

these facts. They come to believe that they are doctors because they are cleverer than other people; in other words they think that their privilege comes from their own brains and hard work, whereas in fact it comes from the advantage of their class position.

It must also be said, that when doctors work in places like Baragwanath Hospital or at the Alexandra Clinic, it is often another form of exploitation. It is regarded as part of their training; after which they go into private practice, and neglect the real problems of health work, which are mostly to be found in rural areas, or urban location.

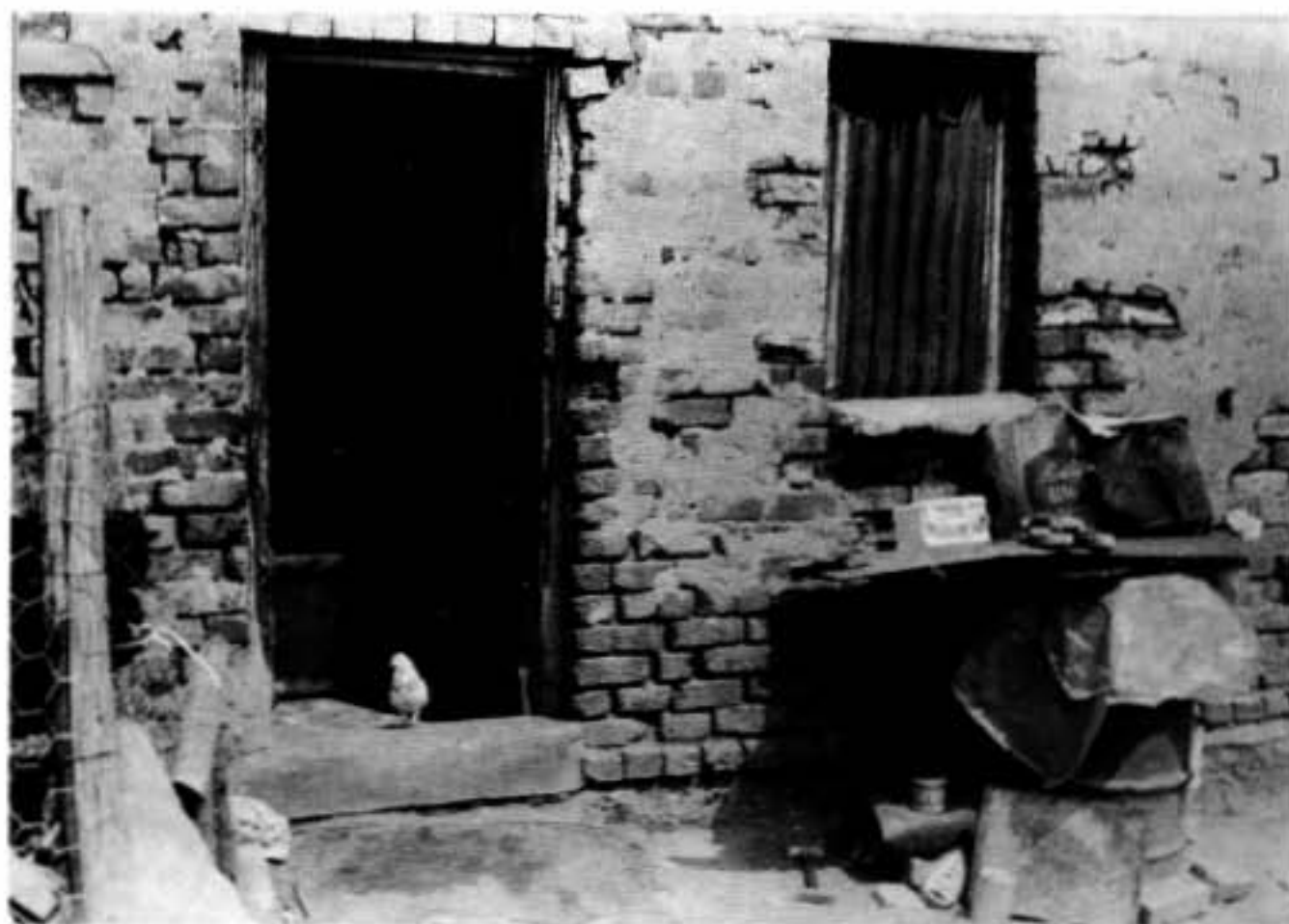
## What the doctor did not know

In his 1940 report, Dr Xuma remarks,

*"One finds it difficult to understand the tendencies of public authorities who spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on subsidising housing schemes and free clinics for the poor, but do not seem to be making any attempt at removing the root cause of these peoples' misery, namely poverty."*

He would have understood better if he had realised that poverty is actually a product of the capitalist system. It is not an accident. The 'public authorities' have simply no reason to abolish poverty, since it is a necessary part of the system that they have created.

Wits medical students, and Alexandra patients are on two sides of the class division in South African capitalism. Doctors will only be motivated to serve the people when they come from the working class, and are subject to the social values of that class. That is a more important thing to understand, than the mere technicalities of curing this or that disease.



# Nomads of Apartheid

By the early 1950's my mother started working as a domestic servant in Pretoria. She lived with her aunt, brother and sister in Eersterus. She was the only member of the family who was working – her brother and sister were still at school and her aunt was unemployed – she sold liquor and vegetables. As a domestic worker my mother earned six pounds per month, and this money was not enough to pay rent, transport, schoolfunds and books, so selling of liquor and vegetables helped them to maintain the family. Later in the mid fifties they were evicted and my mother came to Johannesburg while her brother, sister and aunt went to Pelindaba.

