



---

CHAPTER 3

---

# Trauma and memory: the impact of apartheid-era forced removals on coloured identity in Cape Town

BY  
HENRY TROTTER

---

YALE UNIVERSITY

---

Communities often cohere around memories of historical suffering. Black Americans look back to the atrocities of enslavement, Hutus to the injustices of pre-colonial Tutsi domination, and Afrikaners to the abuses of British imperialism. For coloured<sup>1</sup> South Africans, a people whose diverse ancestry experienced enslavement, dispossession, genocidal extermination and apartheid degradation the question of historical memory is fraught with difficulty. A striking aspect of coloured people's memory today is that, for the most part, they do not invest in a remote past. Some scholars have even implied that they suffer from historical amnesia.<sup>2</sup> Most coloured Capetonians instead focus upon a painful experience within living memory: the forced eviction of 150 000 coloured people from their natal homes and communities in the Cape Peninsula between 1957 and 1985 under the Group Areas Act.

Based on over 100 life history interviews with coloured forced removees, this chapter examines the impact of Group Areas evictions on contemporary coloured identity.<sup>3</sup> It suggests that, in the wake of mass social trauma, coloured removees coped with their pain by reminiscing with one another about the 'good old days' in their destroyed communities.

Their removal to racially defined townships ensured that they shared their memories almost exclusively with other coloured people, and only infrequently with Africans, Indians or whites. Apartheid social engineering determined the spatial limits within which coloured memories circulated, creating a reflexive, mutually reinforcing pattern of narrative traffic. Over the past four decades, the constant circulation of these nostalgic stories has developed a narrative community among coloured removees in the townships. This experience of popular sharing and support in the context of loss gives coloured identity in Cape Town a salience today that would be lacking if it were based solely on political or economic interests.

Measuring the ‘resonance’ of identity – its depth, power and relevance – involves understanding it beyond its explicit manifestations. Most studies of coloured identity deal with its overt characteristics, such as the apartheid state’s categorisation of people as coloured, or of white society’s external identification of people perceived as being of mixed racial descent as coloured, or of assimilated colonial blacks’ self-identification as a middle-tier coloured group situated between ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’ after the mineral revolution.<sup>4</sup> These analyses are crucial for our understanding of coloured identity in its more explicit forms, but their focus on categorisation and identification do not cover the interior dimensions of the concept. They reveal little about the significance of coloured identity for the people who have identified or have been identified as such. They do not ascertain what commonalities they share, by what means they are connected, and what level of boundedness they feel as a racial community. Essentially, they do not probe coloured self-understanding. This chapter thus seeks out the tacit, dispositional, emotional and non-instrumental aspects of coloured identity that are negotiated and reinforced implicitly through the circulation of narratives. It also attempts to understand the relationship between these tacit understandings of self with more explicit and political identity claims.<sup>5</sup>

## Group Areas

After coming to power in 1948, the National Party moved quickly to implement its vision of a segregated racial utopia. After passing the Population Registration Act of 1950, it sought to segregate the officially identified races. Because the status of the coloured category was ambiguous in terms of the binary racial logic of the time, the mechanics of their separation was up for debate.<sup>6</sup> According to Ian Goldin, after the Transvaal and Cape branches of the National Party argued the issue at



length, officials decided that the western Cape would become a coloured labour preference area. The policy was designed to remove Africans from the region and to promote a stronger sense of colouredness by privileging coloureds economically, relative to Africans. And within urban areas, coloureds were to be relocated to racially homogeneous townships.<sup>7</sup>

Although the Group Areas Act was passed in 1950, forced removals did not begin in earnest in Cape Town until the late 1950s. Some of the smaller coloured neighbourhoods were summarily evacuated, as was generally the case with Africans, but the fate of most people was decided by the Group Areas Board (GAB), which claimed that it would determine the racial character of an area only after public consultation. Thus, before classifying an area 'white', 'coloured' or 'Indian', the Board held public hearings allowing people to voice their opinions. Though some whites supported Group Areas evictions, many people of all racial groups opposed the proposed removals at these hearings. Even the Cape Town City Council challenged them, stalling implementation when possible. Most residents argued that their neighbourhoods should stay just as they were. They rejected the government's rationales for removals, claiming that such extreme intervention was unnecessary. Their protests seem to have had no effect on the outcome of the hearings, though, as racial zoning followed a predictable pattern in which whites obtained the prime real estate near Table Mountain and the coasts, while coloureds, Africans and Indians were banished to racially homogeneous group areas on the periphery of the city.<sup>8</sup>

Before the implementation of the Group Areas Act, Cape Town was arguably the most racially integrated city in South Africa. People from different racial and ethnic backgrounds lived interspersed, shaping one another's lives.<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that they were haphazardly spread across the peninsula, or that residential areas did not have distinct racial characters. As Vivian Bickford-Smith shows, racialised space has been a normal part of Cape Town's life since at least the late 19th century.<sup>10</sup> The drastic measures taken to segregate the city illustrates how racially entangled its residential areas had been and how diverse the living conditions of its coloured community was before it was homogenised by racial zoning.

Coloureds responded in various ways to their eviction. In Sea Point and Rondebosch respectively, two coloured men committed suicide, preferring death to dispossession.<sup>11</sup> According to virtually every removee, many older people died just before or just after moving. Survivors blame

this on the trauma of eviction. Leonard Levendal of Red Hill provides a typical example: ‘You know, my father, he was blind, so when they moved him, chucked him out of Simonstown, they put him in the flats down here [in Ocean View]. It was about a year, he got a stroke, he died! Heartbroken!’<sup>12</sup> Most residents, especially homeowners, tried to find some means of staying in the area a bit longer, petitioning for an extension. Others left as soon as possible, hoping this would ensure a better choice of accommodation in the townships. A few fought their fate. Norma Solomons refused to move out of District Six, even after her home was bulldozed. She and her children moved from one ‘broken palace’ (evacuated house) to another as the bulldozers slowly ate away at the District. For years, they managed to stay in the area until there were no more broken palaces in which to squat.<sup>13</sup> Some were caught by surprise. Cecil McLean remembers returning from work one day in 1969 only to find that his family had been relocated to Manenberg, a distant township he had never heard of before.<sup>14</sup> Sadness pervaded these communities when they were notified that they would have to leave their homes. Everyone faced their hardship with great bitterness and resentment. Hopelessness and resignation overtook some, impotent rage others.<sup>15</sup>

### Official and counter transcripts

The apartheid government justified Group Areas removals in a range of ways. Most importantly, it claimed that racial mixing bred conflict. Introducing the Group Areas Bill into parliament, the Minister of the Interior, T E Donges, confirmed that the policy was ‘designed to eliminate friction between the races’.<sup>16</sup> Also, officials believed that most coloured people lived in overcrowded, unhygienic conditions that needed to be eliminated in accordance with the dictates of public health policy and principles of modern urban planning. Removals were seen as necessary for halting urban decay and were construed as philanthropic. Thus the chairman of the Group Areas Board enthused that, ‘Truly, for the majority of people the advantage would be that they will be provided with better housing and living under much better hygienic circumstances.’<sup>17</sup> It was argued that this exercise in slum clearance would provide the coloured under-classes with a new start.<sup>18</sup> A consistent theme in government rationalisations was that criminal activity, which was especially prevalent in coloured areas, would be curbed. Segregation rather than better policing was touted as the solution to crime. These justifications constitute the core of the official transcript for Group Areas evictions in the Cape Peninsula.



