

Notes on the Life of Ernest Cole

1940 – 1990

This book and exhibition are an attempt to construct a clear picture of Ernest Cole, a complex man whose work is little known, especially in his own country, but who deserves recognition as a major voice in the struggle against apartheid and as an original photographic artist. He was a determined, intelligent and skilful photographer with a special capacity for observation and an exceptional eye for capturing artistic, aesthetic and meaningful images even in the harshest and most threatening of situations. The main focus of Cole's photography was his commitment to humanity. From the late 1950s until 1966 he portrayed the everyday lives of black South Africans with warmth and empathy. As one of the most socially aware photographers of his time he left an insightful and comprehensive document of his people and their struggle.

Many of the critical social documentary projects we know from the history of photography are characterized by the perspective of an outsider, looking obliquely in, or by somebody from a higher social class, looking down. This is the case in the early picture stories that became emblematic for photography as a weapon for creating change in society - from Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine, who both documented child labour during the first half of the 20th century - through the Farm Security Administration project in the USA during the 1930s, to contemporary documentation of the poor and those in underdeveloped countries. These photographers, temporarily visiting an environment, bring home material from an unknown reality, a reality that often shocks but also stimulates the curiosity of the viewer.

Ernest Cole is an exception to this perspective. He documented the people in his native South Africa from the inside – he represents himself and his own world and ideas, he is neither represented by nor spoken for by someone else. It might be fair to assume that his inside knowledge about the motifs, his lived experience and his ability to visualize make the difference between

Cole's photographs and those of many other critical documentary photographers. Even if his pictures are connected to an aesthetic that is related to that of well-known picture magazines of the time as well as that of Henri Cartier-Bresson, to which he himself referred, there is still something typically Cole about them. This is even more obvious if his pictures are compared to those of other documentary photographers, which often look staged and distant, or spectacular. When compared with contemporary South African photographers, Cole's pictures stand out due to their aesthetic, deliberate form, remarkable rigour, subtlety and elegance.

Cole must have been clever, courageous and willing to make almost any sacrifice for his work, to show the world what was happening in South Africa. He had to pay with half his life spent in exile, uprooted from his family and home, homesick without a possibility of return. Could this displacement in a world he didn't recognize, his restlessness and rootlessness, and a failure to remake his life in another country, be the reason for his trauma in exile? Many people have spoken about his assumed bipolarity, his mental illness in his final years. This is a story of hardship and suffering borne out of self-imposed isolation which resonates with the suffering and ultimate triumph of the people he left behind.

GROWING UP, 1940–1960

'Everyone remembers the way it was – though differently'

Christer Strömholm

Ernest Cole was born Ernest Levi Tsoloane Kole, on 21 March 1940, in the black township of Eersterust on the outskirts of Pretoria. According to his older sister, Catherine Hlatshwayo, and his younger brother, Sam Kole, he was a curious, and choosy child who, even then, was very much a loner.¹ He

was also noticeably intelligent and became interested in photography at an early age, first using a camera as a teenager. The musician Julian Bahula, a childhood friend of Cole's, remembers this time:

"He grew up loving photography. He had a box camera but I do not know who bought it for him. During weekends and school holidays he was always taking photographs around the township. He used to charge people about ten pence for a photo. At that time, he was not yet a professional photographer, so after he had exposed the film he would take it to a chemist in the city to be developed."²

People who knew Cole from Eersterust say that he was a sensitive and loyal person. They also say that people were kind to each other there, they were like a family although they were not blood relatives, and people looked after each other. Cole is remembered as taking pictures all the time, as if his fingers always wanted to click the shutter.³ When Cole started high school at the Kilnerton Training Institute in the 1950s he got to know Geoff Mphakati. Their friendship lasted throughout their lives, and when Cole died in 1990 Mphakati managed Ernest Cole's estate.⁴

