never go to meet with the department of housing or anyone in government, and that they never consulted with the broader community or called for new elections (which they now do every year). Mzobe’s explanation is more forgiving – that these leaders were old, and that they were still operating on the apartheid-era mindset of not talking to the government because the government’s position was that there settlement was illegal. Few people thought that this committee had really served the community well, and they talk about now versus then in terms of day and night. Anton Zamisa speaks of when Zikode was first elected to the committee in 2001<sup>70</sup> in glowing terms: “I started to see S’bu Zikode, and I thought ‘this is a man who knows what he’s talking about, I can fight [together] with this guy’ . . . S’bu opened our eyes. The

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<sup>70</sup> Zikode recounted that he was elected for chairperson in 2001 and 2002, but in 2003 when he was elected he declined the position because “there was too much competition around the position. Personal Interview, 1 Dec 2005.

committee was not so powerful [before], but this one . . . we talk about straight things, land, housing, electricity.” The committee also talks to the community more than it ever did before, says System Cele, holding mass meetings where they invite everyone to come with a loudspeaker. Because of these meetings where anyone in the community could voice their ideas or concerns, and because the committee holds such democratic legitimacy, decisions that they make and actions that they choose to take enjoy broader popular support than they could in any other structure. Zikode confirms: “I’ve learned the importance of support – [the committee] would not be democratic [unless] the entire community has given us complete support<sup>71</sup>.” Thus, in consultation with the community, when the committee gave the go-ahead to block the road in March, people turned out by the hundreds.

Telling the story of that week in March, T.N. Lembede<sup>72</sup> said that on the morning of the day when they blocked the road, people went around knocking on each others doors as early as four in the morning, saying, in System Cele’s words “we all need houses, we all must go<sup>73</sup>.” Referring not specifically to this march but to all of the marches they have initiated, Lembede talked about cajoling people that they must not go to work that day – “only the grannies, pregnant women and disabled can stay behind.” Asked if they thought that this was democratic – it did not seem that way to me initially – people usually chuckled and replied that it was, because people could voice other ideas in the meetings, and that they had elected the committee.

Thus the movement began not only on the power of people’s frustrations or anger, but because they had a legitimate, democratic leadership that promoted the whole community’s involvement in decision-making. And, as best it can be reconstructed from oral histories, the real advent of this culture – when Zikode, the most committed evangelist for the importance of consultation, was elected chairperson – coincided with the turning points that people point to in the history of the community. First, when the committee started talking actively to the municipality in 2001, and then when they organized the clean-up campaign in 2003 after he had been elected again. So while the stories of promises and betrayal are critically important, as are the ways that people

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<sup>71</sup> Interviewed 2 Dec 2005.

<sup>72</sup> Interviewed 11 Nov 2005.

<sup>73</sup> Interviewed 24 Nov 2005.

moved from feelings of betrayal to anger and action, this action most probably would not have been so calculated or collective without the leadership structure that brought people's feelings together and directed them towards one goal.

### *Protest Goals*

Asked what their goal was when they blocked Umgeni road, most people talked about trying to make their voice heard, and about trying to bring attention to the ways their councilor had failed them. Mdu Ngqulunga put it plainly: "the idea was trying to create something visible, because the councilor had been hiding this thing, we wanted to show the whole world what was going on."<sup>74</sup> Zanele Mbatha said it simply: "we had all these meetings and they didn't listen to us. We wanted to show our anger, so we blocked the road"<sup>75</sup>. Others mentioned how people could drive by their settlement without really looking at the conditions in which they live, but when the road was blocked and the news cameras came, people across the country saw that "this is who we are. This is what we want."<sup>76</sup> System Cele confirms: "before, S'bu's committee had several meetings but their voice was not heard . . . now that we're protesting, our voice is heard. . . our struggle is the voice of silent victims . . . we hadn't been able to talk [before]." Reflecting on that and other protests, S'bu Zikode likes to say that "we have been encouraged by our municipality that the Zulu language cannot be understood by our officials, Xhosa cannot be understood, Sotho cannot be understood – even English cannot be understood. The only language that they understand is us getting into the street. We have seen the result and we have been encouraged."<sup>77</sup>

Like Zikode, many people in the settlement, particularly those involved with the recent negotiations with different departments in the municipality, have developed a more strategic picture of that day – that the councilor and the municipality were embarrassed by the coverage in the media, and that this had given the settlement new negotiating power. Several people mused that now the councilor and even the president can see their suffering on his own TV when he watches the news. In meetings now they talk about

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<sup>74</sup> Interviewed 23 Nov 2005.

<sup>75</sup> Interviewed 24 Nov 2005.

<sup>76</sup> It seems like this phrase was originally Zikode's, but is now used widely.

<sup>77</sup> Interview on 6 Nov 2005. He now repeats it in many of the speeches he makes.

mass demonstrations as one of several tools that they possess to deal with the authorities, and this reflects in part the how movement has become more strategic over time. Some even say that they thought this way at the time of the protest, but most report that they initially demonstrated out of anger and a desire to give themselves a voice.

### *From a protest to a movement*

Asked how they felt after the demonstration, people at Kennedy Road expressed initial feelings of confusion over the arrested fourteen, but emphasized that they also felt as though they had power, and that they could be brave. Anton Zamisa simply said that “before we were afraid, and then we were not afraid.” This was basically the refrain of everyone that I spoke with – that the march had been a big success, and in Zikode’s words, that it was the foundation of the struggle that has followed, because it brought people together and showed them that they could take matters into their own hands. This excitement built after the charges against the fourteen imprisoned community members were dropped. Nonhlanhla Mzobe said that as soon as they returned, planning began for the next march as they celebrated their return, almost as if to say that as soon as the fourteen returned, they knew they must protest again. In all of my interviews, people spoke of that day as the turning point in the community – when they ceased to be afraid, or more pragmatically, when conditions started to change.

And while their goal of housing was not immediately met, direct results were seen: the department of sanitation did clean out several dozen toilets, partially renovated the community hall, including its office and crèche, and promised to come back to finish the job. And though these things were critical, especially the cleaning of the toilets, what this also marked was a change in policy from the municipality – where before, as the people at Kennedy Road saw it, the basically been pursuing a policy to make conditions unbearable so that people would be forced to relocate, they were now making concessions that made the place more livable.

With these results and with the new feeling of power, what began as an isolated protest from one settlement grew to a series of protests and negotiations in partnership with other settlements. But always and everywhere, the movement that has followed has born the marks of its birth: frustration with what are seen as government’s broken

promises told in a straightforward narrative, participatory consultation with all involved, and a democratic leadership. Along with this character, the movement has also been sustained through the linkages it has formed – with other settlements, with sympathetic academics and professionals, and with the news media.

## **Movement Linkages – Growing Beyond Kennedy Road**

### *Other informal settlements*

Interviewing members of other informal settlements, they too echoed the feeling that seeing Kennedy Road's protest had emboldened them, and that their grievances had resonated with them. Bheki Mncwangan, chairperson of the Jadhu Place committee, also in Councilor Baig's ward, said that he had learned so much from Kennedy Road, that while when the councilor was telling lies, he saw that Zikode and the people at Kennedy Road "were telling the truth."<sup>78</sup> People at Kennedy Road now seemed conscious of this too: System Cele put it simply that "first it was Kennedy Road, now it's all the informal settlements. People are learning from here, it's given them a lesson: you must stand up for what you want"<sup>79</sup>.

From the interaction that I had with other settlements, they too tell similar stories of broken promises and frustration with the councilor, the department of housing, and the ANC. Mnikelo Ndabankulu, a young leader at Foreman Road, often references the freedom charter and the ANC election slogans when he speaks: "the ANC said 'a better life for all,' but I don't know, it's not a better life for all, especially if you live in the shacks. We waited for the promises from 1994, up to 2004, that's 10 years of waiting for the promises from the government. If we just sit and wait we'll be waiting forever. We got tired of that, so we started *toyi toying*"<sup>80</sup>. When these settlements heard Kennedy Road's message of frustration with the government, especially with Councilor Baig, and saw pictures of their conditions, it resonated immediately.

But exactly how was this message communicated? A few people mentioned hearing word of the first protest on the news, or hearing stories of it during bus rides or at their work. Others, like those from Foreman Rd., said that they had always known about

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<sup>78</sup> Interviewed through Thembisio Bhengu and System Cele, 22 Nov 2005.

<sup>79</sup> Interviewed 11 Nov 2005.

<sup>80</sup> Zulu for protesting. Interviewed

Kennedy Road (they are about 2 km apart), because the same bus had taken them for ANC rallies. Equally ironic, Bheki Mncwangan of Jadhu Place said that he had met Zikode at a class held at the municipality for committee chairpersons, that Zikode was teaching. Most of the settlements that have since joined mentioned receiving pamphlets about Kennedy Road's next march after hearing news of it through other channels.

William Bogege remembers a film about Kennedy Road that was shown at Foreman in the week leading up to the march in May as a turning point for the settlement's support. Until then, many in his community had been unsure of what was going on at Kennedy Road, but when they saw the film, they wanted to join with Kennedy Road. These settlements' joining would prove to be not only in shows of solidarity, but to bring common demands to the municipality as one unified body. For the May march, there were five settlements marching together. When I first started researching Kennedy Road, there were twelve, and now people report as many as twenty-four.

Nobody could remember exactly when it had started or when it had adopted its name, but said that the *Abahlali base Mjondolo* (ABM) leadership committee had come out of meetings between the leaders of different settlements earlier this year. These meetings bore strong resemblance to the committee meetings at Kennedy Road and if anything, they were even more participatory<sup>81</sup>. Representatives of each settlement attended and were told to give reports back to the leadership committees of each of their respective settlements, and then to bring back the feelings of their settlement to the ABM meetings. Meetings were formal, and people were often told – usually jokingly – that they were out of order if they spoke of something not being addressed or they spoke over someone else. Here too, while the chair and deputy chair spoke a lot, usually giving updates and summarizing what others had said, everyone was given the chance to speak. And speak they did – the meetings would often last more than four hours – but people

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<sup>81</sup> Interestingly, it seems that interaction with Kennedy Road and with *abahlali base mjondolo* is producing a wave of democratization across other settlements. At Foreman Road, the area committee, which had been supporting the councilor because of small patronage that he gave them, is being challenged by a younger leadership doing more work to consult with community members and, with Kennedy Road, are protesting for land and housing. Their boldness has attracted, by Richard Pithouse's estimate, the support of eighty percent of their settlement. The democratization that Kennedy Road through *abahlali base mjondolo* has introduced would be an interesting topic for further study.

seemed to enjoy being there, and the many that I spoke with were very proud to be on the committee and involved in the decision-making process. It was clear too that friendships had formed between the representatives of the different settlements and that they had a strong sense of common cause: Senzo, speaking again, said, “All who are working are here for development, whether you’re ANC or IFP or whatever, what unites us is housing.<sup>82</sup>” And as with the Kennedy Road Development Committee, in the seven or eight meetings I attended I never witnessed a decision come to a vote, because consensus was usually reached.