## She went to J.H.B

In Johannesburg she found employment at an old age home, but left the job for domestic work which was paying better. Her new employers provided accommodation. She lost this job and the accommodation when her employers went to live overseas. She went to Alex and lived with a relative in 7th Avenue. Shortly afterwards, she found a job at a certain factory in Johannesburg, and here she worked for a long time earning R24,00 per month. Late in 1957 she and her future husband found a room in 4th Avenue, by this time their first child was born and she had to leave the job.

Shortly afterwards, her husband lost his job, so she had to return to work as soon as possible. She found a new job with the same employers as before, but this time doing domestic work.

## Slave wage

From the R24 which she was earning she had to pay rent, buy food, pay transport, buy clothing for the baby and pay a nanny to look after it for about R1,00 per month, buy milk, napkins and so on. Early in the sixties her wage was increased to R30,00 per month. By this time they had two children: a boy and a girl born in 1960. Now she had to support a family of four from the R30,00.

They had to live on cheap food, like Mala, mogodu, maotwana and mealie-meal.

When her husband was banned later in 1963 their last born child was in Roodepoort Hospital where he spent two years. All this cost a lot for a woman who was underpaid. When her son was discharged from the hospital she had to get someone to look after him, and my brother was about to go to school. The R30 was not sufficient so she joined a mogodisana for buying and sharing groceries. This helped her a lot because she could save more than if she was going to the shop

individually. Mogodisana was not enough for she had to work at an extra job to cope with the ever rising cost of living. On Saturdays and Sundays she was doing washing in the suburbs. Life was becoming more difficult for she had to pay installments, which were so high that she had to borrow money from friends. She could not afford to give her son pocket money for school, this led him to start begging in the stadiums and shopping centres. From begging he became a caddy; being a caddy was tough and cruel, because they were robbed by the bigger caddies, and even beaten up by both far bigger caddies and golfers. Begging was his favourite because there were no older boys who could take his money, but there were police who always arrested them, to wash their cars, and they were beaten up by rude unsympathetic whites – but this was not as frequent as on the golf course.

## Kept him out at night

Begging and caddying were the means of getting money for bioscope, stadium, and mostly for pocket money at school. The eldest was helping his mother who was not able to give them pocket money for school, to go to bioscope and anywhere they wanted. Later in 1967/8 we were evicted from 4th Avenue for the erection of a hostel. My mother found a room in 3rd Avenue. We did not stay long in 3rd for this place was also demolished.

## Scattered family

All these years Peri-Urban was harassing people. My parents were among the victims and they were fined on many occasions for living in Alex without a permit. In 1972 when the yard in 3rd Avenue was demolished the family was scattered. My mother went to live in Hillbrow in a flat where her employers lodged, and the three of us went to Marapyane and Seholo. In the bundus we were not living together – my brother went to Seholo and my sister and I to Marapyane. We lived with our grandmother and our elder brother with our mother's uncle. Our mother had to pay:

School building. . . . . R20,00;  
Post Office. . . . . R 1,50;  
Regional Office. . . . .R10,00

before we could be admitted at schools. She had to buy groceries for two families, schoolfunds, books, uniforms for two different schools and transport. Transport was scarce and most people used trucks and some privately owned buses. The fare for this kind of transport was very high, especially the individual truck owners. A single trip from Johannesburg to Marapyane was R5,00 without your luggage which was charged separately (a box weighing 30 – 35 kilos was charged R2,00). She had to cut her trips to visit us because of the expense. She only sent the groceries. She could not cope with such expense, and in 1977 we went to live in Hammanskraal with her aunt. By this time my mother was earning R80 per month and she had to pay: R20 for food every month; R9,00 for school funds; R40,00 for books which we bought at school; R30,00 for uniforms; R4,00 for transport.

## A two-roomed

Late in 1977 we found a two roomed house in the township Temba. By this time my brother was working in Johannesburg at a factory earning about R24 per week. Both their wages could not afford to support a scattered family. My mother was now living in a hostel because her employers had bought a new house and there were no rooms for workers. Our brother was staying with a friend.

## Triple rent

My mother paid R5,00 for rent, our brother R4 and ourselves in Hammanskraal R5,60. She had to buy food, pay school fees, transport, clothing, rent and etc, for three places. In 1979 I came to live with my mother in Alex at my grandmother's place in 2nd Avenue. She had to pay R7,25 for rent in Hammanskraal; R4,00 for my brother's rent; R6,70 for her hostel room; R20,00 for school funds for Hamanskraal and R15 for school fees for Alex.

## Back to Alex

She applied for a permit in early 1979 and she got it later in December the same year. She found a house in 4th Avenue. This house like other houses in Alex is bad, at any time bricks are falling out of the wall. Later in 1982 her wage was increased to R100 per month.

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## LETTERS

Izwi,

Have you noticed that on two sides of Alex factories are being built. A few months ago that ground was empty – it has been empty since I can remember, though Alex was crowded and needed more room. Well then why could not the township be made bigger by taking that land – why must it be factories?

Another thing is, they are built so quickly. What causes this, when it seems such a difficult thing to build small little houses for people, but factories go up overnight?

I am not against factories. People need jobs so factories are welcome. But they can be anywhere, why on our doorstep, where we need the land for our own township space.

G.N.