In 1960, the Cole family were moved to Mamelodi when the apartheid authorities demolished Eersterust. Ernest became acquainted with a Catholic priest, Father Webber, who became an important figure in his life and introduced him to a lifelong relationship with religion.⁵ Catherine said in a film interview that Father Webber gave Ernest a camera and it was then that he began to realise the potential for using photography to document his own reality.⁶ In Mamelodi he also got to know Moses Mogale and his family through Geoff Mphakati. Moses Mogale played the guitar and Mphakati and Cole were both impressed by his music and they loved jazz. Cole and Mphakati realized that the Mogale parents were struggling to keep the six boys and two girls in school, and struggling even more to buy Moses a guitar. Moses remembers: "They looked after my family, buying me clothes, taking me to school. Ernest organized a scholarship through the Roman Catholics for me to complete my standard ten, that is to matriculate, at technical high

school. Sometime, during the course of the year, he would organize some blankets for the family. You know, winter time is cold.”⁷

Both in South Africa and after he had left, Cole tried to help the Mogale family. Whenever he sent money to his mother he also sent a portion to the Mogale family.⁸ When Moses Mogale describes what Cole and Mphakati meant to him, he says: “I am what I am because of them... Ernest used to take me from my place to his house and play music for me. He bought me the first record of Wes Montgomery, *Full House*. I started learning about Leslie Spen from him. I still have records they bought for me. I am still a musician, I play guitar. And I am also an electronics technician thanks to them.”⁹

Moses Mogale’s younger brother, Dan Mogale, also remembers Cole well: “Ernest went around with my mom, taking pictures when she was selling scones. He would actually make sure he was up at the time when my mom started to make the scones. He would focus on her, as he wanted to document how she struggled to supplement a living for a poor family.”

Dan Mogale recalls that Cole sometimes took him along in his yellow Volkswagen. Once Cole was taking photographs of the police, “photographs that really got him into trouble, that led him to leave the country. It was, however, not the ones he was documenting who were harassing him – it was the Special Branch.”

In retrospect, Dan Mogale realized that he learnt a lot about documentary photography and the importance of waiting for “the right mood – to convey something, to get a picture that could talk, that could say something, something about the conditions of living, or political statements... Ernest was politically conscious. He was not a person who would verbalize, but he would definitely ask questions about political issues. He was very disciplined. He wanted justice, he wanted the right things to prevail, the right environment, and equality. He would speak about unfairness, about blacks and about development. He would speak about educational matters, why poor people

have to pay for education when they don't have the money, and white children do not have to pay for education up to matric. He would try not to tell you what to think, he would facilitate a discussion rather than impose.”¹⁰

In the Kole family house in Mamelodi, they still keep some of Cole's early prints of the family and friends, and from the church. There is also the folder from the correspondence course Cole took with the New York Institute of Photography, and some of his assignments. His first darkroom is still there. Cole's younger brother, Sam Kole, his nephew Theo Kole, and his niece Yolanda Kole and her three children now live in the house.¹¹

PROFESSIONAL LIFE, 1958–1966

After leaving school in 1956 Ernest Cole was first apprenticed to a Chinese photographer and worked at the magazine *Zonk*, but the real start of his career was when he arrived at the black monthly magazine *Drum*. Jürgen Schadeberg, Head of Photography at *Drum Magazine*,¹² explained:

“In 1958 a pint-sized 18-year-old, Ernest Kole, appeared in the *Drum* office looking for work. He was a shy but determined young man who had been studying photography for some time and had a number of the latest 35mm cameras over his shoulder. Ernest worked for us as a freelancer for a while and then, since he felt that he needed and wanted to learn more about picture layouts, became my Assistant Picture Editor and Designer of the magazine pages. Ernest went on to freelance for several papers and to produce his own work.”¹³