People interviewed at Kennedy Road expected that, as their struggling won concessions from the government, that other settlements would want to join. This struck me as a somewhat opportunistic, but everyone I spoke with viewed these links between settlements as critical, and expected that the movement would get very large. And people did not seem to view these late-joiners as opportunists – perhaps because they thought that other settlements’ initial skepticism was warranted. If anything, people seemed excited about more settlements joining (at the meetings that I attended, if a new settlement’s representative was there for the first time, people applauded him or her), and people in leadership and on the peripheries at Kennedy Road expected that the movement would soon become national. As with many phrases, “the most important thing we have is our unity” has now become a part of the common vocabulary of the people involved in the movement. With this, the most frequent answers I received to the question of what people had learned from the struggle were “I’ve learned that we must be together” and “we are strongest together.” When people answered this way, they were usually referencing the spiritual-psychological assurance of togetherness, but some also said explicitly that they saw the strategic advantage: 6000 marchers, and even more voters, wielded a lot more bargaining power than would fewer.

Nearly everyone that I spoke with at Kennedy Road was pleased with the expansion of their protests and negotiations with the municipality to include other settlements, and they voiced faith in the representatives who were designated to go to the meetings. A few suggested that Kennedy Road should continue to meet with the municipality independently, though, not to fast-track housing but to address concerns

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<sup>82</sup> Meeting 15 Nov 2005 at Juba Place.



specific to Kennedy Road – toilets, and the community hall. They did not seem to think that ABM would patently ignore these concerns, but more practically, that they would be forgotten in big meetings with the mayor where only a few representatives of Kennedy Road would be present. Anton Zamisa put it bluntly: “People are shitting outside of my house and it stinks . . . someone at the meeting [with the deputy city manager that day] needs to talk about toilets at Kennedy Road, but there are so many people there . . . how will they remember?”<sup>83</sup>”

This aside, people were still extremely positive about *abahlali base mjobdolo* and the work that the settlements were doing together. People seemed proud to live at Kennedy Road, the place where the protests had begun, and they joke that when the police hear that they are from Kennedy Road, they worry and accuse them of inciting everyone else. They also speak of meeting people in taxis and on the streets who talk about having seen them on TV, and sometimes ask them how their settlement can join. A question I put to most everyone I interviewed was whether people at Kennedy Road feared that it would take longer to get houses if they were working with all these other settlements, and that things would slow down, but no one seemed to worry about this. These linkages with other settlements had built feelings of unity and of strength, had been an opportunity to share in each other’s suffering, as System Cele put it, and to capture a strategic advantage via numbers.

### *Involving the middle-class*

In their descriptions of forming these linkages with other settlements, stories of pamphlets and films about Kennedy Road, along with meetings all over the ward reveal an access to resources that has come through another fruitful linkage – with sympathetic academics, a filmmaker, and briefly, with two lawyers. These people have brought advice and skills, including media-savvy, have made strategic interventions and have connected the movement to networks of resources that have helped it grow. Somewhat to

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<sup>83</sup> Interviewed 24 Nov 2005. Towards the end of my research, toilets started to be cleaned and I saw several cars from the department of welfare coming for meetings about the crèche and about the drop-in center, so I would suspect that people’s fear that concerns specific to Kennedy Road would be lost has now subsided.

my surprise, people at Kennedy Road also held uniformly positive views of this involvement, perhaps because they still felt like they were the owners of the movement.

Nonhlanhla Mzobe talks of when Richard Pithouse first came to the settlement after they blocked the road and laughs at how initially skeptical the in the settlement were: “we met Richard [Pithouse], but the people didn’t like Richard and they chased him away, but he introduced himself to me. For a while, I was the only one who trusted him, and whenever he would come people who say ‘hey Princess, your man is here’ or “your *umlungu*<sup>84</sup> is here!” Then we met Raj [Patel], then Fazel [Khan], and the lawyers, and we started the good relationship<sup>85</sup>.” Some remembered that their skepticism had eased when they read an article that Pithouse had written about the protest and about the settlement in the newspaper, the first one sympathetic one after several that rehashed the police report of their inciting violence. Through Pithouse, the fourteen arrested settlement members connected to *pro bono* legal counsel from two lawyers, the first reducing their bail to zero – effectively releasing them – and the second getting all charges dropped.<sup>86</sup> Though my interviewees mentioned him less than the lawyers, around the same time Aoibheann o’Sullivan’s made a film titled *Kennedy Road and the Councillor*, giving a short overview of the Kennedy Road struggle from March to June this year<sup>87</sup>, and people from other settlements remembered the film as an important mobilizing tool. The people whom I interviewed at Kennedy Road were uniformly positive about the relationships that they had formed, even when some were unclear as to how they had come about<sup>88</sup>. Asked how these relationships had benefited the struggle, people usually began with mention of t-shirts, sound equipment, transportation, and knowledge of “how to do *toyi toying* in the right way [without getting people arrested]”. After mentioning being very thankful for these things, people moved in different directions with their

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<sup>84</sup> Zulu for white person.

<sup>85</sup> Interviewed 10 Nov 2005. While she didn’t specify, it seemed like the skepticism came out the interactions they had had with white people over the years.

<sup>86</sup> Though it did not come up in interviews as often as I expected, this intervention was clearly critical to the resolve of the movement. Around the same time, members of the Cato Manor informal settlement also mounted protests, but a few people were arrested and no follow up demonstrations have been reported.

<sup>87</sup> Pithouse, Richard. “Coffin for the Councillor.” 2005.

<sup>88</sup> Anton Zamisa, among several people, thought that the academics, including myself, had all been friends of S’bu Zikode and that he had brought them to Kennedy Road. In his account, Richard Pithouse said that he just went over to the settlement after he had heard that they had blocked the road, and then invited Raj Patel and Fazel Khan, also from UKZN, to accompany him the next day and later that week.

responses. Mondli Mbiko went on to say “they’re good people. They’re teaching us about leadership . . . [they] take us to the university, [they’re] willing to teach us lots of skills. He added, presumably referring to Pithouse, that they “help expose the government for what they’ve done to the poor” with radio interviews and newspaper articles. System Cele went even further: “I really think you all are a miracle from God sent to us.” Only on one day, when a meeting with the mayor was set up and talk of relocation to Phoenix, another township, were going to quickly, Thembisio Bhengu critiqued the tactics: “Fazel [Khan] and his team [are] talking as if this is a union, but we are not workers, if you’re in a company you can *toyi toyi* and come back to work in a few days. But if we move we move for life, and what about the children who are going to school here.” He qualified this with praise for everything else that had Khan had done, and these negotiating tactics were later criticized in a meeting of *abahlali base mjidolo*, where people made it clear that there needed to be more consultation, and that things needed to move more slowly.

Interestingly, as most of these academics and lawyers are white or Indian, together with the solidarity of ‘coloured’ people from Wentworth and the Sydenham Heights municipal flats, their involvement has introduced a strong multiracialism to the movement. I was unsure of how to generate more interesting discussion than confirmation that they thought this multi-racialism was a good thing, but everyone I interviewed did voice that feeling. System Cele did mention that the police had asked her when they detained her after the Foreman Rd. rally who all these whites and Indians were and why they were also protesting, with some fear.

#### *Linking to the Media*

More importantly, the “fear” for members of the government that the involvement of academics has introduced has been through the media they have liased with or produced themselves. This has raised the profile of the movement to one known nationally, and appears to make protests the most effective tool in influencing municipal officials via the images broadcast of them later those nights.

Beginning with Pithouse’s article mentioned before, he with others have written a series of pieces driven mostly by interviews with people in Kennedy Road that have been published in Durban’s *Mercury*, the national *Mail and Guardian*, and the *Tribune*.

While it requires more extensive analysis than the scope of this paper, these the initial articles seem to have won over the sympathies of other journalists, who now call Zikode for comment in a series of articles covering the announcements of the municipality's plans for a housing development for them in Phoenix East. A more recent article titled "We are the Third Force"<sup>89</sup> that came entirely from Zikode's own words, which Pithouse edited, was reprinted in the celebrity and pop-culture magazines *Drum* and *YOU* and an Afrikaans-language sister magazine, with a combined circulation of 5 million readers. Thus, sometimes quite literally, people in Kennedy Road are able to tell their story in their own words.

And when they tell their story, commented Raj Patel, referencing Zikode's recent article in particular, it appeals to people for its narrative coherence and its direct appeal to human experience. He likened it to Desmond Tutu's writing and to a sermon in the school of Christian humanism, using "experience as the necessary grounds for action because the experience is so appalling"<sup>90</sup>. In this, he said, it differentiated itself from most writing from the Left, who tend to be the ones who write about other movements of the poor<sup>91</sup>, whose language of class struggle and bourgeois oppression already significantly narrows the audience it can effectively reach. He noted that the movement also benefited from a particular openness from some parts of the media to stories not necessarily favorable to the government. In particular, E-News, which has given sympathetic coverage to several of the protests, markets itself specifically as not sponsored by or connected to the government (as opposed to SABC). So in covering a recent report on the Foreman Rd. rally, they opened with a line to the effect of "here are people who followed all the right channels, but the municipality denied them their right to protest"<sup>92</sup>. But SABC, the public broadcaster, has also covered the protests extensively, and recently invited Zikode to Johannesburg to talk about housing and slow-delivery for an hour-long program this December.

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<sup>89</sup> Zikode, S'bu. "We are the Third Force." *Drum Magazine*, 1 December 2005. Attached in its rough form as an appendix to this paper. See "Interview with S'bu Zikode" 6 Nov 2005.

<sup>90</sup> Interviewed 29 Nov 2005.

<sup>91</sup> Perhaps this is because so few movements of the poor get to tell their stories in their own words, a point he also made.

<sup>92</sup> I watched the report, but did not record it, so this is only my best recollection.

Of course, the people at Kennedy Road whom I interviewed were all very positive about this coverage, and, as noted before, mentioned with pride meeting people who recognized them (or at least their t-shirts) from television. I tried to see why they thought the media coverage had been largely sympathetic to their cause, but this did not lead to many responses. Most people did not seem to expect anything other than sympathetic media coverage, perhaps because Kennedy Road had been under the radar of the media and of the public view for so long. Zikode did mention that he thought it was because “people can now see our suffering,” implying something of a snowball effect – the media coverage is sympathetic because the initial coverage showed (sympathetically) their suffering. More people were aware that the power that the media held, and the power that they now held with the media on their side: System Cele, as did many people, remarked about how embarrassed the councilors must be for the whole country to see mock-funerals performed for them by their own constituencies. So while people were unsure as to why the media had portrayed their story as it had, they were clear that this had been an enormous boon for the settlement, both for personal dignity and strategically.