James Scott claims that elites generate a public transcript to justify their acts of domination. This transcript is composed of a series of rationalisations which explain how and why one social group deserves the power it exercises or desires.<sup>19</sup> While elites hope that subordinates will accept these rationalisations, the oppressed usually respond by developing a 'hidden transcript'. Instead of passively accepting the word of the elites, subordinates construct narratives that embody their real hopes and longings as well as a different understanding of their subjugated status. They question the foundations on which their domination is based and fantasise about a reversal of roles. Because they are in relationships of inequality with elites, who often hold a monopoly of coercive force, they face constraints on their capacity to reveal their opinions publicly. Thus the development of this vision from below takes place away from the surveillance of elite power in the relative safety of peer groups and like-minded discontents. Among themselves, subordinates construct and circulate oral transcripts that reject the degrading terms of their subjugation and attempt to salvage a sense of pride, dignity and self-worth despite their condition. In the company of their superiors, they may abide by the ritual conduct demanded by the public transcript and may even go so far as endorsing the virtues of the official transcript in the presence of elites. Scott argues that 'the public transcript of domination [is] ontologically prior to the hidden, backstage transcript'.<sup>20</sup> Elites create narratives while attempting to enforce their will, after which subordinates react by conjuring their own hidden transcript, which comprises 'the offstage responses and rejoinders to that public transcript'.<sup>21</sup> The public transcript has a structuring effect on the hidden transcript.

In Cape Town, coloured rejoinders to the public transcript were not completely hidden. Throughout the city they responded to the government's rationalisations for Group Areas removals with a counter transcript. They stated their arguments against segregation at Group Areas Board meetings, in newspaper articles, and when interviewed. They also developed these arguments away from the ear of power, in a hidden fashion, when commiserating with one another or discussing their plight. But, as Scott's theory suggests, coloureds responded on a one-for-one basis to the government's justifications with counterarguments of their own.

For example, many challenged the main justification of Group Areas removals by detailing how friendly their relations with people of other races were. One removee was reported in the *Cape Argus* as insisting that

‘[w]e have been very happy and secure living here among the Whites’<sup>22</sup> while another claimed that ‘here we find the people who have learnt to live in peace and harmony as good neighbours. Racial and religious friction is virtually unknown’.<sup>23</sup> Coloured people often made the counterclaim that ‘the application of the Group Areas Act over the years has created, rather than averted friction and resentment.’<sup>24</sup> Mrs Brown summed up the feelings of the District Six community when she told a reporter, ‘We were like one family with no divisions between whites, Coloured people, Indians or African. But then the Group divided us all.’<sup>25</sup> Many individuals and groups presented their opinions to the Group Areas Board on the excellent race relations that existed in their communities.<sup>26</sup> In some instances they were supported by their white neighbours. In Lansdowne, whites and coloureds formed the Lansdowne Ratepayers’ and Tenants’ Society to protest the removal of coloureds. They petitioned the GAB, claiming, ‘The application of the Group Areas Act in Lansdowne is seriously threatening to disrupt a stable, law-abiding community where white and Coloured families have lived in friendship and trust.’<sup>27</sup>

Many coloured people, particularly within the petty bourgeoisie, justifiably rejected the notion that they were living in slums. While they did not challenge the idea of urban renewal, they denied that their particular neighbourhoods were in need of such intervention. The Black River Ratepayers’ and Residents’ Association’s submission to the GAB provides a good example:

The residents in the area include people who ... cleared the bush, drained the swamps, and eradicated the snakes, lizards and harmful insects, and have converted the area into a decent habitable one. The residents have invested their life savings in the construction of houses that met with the most stringent building regulations of the council of the City of Cape Town ... [and] measure up to the most modern standards.<sup>28</sup>

Newspapers and GAB hearings show that residents also repudiated the notion that crime and gangsterism were significant problems in their neighbourhoods. The Black River Ratepayers’ and Residents’ Association asserted ‘that the area has been singularly free of serious crime’.<sup>29</sup> Others stressed that crime was not a problem but that it would become one if the government went ahead with its removal plan.<sup>30</sup> Nasima Ebrahim, who was forced out of District Six, claimed in a newspaper article that ‘[t]here were no knife-wielding or undesirable elements to take the joy out of our



evening stroll'.<sup>31</sup> One District Six woman, interviewed about gang fights in her neighbourhood before Group Areas evictions, refused to describe the fighters as gangsters, saying rather that they 'were not gangs at all but just rival groups out to have some fun'.<sup>32</sup> Suffusing their defence was the premise that their lifestyles, including racial mixing, were morally wholesome and that there was no justification for their eviction.

### **Circulating narratives in the townships**

Despite their rejection of the official transcript, people classified 'coloured' were taken from all over the Cape Peninsula and lumped together in racially homogeneous townships on the Cape Flats. Residents who had identified with particular neighbourhoods were dispossessed of them, deprived of their patrimony, sundered from their social networks, and forced to accommodate themselves to a new existence with strangers from other communities. In many ways, they had to recreate their sense of self and their social lives as their old networks were torn apart.

When they first arrived in the townships, removees felt only a tenuous connection to the people around them, unless they were fellow removees from the same area. Many say that they just 'couldn't get used to it'.<sup>33</sup> They were mixed in with all sorts – removees from their own neighbourhoods, removees from other areas, migrants who had voluntarily moved to the townships for the opportunity of having their own home, and former shanty-dwellers who were given formal accommodation by the City Council. In this diasporic context, removees tried to rebuild their lives, seeking one another out for support. Their shared experience of dispossession bonded them as they struggled to make sense of their altered situation. They grieved and gossiped together, commiserated and consoled one another, railed against apartheid and complained about the shabby housing. They also commemorated their destroyed communities, sharing with one another beautiful memories of their cherished pasts. Across the Cape Flats, forced removees mixed socially, creating interlocking webs of connection, circulating their stories within the boundaries of the legislated coloured areas. They also shared this discourse with empathetic non-removee neighbours who validated their pain through emotional support. No doubt they also disagreed with one another about many things, but this did not cloud their desire to honour their lost communities in appropriate ways. Cut off from meaningful interaction with Africans, whites and, to a lesser extent, Indians, apartheid social engineering determined the geographical limits

within which coloured memories spread, creating a reflexive loop of narrative circulation.

Over the past four decades, the constant exchange of nostalgic stories about the 'good old days' has developed a narrative community among coloured removees. Through interaction with one another, they developed a shared set of narrative conventions for remembering a past characterised by traumatic loss. Through sharing they came to agree on what was appropriate to remember about this past and their relationships to their destroyed homes and communities. This helps explain the uncanny resemblance that removee life histories bear to one another. Their stories were forged in the same cauldron of traumatic loss and were animated by the same moral and emotional purposes.

Coloured removee life histories and the stories that they share with one another in everyday conversation can be termed a commemoration narrative.<sup>34</sup> Their memory production is driven by three moral intentions: to counter the government's rationale for Group Areas (counter memory); to compare the difficult present to an idealised past (comparative memory); and to commemorate their former communities with highly selective stories which honour their former homes, communities and identities (commemorative memory). These three agendas come through in virtually every coloured removee life history. An analysis of these narrative components helps explain the conventions shaping life history production among removees as well as subjective aspects of coloured identity.

### *Counter memory*

Though the counter transcript was developed in reaction to the official transcript, the ideological commitments of that effort continue to find expression in removee memory to this day, despite the ending of apartheid. Not surprisingly, a key feature of their life histories today is the reproduction of the counter transcript – now a counter memory – point by point. The counter memory essentially restates the values of the counter transcript in nostalgic terms, thus stories of interracial harmony abound. The Cape Town they remember before Group Areas removals was a place without racial conflict. Removees remember their former homes as fully meeting their aspirations and almost always being better than the ones they were forced into in the townships. Many of the conditions Group Areas officers regarded as deleterious were interpreted as qualities that gave their communities wholeness. What the government





saw as overcrowding, residents saw as ‘closeness’; what officials feared was interracial friction was interpreted as racial tolerance by locals. Though some gained access to modern conveniences such as electricity, water-borne sewerage and running water in their township homes, they are quick to stress that the government could have upgraded their old homes instead of forcing them into the townships. Criminality in the old neighbourhoods is denied or qualified, as when District Sixers conjure the image of the gentlemen gangster to challenge the area’s reputation for violence. Removees also remember their communities as suffused with positive values, especially regarding respect for elders and tolerance of social difference. Though apartheid is over and its transcripts discredited, removees continue to advance arguments of the counter transcript in their memories lest anyone think that there might have been some truth to National Party justifications for evictions.