Thus while the movement was catalyzed by a people’s deep-seated frustration brought together for action by a democratically-elected committee with a culture of consulting the community, it has been sustained and has grown in force via connections with other settlements, with sympathetic members of the middle-class left, and by capturing the public imagination and embarrassing politicians through mass media. And the people in the settlement embrace all of these things, noting all that they have learned from other shack-dwellers and from the academics, and, more implicitly, feeling a new dignity won for themselves via the media.

### **Movement Directions**

But where do its members see this movement going? More recent marches have produced a series of negotiations with the municipality over housing, and the mayor recently announced a partnership with the private real estate developer Moreland for building mixed-income housing in Phoenix East, a township in Durban. Not surprisingly, this has been met with annoyance and anger from people at Kennedy Road and other informal settlements. Here again, they say that it feels like the municipality is making

decisions for them without consulting them, and that there is perfectly good land in Clare Estate that could be developed that the municipality will not give them because they are not wealthy. In their words, this is business as usual: “All the municipality does is talk politics, not about bringing development<sup>93</sup>” has become a part of the common language that people use. Even if it only “talking politics,” the municipality has taken much greater interest in Kennedy Road and in ABM these past few months, and this section will chart the direction of the movement and gauge people’s views of the government.

### *Engaging Institutional Politics – Views and Opportunities*

For all their disillusionment with politicians and what they see as their empty words, the movement will always be tied to these politics. Most everything that the movement is demanding – land, housing, electricity, water, and sanitation -- must come directly from the government or at least be funded by it. In any analysis of the direction of the movement, then, gauging people’s attitudes towards institutional politics and the movement’s engagement with them proves crucial. Theorists of social movements concur: the notion of “political opportunities” as shaping social movements is as old as the discipline of social movement theory. An honest appraisal of Kennedy Road and of *abahlali base mjidolo* critiques conventional theoris of political opportunities, though, as Kennedy Road’s struggle has not been passively shaped by these opportunities but has created many of its own.

Even a quick glance of the shacks and of the community hall, many of them covered with and sometimes held together by stickers and posters of the ANC, reveals the settlement’s political leanings. Each person that I interviewed said that he or she is a committed member of the ANC, and that most of the other people in the settlement were as well; some were even surprised that I would ask such a question. Some said that they had been members of the ANC, the ANC Youth League, or the UDF (United Democratic Front) during the 1980s and early 90s, and one cited the political violence then as the reason he had moved to the settlement. In both local elections, the settlement has voted solidly ANC.

Asked why they supported the ANC when their conditions had remained largely unchanged, most people emphasized that they were not protesting the ANC or the government, but that they were protesting the councilor and the “laziness” and unresponsiveness of people in the eThekweni municipality. Nonhlanhla Mzobe put it simply “The ANC is good, it’s the people,” but went on to say that the most local part of the ANC, of which she had been a part, was “all politics . . . they don’t care about development.”<sup>94</sup> People seemed to accept that delivery would be slow – Mondli Mbiko is a realist, saying “We have been oppressed for 300 years . . . things are not going to change overnight.” What was most frustrating to S’bu Zikode was the way that the municipality operated, not its slow delivery. “We are not aiming at opposing the government,” he said, “but aiming at providing a *real* platform of togetherness – business, the government, and the poor. We are not expecting the government to feed us like children, we are willing to contribute whatever we can, but we need to demand that platform,” expressing the settlement’s desire to be consulted and informed. Put this same question, Cosmos Ngocobo’s analysis was that the national government was doing things reasonably well, and that Thabo Mbeki was a good man, but that the local arms of government were not doing enough to bring the concerns and needs of people in their districts to the attention of the provincial and national authorities. Many people said similar things – that the national and provincial governments were in good working order, but on local levels, councilors were not doing their job. Derrick Gwala speculated that this had likely happened because of money – people in the ANC were now paid too well to be in touch with the needs of the people. While they offered this as a general critique, this response almost certainly came out of their own experience with Councilor Baig. As they said it, it was the duty of the councilor to contact the other branches of government on behalf of his or her constituency, but that when they had asked him to do this, Baig had not. The settlement found out that this had happened only when they had their own meetings with different government departments<sup>95</sup>.

While many people’s frustration was directed entirely towards the councilor – that he had promised them development and consistently forgotten these promises, that he had

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<sup>94</sup> Interviewed 10 Nov 2005.

<sup>95</sup> Specifically referenced was the provincial department of housing.

lied to them about the land and housing they would receive, and that he had lied to them about communicating their needs to the municipality and to the province – others had a sense of broader forces at work. Thembiso Bhengu talked about the way that the settlement lowered the real estate prices for the people living in formal houses in the neighborhood, and because they paid taxes, the councilors would work to serve these people more.<sup>96</sup> Tied to this (because the residents of these houses are mostly Indian), more people said they thought that it was racism – the councilor did not care about black people. System Cele and S’bu Zikode talk often of how the poor are getting poorer and the rich are getting richer, and Zikode credits this to the government’s neo-liberal economic policy. Cele attributes it to governments’ neglect of their citizens, particularly their poorest citizens, and talks of how this is happening all over South Africa and all over the world. But even those who speak of broader forces at work do not forget the view that everyone shares of the councilor – that he is a liar.

Since they have begun marching, people say, they have both exposed the councilor and circumvented him. Several people noted that where before they had meetings with the councilor (and that he often would not come), they now meet directly with city managers, with the mayor, and with the heads of departments – including housing. Thus far, most people said that this had been a far better experience. Derrick Gwala said that while he thought the councilor was a liar and would never keep his promises, that the mayor was not the same<sup>97</sup>. Others noted that these people were obviously more powerful and would be able to get things moving, and bring development, more quickly.

### *Negotiating the Road Ahead*

Though no one suggested this explicitly, it was clear that they had learned lessons from their interaction with the councilor that are now useful in their meetings with the mayor, Mlaba, and with other city managers. The movement now demands every promise in writing, along with a timeline for these projects to hold the city accountable.

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<sup>96</sup> He also talked about the privatization of state-owned industries as making it harder to get employment.

<sup>97</sup> This could be because he has not had as much interaction with him. Mnikelo Ndabankulu said that Mayor Mlaba had come to Foreman Rd. and promised them land in the previous election (5 years ago) that has yet to be acted on. The march at Foreman Rd. – which was banned by the city – was to be on Mlaba’s office, but this time, not to demand his resignation but that he hear the people’s demands and respond himself.



And though in the current series of meetings with the municipality they have yet to do so, they hold the threat of protest out if the officials do not stay accountable to the promises that they make. And even without protests, the relationships they have forged with members of the media leave them other channels to keep the municipality to what it says.

In this way, the movement creates “political opportunities,” rather than only being shaped by them, and can do so more effectively as it has become experienced. Each protest that they have mounted has won some concessions – even small – from the government. After the first protest, the city cleaned several dozen toilets; after the September march, the city agreed to remove the settlement’s waste and provide repairs and chairs for its community hall; just this month, the department of health commissioned a crew of settlement residents to clean the remaining toilets for pay. And while conditions are still bad, these concessions represent a fundamental shift from being forcibly removing to allowing them to stay. With this, the protests have brought more attention from the city, and have given the movement new access to the eThekweni political establishment. Currently the municipality has commissioned consultants to assess land in the Clare Estate area and has made verbal promises to build homes – not specifically on the sites where they are located -- for several of the settlements in the ABM, but the outcomes of these talks are as yet unclear. What is clear, though, is the individual resolve of the people in the movement. Every single person I spoke to said “we will not stop struggling till we get what we need,” and a few even said that they would never stop struggling – that there will always be more people who need houses, and that even when they get houses, they will demand of the government “the better life for all” that they have been promised. The challenges will be maintaining the powerful hand that they hold with the municipality after the local elections (a conventionally theorized “political opportunity”) and maintaining the consultative culture that ABM has developed. They are in the process of drafting a constitution to this end, which I helped with briefly, a part of which stipulates that people remain involved even after their houses have been won<sup>98</sup>, though this will likely be difficult to enforce.

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<sup>98</sup> Even if constitutionally stipulated, this will be challenging. Recently, a settlement that had been involved, Quarry Road, stopped attending meetings after they were promised 100 houses by Councilor Baig.

*Looking Back: Connections with the “first struggle”*

Perhaps the biggest political opportunity that people noted was the right to march in relative freedom and safety, which they often contrast thankfully with the marches a few of them participated in against apartheid. Any talk of struggle in South Africa immediately harks to the struggle against apartheid, and I was interested to see how people saw apartheid – and the struggle against it – as informing the movement that they have started now. The consistent word from my interviews was that the struggle from Kennedy Road roots itself deeply in the struggle against apartheid, both in the way that people conceive its goals and the culture that they bring to it.

The first way that people would usually answer me when I asked how the struggles were the same referred to goals. Many people said that the struggles were the same in that in both “we are fighting for our rights, for human rights.” Among those who said this, there was not agreement as to whether they were even different struggles, some thought that it struggle had been ongoing, others thought that it had been renewed or that this movement from Kennedy Road was completely new. Interestingly, the people most involved in Kennedy Road’s protests and negotiations now consistently had the deepest sense of history – where others laughed at my question or said that they did not think about apartheid or the UDF anymore, those more involved seemed to remember it often. Thus the “partial victory” there would seem to be deeply motivating. Many used this language of “partial victory” over apartheid, some to mean that the struggle against apartheid had not been fully won, and that they needed to “win” houses and land for people; others said more that the outcome of the negotiated settlement had not been fully satisfactory. Sbusiso Mzimela put this most eloquently: “The struggle versus apartheid has been a little bit achieved, though not yet, not in the right way. That’s why we’re still in the struggle, to make sure things are done right. We’re still on the road, we’re still grieving for something to be achieved, we’re still struggling for more.”<sup>99</sup>

Of those who did remember and feel motivated by the struggle against apartheid, they did not discredit it – they saw how important it was in their current fight. Implicitly, people pointed to the struggle against apartheid as a necessary prerequisite to the work that they are doing now. For some this was as simple as the right to protest and the right

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<sup>99</sup> 29 Nov 2005

to basically fair legal proceedings were they arrested; others understood that the constitutional socioeconomic rights that they are demanding could not have been demanded under the old regime. On this point, T.N. Lembede is careful to note that the target of the current struggle is different as well. They are not fighting against the whole government, but against members of the municipality who “are lazy” and have not served them well. Powerfully, they even liken Nelson Mandela to Jesus Christ, but put the poor people of the world as the next messiah<sup>100</sup>.