### *Comparative memory*

The commemoration narrative also posits an explicit comparison between two distinct moral eras separated by the rupture of eviction. This radical divide is a classic feature of nostalgia. It declares that life was better in the past than it is in the present. But unlike general nostalgia in which a vaguely constituted past is compared to an equally vague present, removee nostalgia posits eviction as the critical divide. Removees often characterise their eviction in terms of a fall from a state of grace, though through no fault of their own. Their former communities were Edens compared to the postlapsarian townships. Following contours reminiscent of the story of Adam and Eve, removees plot their lives according to a narrative of descent. As so many removees declare: ‘[E]ver since we were moved out from there, everything went wrong. Everything.’<sup>35</sup> Their stories chart the fall from a plane of moral perfection in their old communities to one of moral degradation in the townships.<sup>36</sup>

Comparative memory operates by treating current concerns through the lens of nostalgia. Many of these concerns are shared by other Capetonians, regardless of race or whether they were victims of Group Areas. Coloured removees, however, tend to use them to compare the pre-removals era to the post-removals one. They use these concerns to highlight the particular role of evictions in bringing about current hardships. The main themes that occur in comparative memory are crime, gangsterism, fear, respect for elders, the value of money, entertainment and community spirit. Other themes such as unemployment, social

opportunities and government service delivery are also pronounced in life histories, but these only became concerns after 1994 when the ANC took power.<sup>37</sup>

The attention that crime receives in public discourse, newspapers and over-the-fence conversation – not to mention its effects on people’s lives and psyches – highlights the extent to which vice and violence are critical issues for people living on the Cape Flats. Murder, rape, assault, robbery, car hijacking, domestic abuse and kidnapping are constant features of their lives. And for forced removees, whose own past must seem like a ‘foreign country’, the crime and violence permeating their lives is an indication of just how much better the old days in the former communities were.<sup>38</sup> As Zulfa Wagner claims, in Goodwood ‘[w]e didn’t live in violence, man. Only here in Lavis [township], then we used to get violence’.<sup>39</sup>

Whether removees have personally experienced crime or violence, or whether they have had to sacrifice dearly held freedoms such as taking evening strolls, their present-day concerns have a major impact on their memories of their former lives. Virginia Elissac, who grew up in Rondebosch, illustrates this: ‘I prefer those days: they were peaceful and quiet and everybody was loving. Yes, oh God, my father warned us about so-called *skollies* [thugs] at that time. “Ooh, they would stab you with a knife” or “they would do all of these horrible things”. But basically, when one looks at today, it’s violent and a violent way of life; then what happened in those days was nothing, totally nothing.’<sup>40</sup> For her father, the *skollies* may have been truly worrisome characters and may have merited concern but present dangers make a mockery of this concern. The past seems safe and innocent in comparison.

While crime and gangsterism seem to go hand in hand today, it was not always so for many interviewees. For them gangsters fulfilled a variety of roles in the past, such as communal protection, neighbourhood entertainment and even assisting the elderly. Some communities, especially those with a rural character, had little exposure to gangsterism. The move to the townships and the introduction to the world of ruthless gangsterism was a rude shock that symbolised the shift between ‘then’ and ‘now’. For Elizabeth Williams, gangs belong to the post-eviction era. Before that, in Louw’s Cottages (Kirstenhof), ‘we didn’t have guns, we didn’t have gangs’.<sup>41</sup> The very idea of gangs could only belong to the brutish world of the townships.<sup>42</sup>

Crime and gangsterism has bred feelings of fear that most say they never knew before Group Areas evictions. Township life introduced a



level of insecurity that never existed in their old communities. They claim that they used to be able to do whatever they wanted without concern for their safety or the threat of violence. Many interviewees lovingly reminisce about how they could walk anywhere at any time back in the old days. When asked if she feared gangsters in her old community, Ruth Petersen of Diep River responded:

Never, never. We used to go to midnight bioscope ... we used to walk to Wynberg, midnight. The whole crew of us. And as we walked, the others joined. And we sit in midnight bioscope and we all go singing home along the road.<sup>43</sup>

In Claremont, Sarah September shared that same feeling of freedom:

And what was so easy, you could be out late at night, you could still go down and do window shopping ... We used to go down on Friday evening and we go down, buy fish 'n chips. Shops closed late at night. But here [in Manenberg] you're even too scared to put your head out during the day. You can't go to the store as we stayed before.<sup>44</sup>

Removees feel bitter and betrayed, for it did not have to be so. Present-day fears prompt stark comparisons between a safe and carefree past with current threats of crime and violence.

A common lament among removees is that the destruction of their communities brought about the demise of certain wholesome values in their lives. Their way of life together with its finely tuned social mores were seen to have been ruptured by evictions, making it nearly impossible for them to reproduce those cultural ideals in the alien environment of the townships. Here they met 'people from different ways of living, so you had to accustom yourself with them'.<sup>45</sup> Along with scholars who have analysed the disruptive legacy of the Group Areas Act, removees highlight the rift that evictions created in reproducing their social values in the townships.<sup>46</sup> They claim that respect was the cornerstone of their former communal lives. For most removees, respect is couched in terms of reverence for older people. Mymoena Emjedi stressed the importance of respect in her childhood:

When we grew up, our parents used to teach us to have respect for the older. We used to go around and knock on elderly people's doors and then go ask them if they don't want anything from the shop because they don't walk. The children

today, they don't do things like that anymore. We used to sit in the bus and when we'd see an elder person getting in the bus, we stand up. We stand up from that chair for that elder person to come sit down. And if we go past an elderly person, we got to greet ... That is why that time, there was no such crimes they got here now, because there's no more respect.<sup>47</sup>

This ethos of respect was lost with their forced removal. As one said: 'The respect we had, we left behind.'<sup>48</sup>

Removees often perceive the value of money as constantly having eroded. Even though some families have more now than ever before, they still present the past as an epoch of abundance compared to today's scarcity. The value of money is used to symbolise that distinction. Sarah September speaks the words of so many removees:

My father earned little, but we had all the comforts. We never struggled. But struggling was when we came down to live here [Manenberg]. That time the earning was very little, but you could buy ... tickey's butter or tuppence jam or so ... But now it's worse than what it was before.<sup>49</sup>

A compelling, but ironic, allegory is usually at play in these memories – back then we earned little money, but it went a long way; today we get much more money, but it does not buy anything. This perception is clearly aided by South Africa having suffered more than two decades of high inflation from the mid-1970s onwards. The cherished 'tuppence jam', 'penny polony' and 'tickey's butter' are quaint images of a time when people say they had all that they needed. Not luxury, but comfort. Not excess, but satisfaction. Group Areas ended an age remembered for its pecuniary innocence.

Coloured removees often reminisce about recreation and entertainment in their old communities, claiming that they were more satisfying than present diversions. Minstrel carnivals, Malay choirs and Christmas bands were annual events that helped make the old times memorable for they were of their own creation.<sup>50</sup> There were bioscopes to attend, dances to frequent, concerts to go to, and beaches to show off at. Those in peri-urban settings entertained themselves through storytelling, kite flying, sewing, window-shopping excursions, and a wide variety of sports and popular games. And for the middle classes, couples would 'relax with their sherry and they'd make some snacks and they'd sit



around the piano and they'd sing. They'd sing all the opera arias, so we grew up with opera and music'.<sup>51</sup> Whether a pastoral idyll or an image of urbane sophistication, past forms of entertainment are remembered as salubrious, satisfying, culturally expansive and family oriented. They were also innocent, in that the joy they engendered was genuine and safe. Everyone could participate, and the cultural values of families and communities were reinforced through hearty social interaction. In virtually every way, that entertainment is considered superior to today's pirated DVDs, electronic games, drug-infested nightclubs and garish malls.

Coloured removees make a point of comparing the community spirit of former times to the alienation of today. In the old days, 'everybody knew everybody else' and people treated one another like family. In areas where Muslims and Christians lived intermixed, residents tell stories of deep and meaningful interaction. One Muslim woman from District Six reminisced with tears in her eyes:

You know, *labarang* is our Christmas, ne? Well, we would go to wish everybody and the Christian people go with us, go wish. And when it's Christmas, then we go with them ... And [when] I was small, then I ran away from home and I'd go sit in the mission with the Christian children, then we go sing gospel songs and then sometimes, they'd sit in the mission, then we sing together. Sometimes we go in the evening, we walk from one street to the other street with a piano accordion and then we'd sing ... The children don't get that anymore.<sup>52</sup>

The spirit that is said to have once suffused the old communities is now gone. That spirit, of which removees speak so nostalgically, is a quality they were not able to reproduce in the townships, try as they might. New communities have been born, it is true, but they are not seen as worthy successors to the old ones. The spirit lives on only in their stories and memories.

### *Commemorative memory*

Besides countering the rationales for Group Areas and comparing the past to the present, removee life histories commemorate their lost homes and communities. This is the overriding sentiment that animates their production of memory. Through countering government justifications, removees show what wonderful places their communities were. In critiquing the present by comparing it to the past, they show how fantastic

that time was. These lesser agendas serve the larger commemorative purpose of honouring their destroyed communities. The idealised recollections of removees help answer the deep emotional need of people who have suffered the trauma of evictions to grieve and come to terms with their loss. They demonstrate their connection to those communities by telling romanticised tales about the old times, when life was innocent and carefree. They honour the passing of their communities by recounting tender memories about them. And they make emotional, social, political and identity claims based on their attachments to those communities.<sup>53</sup>

Svetlana Boym tells us that:

‘[n]ostalgia (from *nostos* – return home, and *algia* – longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship.<sup>54</sup>

Thus idealisation and massive omission of negative memories are key ingredients of nostalgic commemoration narratives. As Barry Schwartz explains, ‘[c]ommemoration lifts from an ordinary historical sequence those extraordinary events which embody our deepest and most fundamental values’.<sup>55</sup> Like grieving parents who honour a dead child with beautiful stories rather than memories of arguments, failures and betrayals, the commemoration narrative focuses on what is good and represses negative memories that might compromise the project. Those are overwritten by successive versions of the narrative which is scripted, rehearsed and refined. Memory is palimpsestual, subject to revision. Through the commemoration narrative, removees express grief, assign blame, treasure good times, value lost relationships and identify with other removees and their old communities.

The narrative also serves as a resource for satisfying a number of crucial needs. First, it has emotional utility. For victims of traumatic loss, narrative development offers a road to psychological recovery and the prospect for healing. It allows victims to keep a sense of connection to the people and places from which they were severed by evoking them verbally. Psychoanalytic theory has long recognised the therapeutic role that narrative construction plays in the lives of trauma victims. By integrating their experiences into their life histories, survivors are able to move on with their lives, no matter how painful that memory may remain.<sup>56</sup>



Secondly, it has archival utility. That is, even though narrative tends to reduce the chaotic mass of impressions that a person has of the past to a more manageable and meaningful set of memories, it enhances their resolution by promoting those memories that fit the narrative's conventions. The commemoration narrative vigilantly guards against the infiltration of the official transcript by carving out a space of 'truth' against the 'lies' of the government and against the risk of forgetting. Like so many post-traumatic commemorative projects – Holocaust museums, war memorials and genocide documentation centres – removee memory fights against both forgetting and mis-remembering an 'authentic' past. In the context of the apartheid townships, in which removee memory remained in oral form without the support of museums, archives, the press or publications until the end of apartheid, the commemoration narrative provided the means through which removees' pasts were kept alive through the years.

Thirdly, it has aesthetic utility in that removees derive immense pleasure both from the recitation and reception of stories that conform to the commemoration narrative's conventions. Similar to singing or listening to a beloved song – where much of the joy is experienced in anticipating and then arriving at critical moments of the composition – the recollection of and response to commemorative stories promise gratification because this elicits aesthetic expectations from removees. Understanding the rules of their collectively constructed genre, they can anticipate and then relish the consummation of crucial moments of the story. By moulding their stories according to this narrative format, removees are assured of, at minimum, communicating meaning successfully. And if they are practised storytellers, with a flair for language or embellishment, then they are able to generate artistic delights by adding personal touches to an otherwise well-known storyline. Those familiar with the rules of the commemoration narrative also appreciate stories that offer unique images or creative use of the genre.

Fourthly, it has social utility, in that narrative sharing allows victims to rebuild new lives together in challenging circumstances. It helps them make sense of a world that has been fundamentally altered. All previous expectations of their life trajectories having been destroyed, narrative development allows for tentative attempts at making meaning of their new state. Through narrative interaction and making sense of the world together, they ended up building new communities in the townships.

Lastly, it has political utility. For people of marginalised oppressed communities, narrative is a crucial 'weapon of the weak'.<sup>57</sup> As we have

seen, narrative is a flexible, durable and universal oral resource easily hidden from the ears of power. It can be subtle and non-confrontational, a whisper of protest. A political strength of narrative is its relative illegibility to power as the oppressed group controls the timing of the narrative's broadcast to elites. At the time of removal, most victims believed that they were too weak to challenge the government openly. They could not afford more muscular forms of protest such as strikes, boycotts and riots – the tactics of the next generation. Removee resistance took the form of underground narrative production against the government's justifications for removals.

In the post-apartheid era, the commemoration narrative has taken on a surprising new relevance. With the decline and demise of apartheid, coloured cultural entrepreneurs have been publicising the commemoration narrative beyond the borders of the townships. The publication of Richard Rive's novel, *Buckingham Palace: District Six*,<sup>58</sup> which later became a standard textbook for high school students in the Western Cape, represents a crucial breakthrough in this regard. Then followed musicals by David Kramer and the late Taliep Petersen, and dramaturgical performances such as *District Six* and *Onse Boet* that embodied the sentiments of the narrative on stage. Very importantly, the District Six Museum was formed to give concrete expression to the memories of the bulldozed community. Today it also acts as a repository for the memories of other Cape Town communities destroyed by apartheid-era forced removals. In this respect, District Six has become symbolic of Group Areas trauma generally, and community members have taken the lead in promoting the commemoration narrative as an alternative to the discredited apartheid transcript. Because of its popular resonance with removees – and its widespread acceptance, or tolerance, by other Capetonians – the narrative has been taken up as the official transcript by the post-apartheid regime.

Moreover, when the ANC came to power, it allowed Group Areas victims to claim some form of restitution, such as their actual land if available, an alternative parcel of land or financial compensation. The process initiated by the Land Claims Commission relied heavily on removees' narratives to substantiate their claims. Besides factual data elicited by the application form – duration of residence, date of expulsion, level of compensation awarded upon their removal, number of rooms in house, whether it was rented or owned – it also asked people to justify their claims by relating their experience of forced removal. In the 550





land claim applications personally analysed, almost all coloured claimants utilise, in some fashion, the template of the commemoration narrative to make their cases.<sup>59</sup> Given the scripted, rehearsed quality of the narrative in their memories, as well as its current ascendancy as the new official transcript, coloured claimants leveraged its legitimacy and simply wrote down what they had been saying for decades in the townships. Their memory has, literally, paid off.