Along with its goals, the current movement has connected powerfully to the struggle against apartheid, consciously and subconsciously, in its culture. Many of the songs that they sing in protest are songs from the first struggle, with their lyrics reworked as necessary to fit the day and the message that they want heard. Mnikelo Ndabankulu told me that the song sung in a video that I took of the Foreman Road rally was directly from the UDF: “*yonkindawo umzbalazo uyasivumela*,” or “everywhere we have the right to struggle.” Even the very tactic of blocking a road with burning tires, people acknowledged, was borrowed directly from the previous struggle. Anton Zamisa said, “when I was out there on the road, I thought to myself, hey, this is like UDF.” Others did not think of it that way specifically – for many, living in KwaZulu-Natal, the struggle against apartheid had been more characterized by violence with Inkatha than by protests or songs. For those people, they differentiate that the apartheid was fought against with violence, and that they are fighting for land, housing, and basic services by peaceful means.

One thing I was interested in was the literal “cultural connection” – whether the culture they had experienced in the struggle against apartheid was the one they now employed in *abahlali base mjongdolo*. Bhekithemba Mncwangan specifically said that he “learned to struggle” through involvement with the UDF in the 1980s, and many of the older people who were not in the rural areas said that they had been involved, though no one else that they had “learned to struggle” this way. The element of “struggle culture” that would seem most deeply connected are the links between the bottom-up, democratic workings of this movement and the similar culture ascribed to the UDF groups in the 1980s. Put these question, Ashwin Desai, a former UDF activist, doubted that this was

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<sup>100</sup> S’bu Zikode quoted in Patel, Raj and Pithouse, Richard. “The Third Nelson Mandela.” 2005.

the case – in KwaZulu-Natal, he said, the UDF had been composed of “petty-bourgeois” organizations that had been anything but “bottom-up democracy.” He said that the organizational culture amongst the shack-dwellers movement is something entirely new to this area. My only other thought was that some of the ABM leaders involved in the UDF could have come from other areas where the democratic workings of that organization had been more robust, as a few people did liken the organizational cultures of the movements.

Nevertheless, the struggle against apartheid clearly did provide a framework for the current struggle for its members – they were both for human rights, and they were both against suffering. Though not completely clear, to analogize these would also seem to legitimize what they are doing in the current struggle: the victory over apartheid is still the single most celebrated event in South African history, and in likening the current struggle to the first one, they take part in some of the same vindication that anti-apartheid activists now enjoy.

## **Conclusions**

As this analogy with the struggle against apartheid would reveal, the struggle at Kennedy Road has been as much for dignity and respect as it has been for the delivery of housing, land and basic services, even if the stories that people tell of the struggle do not reference this as much. Sometimes they make this explicit, in calls for municipal officials to come and meet with them in the settlement, where they live, instead of at city hall and with analogies of the rising of the third Nelson Mandela – themselves. In other places it is less explicit, but the demand is no less strong. For as they march, they are marching for housing, for land, and against forced removals, but they are also marching to be seen – not only by curious tourists photographing them as though they were in a game reserve, but to be seen on their own terms. And though the settlement, and likely most of the people living there, have suffered great indignity, time observing one of the settlement’s reveals the lives of people who still respect one another deeply. Perhaps the meetings are held so formally and everyone’s views are heard because they have not been extended the same listening from the municipality or from government. When they marched in May, perhaps the most defiant banner that they held was the one painted last

– it simply read, “the University of Kennedy Road,” for this is as much a place of learning – and has been for me – as any other.

And perhaps this human side is the deepest critique that the movement from Kennedy Road offers to theorists of social movements. Reading social movement theory in preparation for this research, I was struck by how detached much of it felt from the lives and experiences of people struggling. As a part of this, it seemed to emphasize social struggle as a somehow apart from the struggle that people wage in their day-to-day lives: at Kennedy Road, to get one’s laundry to hang on the line without falling into the mud, to eke out an income to feed your family, and to fall asleep at night in a damp shack filled with insects. But these small, daily, struggles animate the broader struggle that the settlement, with its partners, has mounted. Because it *shouldn’t be* a struggle to fall asleep at night, people wake up the early the next morning to march; because people do not want their children to suffer the indignities that they have in order to get employment, they say that they will not stop struggling when they have gotten houses, or land, but only when their children can learn freely and deeply, when their lives feel full.

In terms of my hypotheses, these proved basically true: people were initially motivated to take to the streets out of material strain coupled with anger over lies that undercut their hopes for land. This action was directed through a committee committed to consulting with the community, and when they took to the street, the “frame” they most consciously employed was simply one of truth-telling: they had been promised housing on this land, but the councilor had lied. Of course, these frames have evolved over the course of the movement – S’bu Zikode now talks often of slow service delivery, and everyone talks about the misdirected development priorities of the municipality: “how come they only build casinos when people are suffering.” These conclusions would challenge typical theorists of social movements in the direction of giving more weight to ideas, to grievances and ideology. Of course, the “mobilizing structure” that theorists talk of is also there – in fact, there are many of them – but it is mostly that people live together so closely, both physically and relationally, and that they have elected leadership whom they respect because they put them there. As for political opportunities, these seemed to play less of a conscious role than theorists conceived them to – as yet, I have not seen the movement consider a particular day or time when a

particular politician would be particularly vulnerable or open to their demands. Nevertheless, protesting their local councilor represented the operation of political opportunity structure in itself – he was right there, they could walk to his office – but it appears that he will be unable to make all the changes they demand. And the movement sees this – so they have created political opportunities via protest of their own.

In terms of how the movement sees itself, I've tried to paint this carefully with each section of analysis, and it was challenging because on a number of points I was not able to elicit a diversity of views – people are almost wholly positive about the involvement of academics and of the media, as they are about most everything that is going on. As I mentioned in passing, this positive feeling about the middle-class involvement might be so strong because of the particular academics and professionals who have been involved – people all committed to facilitating and guarding against co-opting the movement. It is important also that the movement began with a protest that the people in the settlement instigated themselves, independent of any of the linkages we discussed, and these linkages only formed after the “framework,” as Zikode calls it, was laid down in the first protest.

Most apparently, their movement connects to the themes of reconciliation and development because it is a tear in the picture of the rainbow-nation: part of what gives rise to these movements across South Africa is the unfinished business of democratization and of reconciliation. Because while Nelson Mandela has had tea with the architects of his oppression, the people at Kennedy Road in a shack without electricity, water, or sanitation and have received no material reparation for the dispossession of his ancestral land. And though they vote and follow politics religiously, it never ceases to feel to them as though few in the municipal, provincial, or national government actually have his interests at heart.

But assessed honestly, they are at the same time *the* picture of the rainbow-nation: every meeting begins with a singing of the national anthem and their memorandums declare themselves “loyal citizens of South Africa.” What they want is a better South Africa, both for themselves and for every poor person everywhere – Zikode reflects knowingly that the rural areas are a much a form of *mjondolos* as anywhere else. And the movement is a space of reconciliation in itself: while they blame part of their fate on their

[Indian] councilor's racism, they have embraced an Indian lawyer and now an Indian academic as a key consultant to their negotiating team.

The most moving part of the movement, though, is what I have been saying indirectly throughout the paper: that they embody much of the way that they want to see the world work in their own community. So when will they stop struggling? Perhaps when South African democracy looks the way democracy looks at Kennedy Road.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

- A more thorough, ethnographic history of Kennedy Road or of another informal settlement.
- *Abhlali base Mjondolo's* culture and the ways this culture is brought back to its constituent settlements – its democratizing effect. Also, the connections of this culture to the culture of the UDF, and how this culture came to be. In this research I felt like I saw much of how this culture operated and what it accomplished, but wasn't fully able to understand how it came to be.
- I think a deeper exploration of people's attitudes towards government would prove fruitful – is it government's responsibility to provide all of their needs?
- An economic geography of the settlement – where people work, and how this income flows through the settlement's informal economy and kinship networks.
- Included in this or as its own project, a more thorough analysis of the settlements relationship with the adjacent dump.

## **Bibliography of Interviews**

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4. System Phumelele Cele – November 11, 2005
5. Thembiso Jerome Bhengu – November 14, 2005
6. Mdu Ngqulunga – November 16, 2005
7. Micah Kweyama – November 16, 2005
8. Phineus Maphumulo – November 16, 2005
9. Mnikelo Ndabankulu and William Bogege – November 22, 2005
10. Bhekithemba Mncwangan – November 22, 2005
11. Mdu Ngqulunga – November 24, 2005
12. Derrick Gwala – November 24, 2005
13. System Mpume – November 24, 2005
14. Zanele Mbatha – November 24, 2005
15. Anton Zamisa – November 24, 2005
16. Mondli Mbiko – November 25, 2005
17. Amandla Dlamini – November 25, 2005
18. Bheki Mpofana – November 28, 2005
19. Anton Zamisa – November 28, 2005
20. Mdu Hlongwa – November 28, 2005
21. Raj Patel – November 29, 2005
22. Sbusiso “Vincent” Mzimela – November 29, 2005
23. T.N. Lembede and Thembiso Jerome Bhengu – November 29, 2005
24. Akhona Khebesi – November 30, 2005
25. B.M. Kambula – November 30, 2005
26. Ashwin Desai *by email* – November 30, 2005
27. M. Yacoob Baig – December 1, 2005
28. S’bu Zikode – December 1, 2005
29. Thembiso Jerome Bhengu – December 2, 2005
30. T.N. Lembede – December 2, 2005
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## Appendix 1: Survey Instrument

### *General Questions Used for Interviews*

- How long have you lived at Kennedy Road? Where did you stay before that? Why did you / your family come here?
- Tell me what it's like to live here? What do you like about living here? What are some good things that the community does? What are some of the problems that the community has? What don't you like about living here?
- What has made it this way – [use characteristics that they describe] – why are there these problems, why haven't there been houses or toilets built?
- What do you mean when you say development? What kind of development does Kennedy Road need?
- How has the settlement changed since you moved here? What changed in 1994?
- When did you join the development committee? What made you decide to join the committee? What is your portfolio on the committee? What do you like about being on the committee? What don't you like about being on the committee? Does the committee serve the community well? Have they ever betrayed the community?
- When did people first become angry about the [conditions here]? Who did they become angry at? Why did people block the road? Whose idea was it to block the road? How was it decided? Were you there? What did you think? Before that, how did the community make its voice heard? Was blocking the road a success? What did it achieve?
- Why did the community decide to march again? How have each of the marches been different?
- What happened after that? How did the committee decide to march again? Who had the idea to hold a mock funeral?
- Why do think the mayor and everyone won't keep their promises?
- How did you meet the other informal settlements that have been marching with you? Did you always know that there were informal settlements [on Foreman Rd., on Quarry Rd.]
- How did *abahlali basemjondolo* begin? What does it do? What do you think it contributes to the Kennedy Road struggle? Why is it important? Does it make anything go slower, or hurt the struggle in any way?
- Who are you struggling with? [others in Durban, in SA, the poor?] Are there any other groups that are supporting you? How did you meet them?
- What have you learned from the struggle? How have you changed?
- What are the goals? When will you stop struggling? What gives you hope to keep struggling?
- Do you know Richard and Fazel? Have they been helpful? What have they done for your struggle? What mistakes have they made? What do you think they want?
- Are you an ANC member? Do you still vote for them? Were you a part of MK, or UDF, or anything in the struggle against apartheid? Is this the same struggle? How is it different now? What changed for you in 1994?
- What's the way forward? What do you think about moving to Phoenix?
- Do you have anything else that you'd like to say? Any questions for me?