### **Collective, communal and individual identities**

In a recent article provocatively entitled ‘Coloureds don’t *toyi-toyi*’, Shannon Jackson argues that most theorists of coloured identity ‘rely on data sources such as voting practices, voluntary behaviour and verbally expressed political positions, particularly amongst elites... [which] valorises the relevance of consciousness and consciously volunteered information at the expense of more tacit and diffuse domains of meaning’. The problem with this is that it ‘overlooks some of the contradictory behaviour of coloureds who ... voice conscious rejection of a separate Coloured identity in one context and then unreflexively channel their energies into separate Coloured cultural affiliations in another.’<sup>60</sup> She then examines coloured people’s relationships to different bodily movements and gestures, such as *toyi-toying* (protest dancing), to see how these implicit indices bear on the question of identity. Other writers have also recognised this bias toward conscious declarations and have turned their attention to more tacit expressions of identity found in annual rituals such as Coon Carnivals and Malay Choirs; linguistic practices such as code-switching; the expression of emotions of shame, longing, denial or desire; the personal politics relating to hair texture and skin pigmentation; consumer behaviour; and humour.<sup>61</sup>

This analysis of the commemoration narrative provides clues for analysing colouredness beyond explicit statements of identity contained within them. The very structure of their narratives tells us something about the way that removees understand themselves, what Margaret Somers calls narrative identity.<sup>62</sup> This section argues that the structure of the commemoration narrative and its meaning-making devices – plots, themes, tropes, and anecdotes – are means through which coloured removees make multiple identity claims.

Essentially, narratives create meaning out of otherwise chaotic memories and impressions through devices such as plots, themes, tropes and anecdotes. These devices work together to help speakers

construct intelligible stories structured to convey specific messages. The commemoration narrative exemplifies these qualities, with its pre-removals beginning, its forced removal middle, and its post-removals ending. And their narratives are structured to make three crucial points: that the government's rationales for evictions were illegitimate, that their lives were far better before their removal than after, and that removees honour the memories of their lost homes, communities and identities.

But these devices each serve different functions in narrative production and allow speakers to do more than just create meaning through them. They also allow them to make highly specific identity claims without necessarily doing so overtly. These devices allow for subtle cues of differentiation, tacit expressions of inner disposition and latent manifestations of subjectivity. Margaret Somers argues that 'it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities'.<sup>63</sup> Coloured removees use these narrative devices in consistent patterned ways which speak to their sense of identity and belonging.

Firstly, plot structures are broad organising devices that determine a story's direction, but not its details. They provide the evaluative framework for making sense of independent events, putting them in relationship to one another. Plot structures also identify a speaker's disposition towards the direction of their own or community's lives. The commemoration narrative locates memories and events along a downward sloping moral trajectory, showing that their lives were made worse by the experience of forced removals. However, coloured removees are not the only group to use this narrative structure. Most working-class coloured people and many whites, Indians and Africans also structure their life histories in this way. Indeed, this shared plot structure promotes a common tenor to many of the minority communities in South Africa, forming the basis for most opposition party claims, especially at election time. For these other groups, the narrative of descent is usually tied to the historical changes inaugurated in 1994 when the ANC came to power. For many who had been privileged or enjoyed privilege relative to the African majority, this is when their fortunes deteriorated. While most coloured removees agree that their lives have taken a turn for the worse since 1994, that historical moment is not pivotal to their life histories. For them, the descent began with forced removals and merely accelerated with the change in regime.

While the narrative of descent gives a similar pitch to pessimistic minority critiques of the post-apartheid order, allowing them to identify



with one another politically, coloured removees are distinguished from the rest by positing Group Areas evictions as the moment of historical rupture for them. Coloured removees use their nostalgia for a different moral purpose. Theirs is a specific response to the injustices of removals, thus the narrative of descent both ties and distinguishes them from disaffected minority groups. It, however, mostly serves to identify them as survivors of a historical injustice.

Secondly, themes give flesh to the overarching plot structure. As meaning-making devices, themes remain broad, allowing for any number of tropes or anecdotes to be marshalled under their banners. In the commemoration narrative, the major themes fall under the categories of counter and comparative memory. The main counter memory themes are interracial relations, material conditions, crime, gangsterism and morality. These were arrived at in dialogue with the official transcript. Comparative memory themes include crime, gangsterism, fear, respect, community spirit, the value of money and entertainment. These were arrived at through negotiating the challenges of the townships. These shared themes illustrate the commonalities that removees perceive as having shaped their lives.

When tens of thousands of people living in a confined geographical area utilise the same themes for organising their memories into meaningful life histories, it is clear that those narrative choices are not random. There are countless themes that removees could choose to structure their memories but not all would be socially relevant. In the wake of this mass social trauma, three crucial elements came to define their social context: their audience was now exclusively coloured, most were also fellow removees, and victims sought to heal their emotional and psychological wounds through narrative sharing. This reduced the number of relevant themes to an identifiable core.

Coloured removees established what might be compared to an extended support group with a narrative programme that allowed them to approach one another for emotional and psychological succour. As is the case in support groups, in which members tend to develop a stylised narrative format to speak about addiction, rape or trauma – by borrowing the group's confessional style and tapping into commonly accepted plot structures and themes – coloured forced removees also developed a stylised narrative to convey meaning through their stories. These themes, while seemingly attenuating their narrative options, actually opened up the possibility for meaningful speech in the aftermath of trauma. They formed

a common currency that could be traded among removees, allowing for instant intelligibility, despite coming from radically different locales and facing different eviction experiences. As broad meaning-making devices, themes connected coloured forced removees across the Cape Flats without demanding that they sacrifice any of the specificity of their community's or their own experiences. The common themes of their life histories bear testimony to the process of narrative sharing, implicitly connecting these removees despite physical separation, differing opinions and divergent aspirations. Thus, even though many of these themes are used by other township dwellers, the specific functions they serve in removee narratives distinguish them from others. They tie removees together in a loose web of narrative affiliation, giving a remarkable similarity to their stories across the Cape Peninsula. It is easy to predict what kinds of stories removees will offer when telling their life history, so patterned and consistent are they in reproducing this canon of themes through the narrative of descent.

Thirdly, nested below plots and themes are tropes, more intimate meaning-making devices. They are figures of speech carrying symbolic significance far beyond their literal meanings. Tropes condense large amounts of information, emotion and meaning into a memorable, stylised and compact image that is conveyed in a word or short phrase. They allow storytellers to communicate economically and artistically, conveying complex messages in a succinct, symbolic form. As Harold Scheub, in his study of South African storytelling explains: 'Trope implies transformation, from one set of images to another, but without giving up any of the original meanings or perceptions that an audience might have of them.'<sup>64</sup> The use of tropes implies a degree of complicity between speaker and listener, its success being predicated on communicants sharing a cultural vocabulary and an understanding of the relationship between certain symbols and messages. On the Cape Flats, commemorative stories have circulated to the extent that a collective cultural vocabulary has developed so that removees from different destroyed locales can speak meaningfully about their own particular experiences in ways that are collectively understood.

The figure of the gentleman gangster provides a good example of the way tropes work. District Sixers speak lovingly of the 'gentleman gangster', that charming, rough and tough character who is also genteel and civic minded when appropriate. He may fight with other gangsters, or even 'mess' with an outsider, but he would never hurt someone from the community. He is a uniquely District Six figure, a trope evoked by former



residents when the theme of gangsterism arises in their narratives. Use of this trope serves two purposes. It locates people's history and identity squarely within District Six and allows them to deal with the current thematic issue of gangsterism through the commemorative narrative. Other removees do not use that trope in their life history for they have their own way of speaking about gangsterism that is more appropriate to their experiences. The specificity of tropes allows removees to identify with and speak in unique ways about their particular communities while linking them at a broader thematic level.

Tropes are drawn from a locally conceived fund of images, characters or events capable of bearing dense symbolic meaning, and have deep resonance for people within that community. People look to their own histories and localities to provide material for symbolic meaning. Certain mores, socio-economic conditions, vocational trends, landscape features, spatial configurations and historical events cue the recall, representation, rehearsal and development of tropes for a community. Linkages between landscape and memory are common in the making of tropes. That is why street life looms large for District Sixers, forests and gardens for Protea villagers, wide-open spaces for Goodwood Acres people and charming cottages for Newlanders. As Simon Schama reveals in his study of ethnic and national memories, landscapes act as a repository for the myths and memories that a community tells of itself: 'For although we are accustomed to separate nature and human perception into two realms, they are, in fact, indivisible. Before it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock'.<sup>65</sup> Thus tropes develop from landscape features and other cultural perceptions which offer communities the necessary narrative resources for promoting a unique sense of identity within a context of overwhelming sand-brick-concrete and matchbox house sameness in the townships.

Lastly, anecdotes are personal stories that are unique to a speaker, carving out an autonomous space of experience and action within the commemoration narrative framework. It is a narrative device that often speaks to a host of themes, sometimes utilising specific tropes, but ultimately constituting an assertion of individuality. Anecdotes may use thematic topics or communally defined tropes, but they show the speaker also to be an autonomous subject with personal experiences, emotions and aspirations. They provide personalised proof that the past was better than the present, or that gangsters really were gentlemen, or that money really

did go a long way. Thus anecdotes fit into a larger frame of signification, just as individuals fit into larger frames of identification.

It needs to be stressed that the commemoration narrative is not the basis of collective memory. It is a set of guidelines established by removees to help them recount their lives in a culturally appropriate manner in the wake of mass social trauma. The actual memories of any removee life history are singular, the product of that person's own experience, but the way in which those experiences find expression are structured by collectively held narrative conventions. The shared guidelines are what give coloured removee life histories their striking similarity. They are products of the same discursive constraints.

This is not to say that coloured removees never go outside the confines of the commemoration narrative, but when they do, they usually qualify the meaning of their assertions. For instance, some women who were newlywed when forcibly removed say they were happy to get a house of their own and start a family outside of their parents' home. However, lest they appear to be endorsing Group Areas, they quickly say that they wish they could have gotten a house in their old communities, not in the townships.<sup>66</sup> Also, those who were forcibly removed while they were still young do not have a sufficient fund of personal recollections to tap into to give flesh to the commemoration narrative, so they tend to rely on their parents' memories and moral evaluations. Also, the loss is not felt as keenly since they were too young to appreciate the magnitude of what was happening to their families and communities.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, through a shared plot structure and a common endowment of themes, removees identify with each other collectively as removees. Through shared tropes, removees identify themselves as members of particular communities, and through anecdotes, they identify themselves as individuals who have a degree of personal autonomy. Together these devices allow removees to claim collective, communal and individual identities, often tacitly. Identity claims are usually structured into their stories, implicit in how they recall their memories.

## Conclusion

The social engineering effected through Group Areas evictions had a fundamental impact on coloured identity. First, population registration grouped those classified coloured into a legally binding racial category which set in motion a host of institutional effects that severely restricted their social and sexual interactions, political and communicative



opportunities, and professional and material aspirations. Group Areas substantiated this commonality in a most elemental way, limiting residential mobility to within areas legally prescribed as ‘coloured’. It is these institutionally produced effects – not so much the administrative process of classification – that radically reshaped coloured people’s experience in the last half-century, giving concrete social, spatial and political expression to the coloured racial category. Group Areas united coloured people as a group in a fashion unprecedented in South African history. The legacy of the Group Areas Act continues to shape coloured self-perception as well as others’ perceptions of them.

Secondly, Group Areas residential restrictions allowed coloureds to achieve a level of intra-group interaction unprecedented in their history. Though meaningful inter-group relations between coloured people in newly created townships were anything but assured at the time of dispossession, coming as they did from such varied backgrounds, removee life histories today confirm that substantive social networks have been formed within the racial boundaries legislated under apartheid. The shared conventions of the commemoration narrative by coloured removees tell us much about the nature of these connections. Not quite an imagined community – in which people explicitly identify with a common narrative promoted by elites through mass media<sup>68</sup> – coloured removees form a narrative community in which they implicitly identify with each other through an orally shared narrative structure. The commemoration narrative was constructed and circulated through personal contact, involving tens of thousands of people whose lives became connected through interlocking social networks in a socially and spatially defined area. Though the numbers of each individual’s social network were certainly small, these articulated with others, proliferating until they had reached the social limits imposed by Group Areas. Representing the outlook of an oppressed, marginalised community and being in opposition to the interests of the state, this commemorative project was achieved almost exclusively through face-to-face contact. It never enjoyed media support until apartheid was in decline. It was through day-to-day interactions that the narrative gained social purchase.

Furthermore, during the latter part of the apartheid era, many people rejected coloured identity, insisting that it was an artificial racial identification imposed by the government to divide and rule black people. They often signalled their rejection by referring to themselves as ‘so-called coloured’. Others, influenced by the Black Consciousness Movement,

called themselves 'black', identifying with Africans and Indians who were also oppressed. But the effort remained largely intellectual, a mental stance, for it was difficult to create meaningful relationships beyond racially circumscribed areas. Identification with blackness, or rejection of colouredness, was difficult to sustain in reality because people were spatially and socially disconnected. The majority of coloured people's social networks remained almost completely coloured in character, a point easily missed if the focus is exclusively on overt statements of identification.

Thirdly, the sense of groupness or boundedness felt by coloured people was intensified by Group Areas. Before apartheid, many coloured people had long lived in relatively integrated environments or had belonged to communities that had their own norms, histories and understandings of identity that went beyond race categorisation. Some were absorbed into white society through their appearance, associations, standard of living or nuptials, just as whites and Africans were accepted into coloured circles through the same means. Indeed, coloureds married outside of their putative race group more frequently than any other South African grouping.<sup>69</sup> Though coloured identity was well established socially and institutionally before forced removals, its boundaries were porous. Racial classification and Group Areas segregation together with other apartheid legislation such as the Immorality, Mixed Marriages and Separate Amenities Acts together with the coloured Labour Preference Policy hardened those boundaries as never before. But the response of coloureds, especially forced removees, to state-enforced racialisation gave positive content to their otherwise restricted social world. The trauma of removals compelled victims to seek one another out for sharing, empathy and solace. Their effective social horizon – coloured people in coloured areas – became an affective resource for removees adapting to township life. Through everyday sharing, their intention was not to create a sense of coloured awareness or removee consciousness, but their circumstances enjoined them to constitute their situation affirmatively. The government might have controlled the limits of their social world but it could not determine the content that they would give to it.

The combination of the commonality imposed by Group Areas, the connectivity that was achieved through sharing stories in the wake of mass social trauma, and the reinforcement of a sense of groupness through positive narrative circulation has promoted a sense of coloured self-understanding that goes beyond mere instrumentality. Self-understanding





refers to the disposition of having a 'sense of who one is, of one's social location, and of how ... one is prepared to act'.<sup>70</sup> In the post-apartheid era, coloured people have greater freedom to identify without reference to racial categories. But, by and large, they have nevertheless continued to embrace a variant of the identity reminiscent of apartheid-era values, and continue to invest in the social networks they created in the wake of evictions. Part of the reason for this is that they have been able to build rich social lives within those boundaries, creating positive associations through narrative sharing. The depth of understanding that removees have been able to develop through the collective creation of a shared narrative speaks to the sense of intimacy and distinctiveness they feel as coloured people. They have spread the commemoration narrative beyond the confines of the townships to the extent that it has become one of the dominant stories of Cape Town itself.

Although Group Areas removals did much to reconstitute the coloured group as the government intended, the trauma of evictions has set removees apart in important ways. It distinguishes them from their non-removee neighbours in terms of the socialising experiences they created in the wake of their tragedy. They needed, and built, networks of trust, comfort and solace with other removees who faced an uncertain future. This illustrates that race-making projects, like Group Areas social engineering, do more than just unite people under a racial banner. Their trauma can also set them apart and help reconfigure their social identities. While Group Areas social engineering certainly contributed greatly to the reification of coloured identity, it also foisted onto its victims a unique historical and emotional burden which reshaped their understanding of themselves as coloured people. This was partly inspired by narrative strategies they created for coping with their predicament. Their commemorative stories give rich testimony to the ways in which removees have come to understand themselves within and beyond state-sponsored racial categories.