**Appendix 2: Interview with S’bu Zikode  
Sunday, November 6, 2005**

*S’bu Zikode is the elected Chairman of the abahlali base mJondolo [Shack dwellers] movement and is chairperson of the Kennedy Road Development Committee.*

We are being matured in this suffering. We have had a programme of plan A, plan B and Plan C. Our programme was to start the peaceful negotiations with the authorities – this started ten years ago. Restart. Then, if that does not work, we have to come up with an alternative plan,. Our first plan was undermined, boycotted – we were lied too. We have to come to plan 2 which angered so many officials. The only to our next step from some authorise was to say that we can go and jump into the officials. Who the hell are we that we can be allocated so much money for housing. Our councillor called us criminals. The most senior leader that eThekweni municipality. That call was mobilising so many people. We are prepared to talk but if that doesn’t work we are prepared to use our strength. We will do what ever it costs us to do.

The 16<sup>th</sup> of February was the dawn of our struggle. A very successful meeting with the chairman of the housing portfolio of the executive committee of the municipality, the director of housing, and the ward councillor all promised the vacant space around ward 25 and the Clare Estate - of which Elf Road was one of the identified land. Then we were betrayed but the most trusted people in our city. Those people are responsible for this movement. Those people are the second force.

Our 14 heroes, and later Zoleka, laid the foundation for the spread of our struggle. Today we have 14 settlements in this struggle. The struggle in Kennedy road was the beginning of a new era. We are aware of the strategies that the police are coming with to demoralise and threaten the poor. We don’t mind them building the jails for us and hiring more security if they are not prepared to listen to what we are saying. It is important for every shack dwellers to know that we are aware of what is happening in Alexander in Johannesburg, in PE, in Cape Town. We know that are struggle is not by itself. We have sent our solidarity. We will not rest in piece until there is justice for the poor – not only in Kennedy Road there are many Kennedy roads, many mhlengis, many poor voices that are not heard and not understood. But we have discovered the language that works,. We will stick with it.

Our president Mbeki speaks politics – our premier Ndebele and Shilowa in Gauteng and Rasool in the Western Cape, our may mlaba and mayors all over the country speak politics – but who will speak about the genuine issues that affect the people – water, electricity, land, housing? We thought local government would minimise politics and achieve what people need but it all becomes politics, but who will tackle the genuine issues of our society. If legislature comes up with laws maybe provinces should interpret and municipalities implement. It is wrong that everybody should always be coming up with policies and no one implements. At least at the local level the task should be to implement.

The only language that they understand , and we have proven that it works for us, so we will continue. Is putting thousands of people on the streets. It works well. It is the only tool that will emancipate our people. Why should we stop it

Very important to voice this out before people get confused

There definitely is a third force. That must be clear. The question is what is it or who is the third force? We need to get things clear. Especially to those who have spent too much money appointing commissions who will investigate the Third Force. That money should be allocated for the poor.

I might be third force myself.

Third force is all the poverty, the pain and the suffering that we are subjected to every second in our lives. The shack dwellers has more things to say about the 3<sup>rd</sup> force. It is time for us to speak out and to say this is who we are, this is where we and this how we live. The life that we are living has never been seen anywhere in the world. The pain and the suffering that we see each time that we open our eyes, every second is unacceptable. It is at such time that we see that the 3 force is in and around our community.

Each second we open our eyes then we are threatened by poverty, pain and suffering. Which of course eventually puts our life to end. So we have seen that poverty breeds death. We have seen how dangerous being poor is. We have seen how Mhlengi died and other 7 more. We have realised that they are many Mhlengi's in the country who have suffered from the fact of being poor.

In Bayview, in Chatsworth, a woman died of hunger earlier this year – she was fearing to tell the neighbours that she had no food and she died, alone, in her flat.

The greatest threat to stability in our country is poverty and aids epidemic

This is the struggle of the poor. It is time for the poor to show themselves that we can be poor in life but not in mind. I think it is important for a person who lives in middle class or high class to begin to understand the life in the informal settlement. When we talk about the no house life, the no water life, the no electricity life, the no services such as removal of refuse, cleaning of toilets – which breeds more diseases, it is not shocking why the rate of HIV and AIDS is so high in the so called informal settlement. The causes are clearly visible and every Dick, Tom and Harry will understand. Instead of establishing why one is coming with the solution without wanting to establish and investigate why – it is important that we don't run away from the cause of the problem without running from the solutions. There are programmes to stop the spread but no one thinks of the causes – such diseases only target the poor who cannot have proper meals. I

have seen a lot of people dying from the fact of being poor. The pills that the government is giving can't do anything without people having enough food.

For us it is important that we are being recognised as human beings – once again it happened during the struggle prior 1994 when there were only 2 levels, 2 classes – the rich and the poor. Now after the election there are three classes – the poor, the middle class and the rich. Now the poor have been isolated from the middle class. The poor are becoming more poor and the rich are becoming more rich. We are on our own.

There is a solution for the third force. The third force is the pain and suffering that comes from poverty. Those who are busy looking for the third force must look for the fourth force. Land, housing, electricity and basic services – we are only asking what is basic – not what is luxurious. We have learnt from our experience that when you want to achieve what you want, when you want to achieve what is legitimate by peaceful negotiations, by humbleness, by respecting those in authority your plea becomes criminal. You will be deceived more than ten years, be fooled around. We are being undermined. This is why we have resorted to such behaviour – which is still peaceful. But we have been encouraged by our municipality that the Zulu language cannot be understood by our officials, Xhosa cannot be understood, Sotho cannot be understood – even English cannot be understood. The only language that they understand is us getting into the street. We have seen the result and we have been encouraged.

Which is why we won't be minding to be marching every week if that is what builds the positive results for us. And we have been supported by more than 15 informal settlements so far and we hope that by the end of December that we'll have all 500 settlements in our side. It must be clear that this is not a political game. This is a community, a social kind of tool by which the community hopes to get quicker results. This has nothing to do with politics or parties. Our members are part of every political organisation that you may think of. This is a non political movement. We are just hoping to finish its job when land and housing, electricity and basic services have been won and poverty eliminated. We are hoping to say that is enough for us to be united until our people have achieved what is wanted – which is basic. Without that being materialised we will never stop.

The community has realised that voting for parties has not brought any change to us – especially at the level of local government elections. We can see important changes at national level but at local level who ever wins the election will not impact us – who ever wins the elections will be challenged by us. We have been betrayed by our own elected councillor. We have decided not to vote – who ever wins....

The campaign that has began – No land, No House, No Electricity, No Vote, is a campaign that has been agreed upon by the broader community who really don't understand the need and impact of voting. Maybe the IEC will have a challenge to educate people about voting but if it doesn't impact them IEC should not bother.

There has been a dawn of democracy to the poor. People have realised so many things. For us time frame has been a very good doctor. Only time can heal our pain and suffering.

We have learnt from the past – we have suffered alone. That pain and suffering has taught us a lot. The long time frame has taught us a lot. We have begun to realise that we are not supposed to be living under this condition. No one else would have told us – neither our elected leaders or any officials would have told us that this what we are entitled to. We have realised that the freedom charter is for all us and is good in theory. But it has nothing to do with the poor. It doesn't help us. How do we implement the freedom charter. The masses of the people are where we are. If the freedom charter doesn't work for us then it doesn't serve the purpose. Something else must be done.

To those comrades, government officials, diplomats and intellectuals who spoke about the so called third force I must warn them – because they have no idea what they are talking about. For us they are very superior to understand our level – they are too high to really feel what we feel, they must allow us to talk about what impacts us. They must talk for and about us, we therefore encourage those who are prepared to spend millions to investigate the third force that that money should build houses for the poor. This is from the voice of the poor.

Pain and suffering. Fire. What happens in the night while people are sleeping. Who people will feel their body itching every day. When the evening come – it is always a challenge. Some people are prepared not to sleep in the night because one when thinks about sleeping one thinks about relaxing and getting rest. But it doesn't happen like that in the jondolos. Sleeping is another jail – a very painful situation. That is when you get more furious because of the environment. You must see how big the rats are that will run across the small babies in the night. The insects that carry the disease. You must see how people sleep on the bridges – not in the bed – because their floors are wet. The rain comes right inside people's houses. They stand up all night.

How long must we talk so loud and not be heard. How long and how many of us must go to the streets. How long shall the threat of fire be killing people. When are we going to say enough is enough. The victims have spoken. We have said enough is enough. How blind are officials not to see what we have talked about. I am appealing that those in power should have at least one week living in the shacks. I feel sorry for them because they cannot understand what we are talking about. I do not blame them. They might have not seen, they might have not felt what we are feeling ever second, every day. My appeal is that leaders who are considered about peoples live must come and stay at least one week in the jondolos and feel the mud. If it is raining everything is wet – blankets and floors. If it is hot the mosquitos and flies are sucking the blood of the poor. There is no holiday in the shacks. The flies knows no holiday. How long shall that happen in our own country?

We have come to the decision of saying 'enough is enough' up and till someone responsible is prepared to answer for the dying of mhlengi, of the world, and any body else who will suffer the same cause. We have noted that our country is rich. More airports are being built, more developments at the point water front, more stadiums are renovated, more money is floating – borrowed to other countries. But when you ask for what is basic you are told that there is no money. It is clear that there is no money for the

poor. The money is for the rich. What is fair to the rich must be fair to the poor.



### **Appendix 3: Transcribed Interview with Nonhlanhla Mzobe**

*Princess Nonhlanhla Mzobe is thirty years old and has lived at the Kennedy Road informal settlement her entire life, where her Granny, uncle, and uncle's wife also lived. Now she lives on her own, across from the volunteer-run preschool that she helped to found, working there for ten years. She now works for Durban Solid Waste, and serves on the Kennedy Road Development Committee as the Health chair. She also founded and runs the Clare Estate Drop-in Center. I interviewed her on the afternoon of November 15<sup>th</sup> at the Kennedy Road Development Committee's office, and several other friends and committee members dropped in casually to chat with us.*

*J: How did your family come here?*

N: The reason we came to stay here was that my uncle got a job in the municipality, and it was too far from Pinetown, where my Granny stayed. I went to school in Pinetown and stayed with my Granny there during the week, and stayed here on the weekends and during holidays. The place is not good, but people stay here to be near jobs. Back then when the shacks were few – about 10 or 15 – the place was better, not so crowded, but it was just the shacks. But we want proper housing, because you can't live in shacks your whole life.

*J: Are there things that you like about living here?*

N: It's near the jobs, and we're not paying any rent for the housing. If you're working, you can do your own things with your money. And you can't start a new life; I've been here for 30 years. Before I taught preschool for ten years, but there was no payment because the children's parents had no money, not even twenty rand, or five rand. But I kept working there because I saw that the children were suffering, and they were going to Indian primary schools without knowing any English. I wanted to teach the children how to say that they need to go to the toilet, or that they're hungry, just some things so that when they go to school they won't have any problems. And I wanted to help kids not get raped or play with dirt. In the preschool there is no dirt, it's clean, otherwise the kids will just play in the dirt or in the road, and there were many accidents. Sometimes a priest would come and give the children porridge, but otherwise if the child stayed at home the mother might be working or might be a drunkard and not take care of him. Now I'm a Project Manager at Durban Solid Waste. I look after the other people who work there, manage how they do their jobs, check their time sheets and things like that. If there's something wrong they tell me, and I talk to the management. I've been working there since 2004.

*J: How did the committee start?*

N: At first, it was just my Granny and the old fathers, and they would call meetings under the tree and talk about things. I remember when I was about ten or twelve there was a white man, a big boss from the municipality, called black jack, who told the Grannies that they mustn't give anybody else permission to build shacks. He said that they should

leave the shacks for their children, who can go to school and get a job and move into a [formal] house, but not to let anyone else build shacks. But our parents weren't educated, and they didn't know how to keep records. They couldn't stop more people from coming, because those people would get angry and yell and bring a gun to the committee. People came and came. If you have space, you would build a house or an extra room and call people to come and pay rent. By then, not many of the shack owners were working, so they would use the rent they charged to buy food.

In 1995 I became a committee member. I was teaching the children how to model, and there was one white woman helping us organize a fashion show. I was teaching them to be drum majorettes, and we were organizing fashion shows for the community. I don't do it any more, my uniform was stolen. And you need uniforms to do drum majorettes -- you can't be drum majorettes if one person is wearing red and another person is wearing black, you know. I was a drum majorette at school, that's how I learned leadership.

*J: Have most of the committee members been there for as long as you?*

N: Some of the committee members are old committee members, like me, and some are newer committee members

*J: How do you elect the committee?*

N: To elect the committee, we call a mass meeting, usually 400 or 500 people come to the community hall, and we say "now we're going to elect a new committee" and we ask them who they will nominate for the development committee. First we take nominations for positions, for the chairperson and deputy chairperson, for the secretary and deputy secretary, and for the treasurer. The rest are standing members. After people have nominated all of the people that they want to, we vote for who will be on the committee. At the first meeting of the new committee we give all of the members a position -- like health, or safety and security, which Jerome [Bengu] does now. There's also a position for development, which includes housing.

If the committee is doing well, people will say that they don't want to elect a new committee, but we must tell them that our time is up and that they can elect a new committee if they want to, [otherwise] that would not be fair.

*J: Do committee members receive anything?*

N: Hey the committee doesn't receive anything, it's all voluntary.

*J: But you get respect?*

Yeah, but sometimes not, people swear at you, or tell you this thing or that thing.

*J: When did people get angry at the municipality?*

N: The first time we went all the comrades [at the department of housing] were disciplined, you could go and meet the man at housing, and tell him that you wanted a

house and things. But people would say next time that the man who you met with wasn't there, or that he was at a meeting, and we got frustrated. So we went to the councilor to go with him to meet the housing department to talk about land nearby where we could build houses. The councilor mentioned Elf Road, and then the *ganda ganda* came and those people were leveling the ground there, and people were happy with the committee. But then the committee said: why if they're making houses for us don't they tell us? So we sent some people to go and ask the men who were working there . . . they say that they're making a scrap yard, not housing, and the people started to be angry. So the [Kennedy Road] people marched down to the road [to get ready to block it] and Councilor Baig called me and said "hey Princess, what's going on?" And I said "Baig, you never come down here to see for yourself, why don't you ever come down and see for yourself what's going on?" But he said he can't come, the people are crazy, let the police do their work. The police hit them, and sent dogs, and take the fourteen [who were arrested]. We marched on the police station the next day and the police came and blocked us in like at Foreman Road yesterday. They [the fourteen] were starting now to go to court, and we met Richard [Pithouse], but the people didn't like Richard and they chased him away, but he introduced himself to me. For a while, whenever he would come people who say "hey Princess, your man is here" or "your *umlungu* (white person) is here!" Then we met Raj, then Fazel, and the lawyers, and we started the good relationship.

We started planning for the second march once the fourteen were out, and we made a party for them – "welcome heroes!" The second march was for Councilor Baig, but there was no response, no nothing, no one told us what was going on. We marched, called Baig, and gave him the memorandum.

In the third march, there were people from Cape Town, all the informal settlements around here, Chatsworth people. We made a coffin for Baig with a Teddy bear, and we said "this bear is Baig." We carried the coffin in the march, and said "Baig, you're dead, rest in peace, rest in peace. You just bring Briani, you don't care if people live under a tree or if they're suffering, rest in peace. Then people from housing started to come and fix the toilet – I think it was broken for ten years – and started meetings to promise us this and that. At the last meeting, the mayor promised us that they would build houses here, and for other informal settlements. If they take too long . . . [we will march again]. We told them they must not just give the people housing, but give the people taps, and electricity.

*J: Why did the people chase Richard away?*

N: They didn't know if people are going to help them or not . . . we are tired of white people coming saying that they were going to help and then breaking their promises. It's hard to trust people.

*J: How did you trust him?*

N: It just happened, but it was only me that trusted him.

*J: Did you talk with the people who came to march from Cape Town, and from Chatsworth?*

N: Oh, there were also people from Pietermaritzburg. We talked with them, the people that came, and we let them talk too. Everyone talked. We held a meeting in the park before the march, and we let everyone talk there. There were so many people there marching. After the second time, the [municipality] wrote “the people are crazy,” but after the third time, the deputy mayor came.

J: *What’s the way forward?*

N: We’ll wait until the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and meet with the mayor, we’ll know then.

J: *What went wrong at Foreman Road yesterday? (She had said earlier that she thought it had gone badly)*

N: I won’t pin it on anyone . . . we told them after the meeting with the mayor (the previous week), that we should wait to talk to them (the municipality, in the next meeting). And when you meet with the mayor, you can take the minutes to court as proof, and say “he promised us this” and show them the minutes. Foreman Road thought that we lied to them, they said that the 24<sup>th</sup> would be too late. In myself, I said that we should wait for the 24<sup>th</sup> and then, if we need to, march again. Foreman Road forced S’bu to go there. We went for the Rally, he told them that they would die, that the police would hit them . . . you can’t march without permission! If you do things you must plan – plan one, plan two, plan three. I think there was a misunderstanding, but at least they tried.

J: *Why don’t you think they made a better plan?*

N: They didn’t listen, they said that the offer for housing didn’t include them. But Mlaba mentioned there would be housing for Foreman Road, we should have waited for the 24<sup>th</sup> – there was no plan B. The first time we blocked the road, there was no plan B, we just did it because of anger. Then we sat down and talked about what we’d done wrong and what we’d done right. Some people who know, like Richard, how to march and to do this and this and this. They organize t-shirts, those things, now different people from different places [are working together]. Richard knew all the things for how to march, and all the forms that you need to make and things you need to do so that no one gets arrested. Now if it’s Kennedy Road, no people get arrested, no nothing. First you must call a mass meeting and tell people we are marching for this thing and this thing. We tell them “listen to the marshals, don’t hit the cars, the police, don’t touch anything.” But people from Kennedy Road can’t lead people from Foreman. I’ll repeat again: “don’t hit the police, don’t get ahead of the marshals, you can sing and shout and whatever you want, but it must be a peaceful march.” Then the people will do a proper march. People will listen, and stop and go.

J: *What do you think of the ANC?*

N: The ANC is good, it’s the people. The first step for the ANC is the BEC. I’ll talk with our BEC . . . committee members for our BEC don’t talk about development, they talk about politics -- won’t help the people now they only fight for the positions. I was a BEC member, now we have a drop-in center, there is a good thing. I made it for the entire community.

When I started the drop-in center I had no money, was not working, and I had my children. There was a man who was sick with no wife and no kids living by himself. If there's a person who's sick, we make him a meal, clean his house for him.

### Appendix 3: Transcribed Interview with Thembisio Jerome Bhengu

*Jerome Bhengu is 38 years old and has lived in the Kennedy Road informal settlement for the last five years. He had worked at the docks in Durban but resigned in protest of the companies' refusal to formalise the employment of their laborers. He now runs a cigarette and snack shop with his wife, and they live together with his daughter and grandson. He was only able to attend school through standard seven, but educated himself with books that he salvaged from the trash and with newspapers and now speaks near-perfect English. He has been a member of the Kennedy Road Development Committee for three years and is working to found a non-profit organization, the Crime & Health Strategic Movement. He is also active in the Shembe church. I interviewed him in his home which, on the rainy days, also serves as the shop.*

Jacob: How long have you lived at Kennedy Road?

Jerome: I've lived here for five years. Before I lived at Hammerstead – but we came here for the jobs, and it was full of crime and people just suffering. I grew up there, near Pietermaritzburg. I started serving on the development committee last year. My purpose was to help them, they have problems, but I think the more we get together, the more we can help them. I need them [on the committee] to be able to find jobs – I can have ideas of how to create jobs, not for me but for themselves, I can show them how to help themselves.

Jacob: What do you think of moving to Phoenix?

Jerome: I have criticized Fazel and his team, how are we supposed to just move to Phoenix? We are working here. Fazel is talking as if this is a union, but we are not workers, if you're in a company you can *doi doi* and come back in a few days. But if we move we move for life. And what about the children who are going to school here? [Customer is very surprised to see a white person in the shack] Apartheid has made us not to understand each other.

The government fears losing ratepayers [from Clare Estate] . . . the value of the houses includes the view and the environment. The threat of crime and killings means that the value of the property declines. We [the residents of the informal settlement and the neighbors] are scared of each other – we need a transformation of things, we need to understand each other. If no one comes up with a plan, we will just fight each other until we die. We are not criminals. A few of us, maybe five are criminals.

We shouldn't be living like this. If Steve Biko was the leader, maybe we wouldn't be living like this – but he was so aggressive.

You see S'bu is growing very big – but there are problems coming. He may be taken out by the councilors . . . I've told him many times, he needs to be careful. Our people like S'bu, but they [at Jabu place yesterday] wanted to hit him. They were so angry because they said we persuaded them to be in the march, we were lucky to get out alive. But people are not as angry now as before the meeting [at Jabu place]. People are still a little bit angry, though, because they got hurt.

Jacob: What's it like to be on the development committee?