## Endnotes

- 1 I use the term 'coloured' here as an analytical category, not a normative one.
- 2 Recent books on Cape slavery allude to this historical amnesia in their prefaces. See Loos J. 2004. *Echoes of Slavery: Voices from South Africa's Past*. Cape Town: David Philip; Mountain A. 2004. *An Unsung Heritage: Perspectives on Slavery*. Cape Town: David Philip; Van der Ross R. 2005. *Up From Slavery: Slaves at the Cape, Their Origins, Treatment and Contribution*. Cape Town: Ampersand Press. A historical thesis for how slavery was 'forgotten' by slave descendants is provided by Ward K

- & Worden N. 1998. 'Commemorating, suppressing, and invoking Cape slavery', in *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, eds S Nuttall & C Coetzee. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 201–220. Another commentator claims that coloureds suffer from 'psychological enslavement': Willams B. 1996. 'The power of propaganda', in *Now that We Are Free: Coloured Communities in a Democratic South Africa*, eds W James, D Caliguire & K Cullinan. Cape Town: IDASA, 22.
- 3 Research was conducted during 2000 and 2001 and in 2004 in Cape Town. I lived in Bonteheuwel, a former coloured township and dumping ground for forced removees. I interviewed 100 coloured and African forced removees, and also interviewed non-removees as a control group. Moreover, I compared the life histories I obtained with those collected by other scholars.
  - 4 Key texts on the state categorisation of coloureds include Du Pre R. 1994. *Separate but Unequal: The 'Coloured' People of South Africa – A Political History*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball; February V. 1981. *Mind Your Colour: The 'Coloured' Stereotype in South African Literature*. London: Kegan Paul; Goldin I. 1987. *Making Race: The Politics and Economics of Coloured Identity in South Africa*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman; and Lewis G. 1987. *Between the Wire and the Wall: A History of South African 'Coloured' Politics*. Cape Town: David Philip. For coloured self-identification, see Goldin & Lewis, but especially Adhikari M. 2005. *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial Identity in the South African Coloured Community*. Athens: Ohio University Press; and Pickel B. 1997. *Coloured Ethnicity and Identity: A Case Study in the Former Coloured Areas in the Western Cape/South Africa*. Hamburg: Lit Verlag.
  - 5 This alternative analytical idiom comes from Brubaker R & Cooper F. 2000. 'Beyond "identity"'. *Theory and Society*, 29, 1–47.
  - 6 For discussion of the settler–native binary in African and South African governance, see Mamdani M. 1996. 'Beyond settler and native as political identities: overcoming the political legacy of colonialism'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 43, 4; and *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
  - 7 Goldin, *Making Race*, 83. See also Norval A. 1996. *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse*. New York: Verso.
  - 8 Western J. 1996. *Outcast Cape Town*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 121–134; Mesthrie U. 1999. 'Dispossession in Black River, Rondebosch: the unfolding of the Group Areas Act in Cape Town'. Unpublished manuscript, African Studies Collection, University of Cape Town.
  - 9 Scott P. 1955. 'Cape Town: a multiracial city'. *The Geographical Journal*, 121, no. 2, 149–157; Christopher A. 1992. 'Segregation levels in South African cities, 1911–1985'. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 25, no. 3, 561–582; and Christopher A. 1994. *The Atlas of Apartheid*. New York: Routledge.
  - 10 Bickford-Smith V. 1995. *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town: Group Identity and Social Practice, 1875–1902*. New York: Cambridge University Press; and Bickford-Smith V. 1990. 'The origins and early history of District Six to 1910', in *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present*, eds S Jeppie & C Soudien. Cape Town: Buchu Books, 35–43.



- 11 For the Sea Point suicide, see Melvin Mitchell, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 12 December 2000; for the Rondebosch one, see Virginia Elissac, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 19 May 2001.
- 12 Leonard Levendal, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 16 January 2001. For a semi-fictional treatment of eviction leading to death in Claremont, see Schonstein Pinnock P. 1993. *Ouma's Autumn*. Grahamstown: African Sun Press.
- 13 Norma Solomons, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 30 August 2000.
- 14 Cecil McLean, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 11 December 2000.
- 15 There are many studies on removals in Cape Town. On Sea Point removals, see Mesthrie U. 1994. 'The Tramway Road removals, 1959–61' *Kronos*, 214, 61–78; Paulse M. 2001. "Everyone had their differences but there was always comradeship": Tramway Road, Sea Point, 1920s to 1961', in *Lost Communities, Living Memories: Remembering Forced Removals in Cape Town*, ed S Field. Cape Town: David Philip, 44–61; Paulse M. 2002. 'An oral history of Tramway Road and Ilford Street, Sea Point, 1930s–2001: the production of place by race, class and gender'. PhD dissertation, University of Cape Town. Concerning Mowbray, see Western, *Outcast Cape Town*. On Rondebosch, see Mesthrie, 'Dispossession in Black River'. On Protea Village, Kirstenbosch, see Bantom R. 1995. 'A study in the history of Protea Village and the impact of the Group Areas Act'. BA (Hons) thesis, University of the Western Cape. On Claremont, see Anon. 1983. *United Womens' Organisation, Claremont: A Peoples' History*. Athlone: United Womens' Organisation; and Taliep W. 1992. 'A study in the history of Claremont and the impact of the Group Areas Act c. 1950–1970'. BA (Hons) thesis, University of Cape Town. On Simon's Town, see Boge F. 1998. 'Back to the places of the future?: the transformation of places and local identities in the "new" South Africa: a case study of the land restitution process in Simon's Town'. MA thesis, Free University of Berlin. Sean Field (1996) provides a fascinating study of the Windermere community, in 'The power of exclusion: moving memories from Windermere to the Cape Flats 1920s–1990s'. PhD dissertation, University of Essex.
- 16 Western, *Outcast Cape Town*, 85.
- 17 Cape Archives (hereafter CA), Group Areas Board (hereafter GAB), Goodwood K20/1/2 – doc. 82/312/5, 2.
- 18 For a good example of this sort of justification see the quotation attributed to Joyce Waring, wife of National Party member of parliament, in *Cape Times*, 24 February 1966.
- 19 Scott J. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 17–44.
- 20 Scott, *Domination*, 111.
- 21 Scott, *Domination*, 111.
- 22 *Cape Argus*, 11 May 1962.
- 23 *Cape Argus*, 25 June 1965.
- 24 *Cape Times*, 22 May 1981.
- 25 *Cape Times*, 11 February 1981.
- 26 CA, GAB, PAA, Proclamation of Group Areas: District Six, Cape Town, ref K20/1/7, 23 November 1964, 11–14.
- 27 *Cape Argus*, 3 March 1984.
- 28 CA, PAA, (AK), ref K20/1/15, Group Areas Board meeting on Fraserdale and Black River, 13.

- 29 CA, G PAA (AK), ref K20/1/15, Group Areas Board meeting on Fraserdale and Black River, 14.
- 30 See, for instance, letters sent in to the Group Areas Board concerning Claremont. CA, PAA (AK); 18b H6, ref K20/1/8, 1–20.
- 31 *Cape Argus Weekend Magazine*, 5 June 1971.
- 32 *Cape Times*, 29 March 1979.
- 33 These comments pervade my interviews, as well as an apartheid-era study by Maralack D & Kriel A. 1984. ‘“A streetless wasteland”: a preliminary report on Ocean View’. *Carnegie Conference Paper*, no. 10d. Cape Town: Carnegie. See also Zulfa Wagner, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 16 October 2000; Hester Wessels, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 18 January 2001; Leonard Lopes, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 7 December 2000.
- 34 I get this term from Yael Zerubavel’s analysis of the Tel Hai legend, in Zerubavel Y. 1994. ‘The historic, the legendary, and the incredible: invented traditional and collective memory in Israel’, in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed J R Gillis. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 105–123.
- 35 Katie Pfeiffer, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 6 December 2000. See also Ragmat Mallick, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 18 October 2000; Katherine Fischer, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 29 January 2001.
- 36 This can be likened to what Bakhtin calls the ‘epic past’. He says that ‘the epic past is called the “absolute past” for good reason: it is both monochromic and valorised (hierarchical); it lacks any relativity, that is, any gradual, purely temporal progressions that might connect it with the present. It is walled off absolutely from all subsequent time, and above all from those times in which the [speaker] and his listeners are located.’ Bakhtin M M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 15–16.
- 37 The Western Cape Oral History Project, now the Centre for Popular Memory at the University of Cape Town, has removed life histories dating back to 1984. Comparison between these older life histories and more contemporary ones show the development of new themes after 1994 such as unemployment, service delivery and corruption.
- 38 For a discussion on this metaphor of memory resembling a foreign country, see Lowenthal D. 1984. *The Past Is a Foreign Country*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- 39 Zulfa Wagner, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 16 October 2000. See also Michael Fischer, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 29 January 2001; Ragmat Mallick, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 18 October 2000.
- 40 Virginia Elissac, interviewed 19 May 2001.
- 41 Elizabeth Williams, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 22 January 2001.
- 42 Recent ethnographic work bears this out. See, for instance, Jensen S. 2006. ‘Capetonian back streets: territorializing young men’. *Ethnography*, 7, no. 3, 275–301; and Salo E. 2007. ‘“Mans is ma soe”: ganging practices in Manenberg, South Africa, and the ideologies of masculinity, gender, and generational relations’, in *States of Violence: Politics, Youth, and Memory in Contemporary Africa*, eds E Bay & D Donham. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 148–178.
- 43 Ruth Petersen, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 12 January 2001. See also Ronald and Rachel Lambert, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 16 December 2000.



- 44 Sarah September, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 5 January 2001. See also Daphne Bloom, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 8 January 2001.
- 45 Sarah September, interviewed, 5 January 2001. See also Hester Wessels, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 18 January 2001; Arthur Morta, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 29 January 2001.
- 46 For the classic study on how forced removals contributed to the growth of Cape Flatsgangs, see Pinnock D. 1984. *The Brotherhoods: Street Gangs and State Control in Cape Town*. Cape Town: David Philip. For his study on Group Areas and protest, see Pinnock D. 1981. *Elsies River*. Cape Town: Institute of Criminology, University of Cape Town. His later book on remedying this problem also reveals how Group Areas destroyed the fabric of family and community. See Pinnock D. 1997. *Gangs, Rituals & Rites of Passage*. Cape Town: Africa Sun Press. Many photo books attempt to describe visually and textually just the kind of community values that abided before removals. See Manuel G & Hatfield D. 1967. *District Six*. Cape Town: Longman; Schoeman C. 1994. *District Six: The Spirit of Kanala*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau; Greshoff J. 1996. *The Last Days of District Six*. Cape Town: District Six Museum; and Breytenbach C. 1997. *The Spirit of District Six*. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau.
- 47 Mymoena Emjedi, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 31 October 2000.
- 48 Sarah September, interviewed 5 January 2001.
- 49 Sarah September, interviewed 5 January 2001. See also Susanna Williams, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 18 January 2001; Julia Yon, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 16 January 2001; Kathleen Samuels, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 29 September 2000.
- 50 For an outstanding analysis of the coloured carnival season at New Year, see Martin D. 1999. *Coon Carnival: New Year in Cape Town, Past and Present*. Cape Town: David Philip.
- 51 Virginia Elissac, interviewed 19 May 2001. For more information on peri-urban amusements, see John Valentine, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 25 October 2000; Brian Sassman, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 23 January 2001.
- 52 Mymoena Emjedi, interviewed 31 October 2000.
- 53 For an insightful treatment of how people have relationships with home and mourn those losses if removed, see Porteous J & Smith S. 2001. *Domicide: The Global Destruction of Home*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. It offers numerous examples of testimony and literature on the importance of home for a healthy and happy life.
- 54 Boym S. 2001. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, xiii.
- 55 Schwartz B. 1982. 'The social context of commemoration: a study in collective memory'. *Social Forces*, 61, no. 2, 377.
- 56 Erikson K. 1995. 'Notes on trauma and community', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed C Caruth. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 183–199; Fivush R, Haden C & Reese E. 1996. 'Remembering, recounting, and reminiscing: the development of autobiographical memory in social context', in *Remembering Our Past: Studies in Autobiographical Memory*, ed D Rubin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Harvey J. 1996. *Embracing Their Memory: Loss and the Social Psychology of Storytelling*. Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon; Herman J. 1997. *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books; Linde C. 1993. *Life Stories: The*

- Creation of Coherence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; McAdams D. 1993. *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*. New York: Guilford Press; Pennebaker J. 1997. 'Writing about emotional experiences as a therapeutic process'. *Psychological Science*, 8, no. 3, 162–165.
- 57 Scott J. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- 58 Rive R. 1986. *Buckingham Palace: District Six*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- 59 The relevant documentation is located at the Land Claims Commission (Western Cape), Matrix House, Cape Town.
- 60 Jackson S. 2005. 'Coloureds don't toyi-toyi: gesture, constraint and identity in Cape Town', in *Limits to Liberation after Apartheid: Citizenship, Governance and Culture*, ed S Robins. Cape Town: David Philip, 209.
- 61 On coloured identity and annual rituals, see Martin, *Coon Carnival*; Baxter L. 2001. 'Continuity and change in Cape Town's Coon Carnival: the 1960s and 1970s'. *African Studies*, 60, no. 1, 87–105. On linguistic practice, especially code-switching, see McCormick K. 1990. 'The vernacular of District Six', in Jeppie & Soudien, *Struggle for District Six*. On emotions like shame, longing, intolerance, denial and desire for assimilation to the dominant culture, see Adhikari, *Not White Enough*; Gibson J & Gouws A. 2000. 'Social identities and political intolerance: linkages within the South African mass public'. *Journal of Political Science*, 44, no. 2, 278–292. On hair and pigment politics, see Erasmus Z. 2000. 'Hair politics', in *Senses of Culture*, eds S Nuttall & C Michael. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 380–392. On consumer behaviour, see Burgess S. 2002. *SA Tribes: Who We Are, How We Live, What We Want From Life*. Cape Town: David Philip. On humour, see Adhikari M. 2006. "'God made the white man, God made the black man...": popular racial stereotyping of coloured people in apartheid South Africa'. *South African Historical Journal*, 55, 142–164.
- 62 Somers M. 1994. 'The narrative constitution of identity: a relational and network approach'. *Theory and Society*, 23, no. 5, 606.
- 63 Somers, 'Narrative constitution of identity', 606.
- 64 Scheub H. 1998. *Story*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 126.
- 65 Schama S. 1995. *Landscape and Memory*. New York: Vintage, 6–7.
- 66 Ruth Peterson, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 12 January 2001; Mary Wyngaard, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 11 January 2001; Ronald and Rachel Lambert, interviewed by Henry Trotter, 16 December 2000.
- 67 For greater detail on how gender, class and age inflect coloured removee memory, see Trotter, H. 2002. 'Contoured memory: gender, class and generation', in 'Removals and remembrance: commemorating community in coloured Cape Town'. MA thesis, Yale University, 195–219.
- 68 Anderson B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, especially 44.
- 69 Sofer C. 1949. 'Some aspects of inter-racial marriages in South Africa, 1925–46'. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 19, no. 3, 187–203.
- 70 Brubaker & Cooper, 'Beyond "identity"', 17.