Jerome: They can't understand – the other committee members – what it means to be a committee member. They need to have some skills. Like, leadership skills. With everyone with his portfolio, they don't even understand these jobs, they are not capable of the jobs that they have. The only person who understands leadership is S'bu. The others they don't even understand which alternative they should take – at Kennedy Road, or at the Shack Dwellers' Association. They need some training.

*On Politics*

Jerome: The IFP? It's a sad story. We're trying to prevent our kingdom from being ruled by other nations, like the Xhosas. We don't need parliament, we love to serve and be served under the King. The IFP leader was using them, he knew our leaders were getting paid so they come and bribe us.

ANCs are more aggressive, they don't want any other party to exist. The ANC is starting to fight us. Most of us are going to die. They are going to kill us. The ANC are the traitors. I was an ANC member, they said that we should kill the [apartheid] councilors, that we didn't want these small township [houses]. At the end of the day, now that they're in power, they build these small, small rooms and call them houses. I think their time is over.

Knowing the way that we are . . . we need to be free to be what we are. The problem is that we have customs, but we can't practice our customs in this kind of place. I have been a Christian even though I don't want to be one. We can't communicate with our king. The IFPs have been killed because no one could understand what their grievances are – not the IFP itself [that has been killed], but the idea. You must go deep down to understand the solution. The ANC doesn't want to provide us with jobs, but where else could we find more jobs? Isn't this creating more criminals?

This is our country and it's where we need to be free, which is why now things [like inequality and crime] are getting more out of hand – and there's more that's going to happen. We need to stop this, but the government doesn't know how to control the situation.

Mbeki thought this [protesting] could only happen under apartheid, and that it would never happen to him. If they kill one of our people, we'll be obliged to go and do the same to him. And there will be more, like at Foreman Road, things are starting to get out of hand . . .

Jacob: Did you participate in the marches?

Jerome: Yeah I had a big role . . . but I see where the problem lies. You still got apartheid, and you cannot force Yakoob or the municipality to change right away.

.....

Jerome: Now there's a new session of our development committee . . . it began in September, but we need to have new portfolios.

#### **Appendix 4: Transcribed Interview with Mnikelo Ndabankulu and William Bogege**

*Mnikelo is 21 and William is 19. They're both young leaders of the Foreman Road Informal Settlement.*

Jacob: What's it like to live at Foreman Road?

Mnikelo: What I can just tell you is it's nice in Foreman Road but it's difficult to be in the shacks. If we can have better houses like our neighbors, the coloreds, than it can be nice. The problem is the houses . . . if we got the houses, we can be super-happy. We've got a lakker relationship with our neighbors, if we lived at Phoenix we'd have to budget and come and visit you.

Jacob: What else is nice?

Mnikelo: It's nice there because we've stayed here for so long. We've got these friendships because we've been living there for so long.

Jacob: Do you get along with the neighbors?

Mnikelo: We've got a big relationship! Like the Indian named Mkhize, who works for the independent newspaper. When we have fires they phone the fire brigade for us, or the cops, they phone them when we are in trouble. Fires are a big problem that we have in the shacks

Jacob: What are some of the things that you don't like about living there?

William: Fires, and it's too dirty there.

Mnikelo: It's too dirty and it affects the children, because it's dirty and there are rats and mosquitos.

Jacob: When did you first want to start marching?

Mnikelo: We started to march after 10 years of empty promises from the government. From 1994, the president was Nelson Mandela, they announced that people would have houses, would have land. The ANC said "a better life for all," but I don't know, it's not a better life for all, especially if you live in the shacks. We waited for the promises from 1994, up to 2004, that's 10 years of waiting for the promises from the government. If we just sit and wait we'll be waiting forever. We got tired of that, so we started *toitoiing*

Jacob: Who was making the promises, the national government, the councilors?

Mnikelo: Everyone, the ANC as a whole from the cabinet up to the councilors say the same thing: "vote ANC for a better life."

Jacob: What inspired you?

William: I think it was the burning of the shacks. There were many people dying, we lose a lot of things in the fires – we lose our people, we lose our clothes, even our IDs.

Jacob: Did you start toitoiing before Kennedy Road, how did you meet up with them?

Mnikelo: With Kennedy Road, we are together, we want the same thing. We both want land and housing, for Ward 23, we are marching as a ward because we are united. We



are marching in wards and not for Kennedy Road or Foreman Road. When there is a march we are always part-and-parcel of that march. When Kennedy Road is marching we are always there, if Foreman Road is there Kennedy Road is marching.

Jacob: How did you meet the people at Kennedy Road?

Mnikelo: We always know each other from the ANC rallies. They will pay for a bus, that will load Kennedy Road, then Foreman Road. Let's say there's an announcement that there's 4 buses in Ward 25,

Jacob: Did you go when Kennedy Road blocked the road with the burning tires?

Mnikelo: No, it was an illegal march so we were not informed. It was heat of the moment, because they were so sick and tired of broken promises. When they make legal marches, we are always there.

Jacob: So, you marched in the . . .

Mnikelo: 2 marches giving the councilor a funeral, and then a march on Bachu from Quarry Road. And then the same Os were there marching against Mlaba.

Jacob: Is there a development committee at Foreman Road, like at Kennedy Road?

Mnikelo: There's a development committee at Foreman Road, and they're in charge of development. There's also an area committee, so if somebody steals someone's something, or there's a problem, they sort out that thing. The development committee is always there for development only

Jacob: How do you create the development committee?

Mnikelo: The development committee has been elected by the community

Jacob: Are you satisfied with them?

Mnikelo: Yes, we're satisfied with them, they're getting so popular now – you can see them on E-TV, in the Mercury, they are telling the whole world that we are suffering at Foreman Road. They're there to tell the government that the people of Foreman Road want houses. We're super-satisfied with them.

Jacob: Are you on the development committee?

Mnikelo: Yes, I'm a member.

Jacob: Who was mobilizing people for the march against Mlaba?

Mnikelo: It's not a one man show, it's everybody's job. Everybody wants to march, everybody who's got time to mobilize. Like when we supplied the pamphlet, everybody was happy about this, and was willing to work not because they were told but because they want a way forward.

Jacob: What about *abahlali basemjondolo*, when did those meetings begin?

Mnikelo: It began when the marches began. If we want to march in numbers, we must have an umbrella, we must show the government that they must act quickly.

Jacob: After the march, there was a lot of conflict at Foreman Road. What was happening?

Mnikelo: That's not a serious issue, it's just that people didn't understand. It's not a serious issue. They were just fighting for the permit, because they need to go to Mlaba.

Jacob: What's the goal? When will you stop struggling?

William: After we got what we need – land and houses. And we want the land next to our shacks, we were promised by the mayor in 2000. We don't want bushes there, we want houses. They mayor promised us that land, and we want him to fulfill his promises.

Jacob: If he promised it to you in 2000, why do you think it's taking so long?

Mnikelo: The government is always making empty promises. If they've got an election, they'll come and make you promises, but then they'll just sit in their offices and they won't come around anymore.

Jacob: What are some ways to force the government to fill their promises?

Mnikelo: Well, we march on them, and we tell them that we won't vote for them unless they fulfill their promises. Thabo Mbeki is the president because of our Xs.

Jacob: You don't want houses in Phoenix?

Mnikelo: We are the residents of Ward 25, we want to remain in Ward 25.

Jacob: Even if they made jobs for you there?

William: We've got jobs here, we don't want to go there.

Mnikelo: YWe get little income, but we have no transport costs.

Jacob: What have you learned from the struggle? How has it changed you?

Mnikelo: We've learned that you must demand services by marching on the road. Everyone is doing that – the teachers, even COSATU. It does something to the councilors' dignity, to have a funeral even when you are not dead. The people are not satisfied with the service from them, and they cannot go and say "I have been the councilor from Ward 25" somewhere else, because those people will say "your people have been marching against you."

William: Marching is the only way to force government, I don't think there's any other way.

Jacob: What are some threats to *abahlali basemjondolo*, or challenges or obstacles?

Mnikelo: Only if the government doesn't give us permits to march, that will be a problem. We know the proper channels, we know how to do the marshals and the t-shirts, but at the end of the day, if you don't get the permit, that's going to be a big problem.

Jacob: That's a problem from the outside, but could there be any problems from the inside?

Mnikelo: Actually we are united there is nobody who's willing to go behind somebody's back, if the government gives us permits to march, that's the only problem.

William: I think everyone who lives in the *jondolos* wants proper housing, I don't think they like living in the shacks, so we are united.

Jacob: What about other problems from the outside?

Mnikelo: If they want to stop our march, they must give us what we want.

Jacob: What else might they do to stop the march?

William: Oh, you know when we were going to Kennedy Road for the march on Baig, we saw the pamphlets on that morning that said that the march was for the IFP. But we went there because we knew that that was just a trick.

Jacob: How did you know?

Mnikelo: Because we knew that these Os were not IFP members. Since we've been living in the shacks, we've known that these Os, they were members of the ANC. Then that morning they were IFP members – why? It's just because they didn't want us to march. That was just a waste of time -- the ANC is our party, but we can't support them if they're not delivering. But we won't vote for the IFP, we must force this one to do what we want, because the government must do what we want. We must march against them to give us services. We won't be IFP members until we die, we can't say that ANC is good if they're not good, we must speak out

William: To say what is in our minds. You can't pretend as if they are good if they've got these mistakes. We can't say the ANC is good if they're not giving us houses. WE must show them that we are not happy – why? Because of land and housing.

Jacob: When did you meet Richard, and Fazel, and Raj?

Mnikelo: Richard was there on the day of the illegal march at Kennedy Road. Fazel and Raj I saw at the second march. They are always with us, on bad and good days.

Jacob: Do they help the struggle?

Mnikelo: Yes, they're super-helpful, these guys spend their time and money to help us – they just want to help us. They've got land, housing, they have what we are fighting for.

Jacob: What do they do for the struggle that you can't do for yourselves?

William: They brought a video for us for the last march, it showed our people that they are not the only ones who are [protesting]

Mnikelo: and I don't think anyone in the shacks have videos, all these equipment, generators. Hey, these guys are great man. They print t-shirts, and pamphlets.

Jacob: What do you think that they want?

Mnikelo: They just want us to have a better life like them. They've got houses, they've got toilets, they've got land. They want us to be comfortable like them. Better life for all! -- they want us to have a better life like them.

Jacob: What's the way forward, what's next?

Mnikelo: We've got a meeting with the mayor. They're always giving us empty promises, and we're always aware that they're bluffing, so we're ready to march again.

We've got meetings with Mlaba himself – he says “trust me,” but he must have a deadline. If we see no results from that we'll continue to march until he gives us what we want.

Jacob: Who's going to the meeting?

Mnikelo: The development committees of Ward 23 and Ward 25.

Jacob: Are you going to go?

Mnikelo: I'm not sure, but I'm willing to meet him, because I want to tell him straight: this is what we want.

Jacob: Is there anything else that you want to say?

Mnikelo: We can be glad as now we're struggling, we can be glad as everyone in the world can see that we're suffering. Because everyone can see, the premier (of KZN) must come and support us, the president must come and support us. If they tell us that we're going to build houses, they must not just tell us, they must come and build them.

**Appendix 5: “Hear our Cries! Voices from Kennedy Road”**  
**Letters from the Youth of Kennedy Road to Thabo Mbeki and Obed Mlaba**  
**Organized and Compiled by System Cele and Jacob Bryant**

Dear Thabo Mbeki,

My name is Bongekile Shinga. I am twelve years old. I have lived in a shack for seven years. Our shacks are built with boards and plastics. We use candles for light. We've got no toilet. When we're coming from school, we've got no food to eat or clothes to wear because of the fire. We don't want new houses in far away places. We are in the shacks, and it's dangerous and there are bushes. We're near a dump, and the water is dirty. We don't want to go to Veralum. The other houses are falling down because they are built with plastics. There is no development here. Kids are playing in dirty waters, and they get sick. Old men are raping small children here in the shacks. And the criminals are getting chances to get in because they are built with plastics. We are not going to vote without houses. How could we vote if there are no new houses here in Kennedy Road? We are sick and tired to live in the shacks.

Dear Obed Mlaba,

My name is Nomvuyo Mngadi. I live in eThekweni, in the shacks of Kennedy Road. I am thirteen years old. I've stayed here about seven years. I have a request to make to you as the mayor of the city of Durban, for you to help us. We are crying every day here in the shacks because of the fire. The reason is that our house are built with cardboards and plastics and paint tins. As I'm talking, in these past few weeks we've buried a small boy, Mhlengi Khumalo. He died because of the fire here at the shacks. Land, houses, and electricity could have helped protect his life.

The next thing is we've got no toilets. We have to relieve ourselves in the bushes. The toilets are full. As I write, if we go to our councilors they are deceiving us. They want us to move away where there are no jobs. And we don't want to go there to the farm. We are going to stay here, we are not going anywhere. Father Obed Mlaba please, we are begging you. You are living a life of luxury while we are sitting here in poverty. While we are crying you are laughing. We are sick and tired to live in the shacks. Why are you guys not allowing our rights, what would you say if you were living in a place like this. Are you happy as we are sitting here in the shacks?

Dear Obed Mlaba,

My name is Khosi Zondi, I am sixteen years old. I have stayed here for six years in the shacks of Kennedy Road. I am sick and tired of staying in the shacks, I want development. The bad thing is as we are sitting here, you, you want to move us away to the farm, and you don't want to help us. We are not going anywhere here at Kennedy Road. We want houses to be built here. We want electricity, toilets, and water. I am saying to you, Obed Mlaba, I wouldn't be writing this letter to if there were houses, electricity and water, and all our needs. Many shacks have been burned because of the fire. We have lost our sisters, our brothers, and our parents. And if there was electricity, we wouldn't have been using candles. And most of all, the little toilets we are having – you don't bring the cars to drain or clean the toilets. You, Obed Mlaba, are using a flushing toilet. That is why you don't care about our toilets being drained. You are

eating expensive food while we are eating Phuthu only. But I'm saying to you, one day God will be on our side. Because we are not going to vote, and the place that you've bought by saying you are going to build houses for us, just forget about it. You are drawing us away, and we are not going anywhere. We are orphans because of the fires. We are sick and tired of the fire, we are saying enough is enough. We have lost enough relatives now. It's okay, Obed Mlaba, you know what you are doing to us.

Dear Thabo Mbeki,

My name is Mzingisi Mphetshwa. I am sixteen years old. I have lived here about six years. We are burning in this place, because we've got no proper houses. We don't want to go to other places, except this place. We love this place. The reason we don't want to move is because we are near our schools. This place is dirty, and we are sick because of the bad smells coming from the dump. If we could have electricity, new houses and water, we could be living a good life. Please you must give us everything we ask from you, because we are not going to vote. It's been a long time that we've been told that we're going to be built houses. We were told to march, but there are no results. It's been a long time we've been deceived, told we were going to be built houses. You want us to bow on our knees to request houses. You must accept our request because we've got no clothes since our houses were burned. Everything we had in our shacks was burned, even our uniforms. We want you to show us what you are doing because being burned is not a good thing. Is it good to you to hear that people are dying because of fire while you are sitting there eating expensive food?

Dear Obed Mlaba,

My name is Nomvuyo Mngadi. I live in the shacks at Kennedy Road. My problem is I don't want to live in a place like this. You as a mayor, couldn't you help us in these shacks which are built with papers? We've got no toilets, and we are sitting in the mud. Our councilors are selling our land. They want us to go to the farm. But there in the farm there are no jobs. The municipality is hiring people from outside places and where are we going to get the money to go from the farm to reach here, to come to our schools and our jobs? Can't you guys build us houses here near Durban? And the bad thing is our shacks are burning every time. We've got no water. People are living having to poop in their houses, because there are no toilets. Baba Obed Mlaba, the sorrow we are living in with our sisters and brothers, we are sick and tired of it. We are crying every day because our souls can't rest. How long are we going to live the life like this?

Dear Thabo Mbeki,

My name is Gugu Mthembu. I am sixteen years old. I have stayed here for six years, but I see no development. All I see are people dying in fires. Many peoples lives are lost because of fire, because our houses are built with cardboard and plastics. If we had electricity, we wouldn't have lost so many souls. We *abahlali base mjondolo*, we want our houses to be built here, not in Verulam. Here we are near job opportunities. If you don't have the power to build us houses, please give us electricity at least. If you don't want to accept our request, how long are you going to watch us dying? We can see that

you are happy with all these things happening to us in our land? You are looking at the outside countries, that they are living in poverty, but you are not looking in your own country. Every time we come from school, we get a surprise: that our homes have been burned, and we've been left with nothing. We are sick and tired of living in the shacks, while you are sitting there eating expensive food. We are sick and tired of watching our brothers and sisters dying because of fire. Orphans are left because of fire. There are many widows and widowers because of fire. It is enough now. We have no electricity, we have no toilets, we must go to the bushes if we want to go to the toilet. But I'm saying: one day, somebody will have to answer to God about those souls. How does it sound to you to hear that people are dying every day? It is enough. Enough of staying in the shacks. Enough of going to toilet in the bushes.

Dear Baba Mbeki,

I was born here in Kennedy Road, and I'm fifteen years old now. But I see no difference. We live in the mud just like pigs. We are living in the shacks with water inside on the floor, whether it's raining or not – it's the same. What I want to ask to you: would you agree to let your children live in the place with mud? Even our houses have no electricity, no jobs, but you want us to vote while we are starving. We're sitting here like pigs. We are not going to vote without housing and electricity.

Your concerned child,  
Thola Mkhonde

Dear Honorable Mlaba,

Your majesty, I'm sick and tired to live in the shacks. I've got fourteen years living here, and now I'm twenty-four years old. Here is my problem: in all these years I've seen nothing when it comes to development. This is what I've seen: burning of shacks, apartheid by Indians, no jobs and starvation. Our parents couldn't find jobs, they are not working. The first informal settlement in Ward 25 was Kennedy Road, and we were promised houses first. But the shacks that were built behind, they now got new houses. And now you want to move us away! Where do you want us to go, because we've grown up here?

Yours Sincerely,  
Jabu Ncosi

Dear Dr. Mlaba,

I've got twenty-five years living here, and I see no difference. All I see are shacks that came behind us getting houses. Now we are going to be grannies, but I see no difference. We are living in poverty, drinking dirty water, we see no jobs. We don't see even houses. We are sleeping in the water like fishes. Can you sit in the water with mud? You guys asked us to vote and promised us you'd build houses for us, but till today – nothing. How can we vote if we are sitting in a place like this? See other countries are living in houses.

How long are we going to stay like this while we are voting every year? Instead we are getting older, sitting in a place like this, living in the water like fishes and pigs. There is no electricity, there are no houses, but we are asked to vote. We are not going to vote if there are no houses, no houses, and no electricity.

Concerned Resident of Kennedy Road, D.M. Buthelezi

Dear Mr. President,

I am a resident of a shack at Kennedy Road. Here is my problem: I've have stayed here for twenty years, but I see no development. Our houses are built with cardboards and plastics. We've got no electricity, which leads to our shacks burning every day. In this poverty we have, we end up losing our relatives because of fire. If it's raining, our houses are filled with water, and it's like we're living outside. I just want your eyes to focus on the place we are living in, and see the sorrow we are facing. First of all, you are promising us. If you want us to vote for you, you promise us a better life, job opportunities, etcetera, etcetera. And you can be my weakness – many votes you get, you're getting it from *abahlali base mjongdolo*, because we go to vote, all of us, in the hope that you are going to build us new houses. And that we are going to leave the sorrow behind. But we are deceiving ourselves about that. After you've got the votes, and you're sitting in your swivel chairs, you just forget about us. You must remember one thing: that you being the president relies on the votes from *abahlali base mjongdolo*.

A Concerned Shack Dweller,  
Mpume Ndosi

Dear Thabo Mbeki,

My name is Gugu Khonono. I live in Kennedy Road. I live with my mother and brother. I am twelve years old. I am in Grade 7 in Springfield Model Primary School. We are having problem in the mjongdolo. We want houses. We don't have clothes to wear because the mjongdolos are fired. Our mjongdolos are getting fired every time. And children are raped by the big man. We need water, we got one tap. The rain water is coming inside the mjongdolos. We drink dirty water and people are dying. We can't sleep at night because of the water. We are getting sick of the damp makes us sick. We will not vote. We need houses. Try to help us. We will not go to Verulam. If you don't give us some houses you must give us lights to see in the dark. I now that you don't like that things. No vote.

No houses – please try to give us some houses to live. We are asking you for help Thabo Mbeki. Make us happy and make for us houses. Eight years I am living in mjongdolos. Help us make peace for us. I know that you eat KFC and you have lots of money but you are so fat like a pig.

From Gugu Precious Chonono



Dear Obed Mlaba,

My name is Sisanda Notsolo. I am eleven years old. Long long time I have lived here, 7 years. I have a problem. Here my problem is that we have no toilet, the water is getting in our houses that does not make us happy. In our mjondolo we are not safe. People are raping children and this is not safe people are killing other people. I like to stay here but the problem is that our mjondolo is always burning every time. There are not enough water and toilet. We live in small houses. The place we live on is dirty this is not the place we must live on. If you come and visit our place you are going to see if this is the place we can live on. We need to move here this is not the place that we have to live on. We cannot vote for you if you don't move us on this place. This is not the way we are safe this does not make our lives safe. We have only two taps for people. We pee in the bush this is how we are safe. No voting, no land, no nothing.

From Sisanda Notsolo