Schadeberg was impressed by Cole's attitude and enthusiasm and his ambition to show how the blacks were treated under apartheid. He also claimed that Cole's eye was at least as alert, observant and aesthetic as those of the other photographers', perhaps even better. Schadeberg recalls how he allowed Cole [still called Kole at the time]¹⁴ to use the darkroom,

gave him film to use and encouraged him to go out and shoot during the weekends.¹⁵ The British photographer, Ian Berry, who worked at *Drum* during this time for a period of eighteen months, remembered Cole as Assistant Picture Editor, taking photographs during his free time and using the darkroom at *Drum* to produce his pictures. He also said of Cole that he was very courageous, but he was also difficult, a small thin guy who took tremendous risks.¹⁶ According to Alf Kumalo, another photographer who occasionally worked for *Drum*, Cole was not a very skilled photographer when he arrived, but he was eager to learn. Kumalo also said that the darkroom assistant, Philip Sithole from Pretoria, helped Cole a great deal, and that Cole knew that he wanted to become a great photographer. Kumalo continued, "His *real* surname is spelled with a 'K' – it's Kole, not Cole – he changed it."¹⁷ Actually, that's what got him in trouble, changing his surname. The police, the Special Branch, moved in on him and reminded him that his real surname was Kole, why is it 'Cole' now? So they threatened him, then they wanted him to spy, to work for them, and he was not interested in that. It's one of the reasons he left."¹⁸

Cole developed his photographic skills enormously during this time owing both to the people he met and worked with at *Drum*, not least Jürgen Schadeberg as his tutor, and the correspondence course with New York Institute of Photography, which he had just begun. It was also during this time, with a two-and-a-half-hour commute from his home to Johannesburg, that Cole "met a lot of Africans, who were very concerned about what was going on in South Africa at the time."¹⁹ In November 1960 he left *Drum* for a weekly newspaper and to work as a freelance photographer.

Alf Kumalo explained that at first he too was employed by *Drum*, but didn't want to be a staff photographer, so he started working as a freelance: "Because I wanted to follow certain stories that I wanted to follow. And Ernest wanted to do the same. We enjoyed our freedom, because you could do a project the way you wanted to do it yourself. And we used to follow stories they didn't have. And because it's something unusual, *Drum* ran a number of features with his pictures."²⁰

About Cole's photographic style and where he learned it, Kumalo said: "The style – not using a flash and all those things – he learned when we were together. Because *Drum* didn't want them, they did not like pictures taken with flash. Most of us were anti-flash. Not unless you had to, then we'd use bounce flash, or if the ceiling was not white, then you were forced to shoot straight, flash-wise. But especially, I would say, Ian Berry didn't like flash. That's one guy Ernest worked with, another guy that he admired."

Kumalo went on: "At *Drum*, most people became political." He didn't think Cole was political before he started there, but the environment of *Drum* was highly political, and the police harassed them all the time.²¹

The journalist and writer Keorapetse Kgositsile spoke about his meetings with Cole when they were still young, in around 1960. "Cole was working for one of the weeklies, the *Golden City Post* or the *World*, and for *Drum*." Cole was one of the younger photographers around and Kgositsile was a young journalist working for *New Age*. At that time the media people spent much more time together than they do today. In Johannesburg there were several places where they could meet every day. Ernest was part of this community, as were both his friends from *Drum*, Alf Kumalo and Peter Magubane, as well as Kgositsile and the young journalist Joe Thloloe. Cole, however, didn't associate with the *Drum* tradition of hard drinking, hard smoking and hard living. As Kgositsile recalled, "Ernest was a bit of a recluse, but he did make contact." Kgositsile left South Africa as early as 1961.²²

Cole also met the young journalist Joe Thloloe in the early 1960s: "We met as journalists, we were both young men at the time. He was working for *Drum* magazine and the *Post* newspaper and I was working for the *World* newspaper. Ernest later became a freelance photographer and he would sometimes ask me to write the words for his pictures. Some of these stories were published in *Drum*, the *Post* and *New Age*, but mainly in international publications."

Joe Thloloe especially remembers one story he did with Cole: “We went to what was at the time the Modderbee prison in Benoni in the East Rand. We went there on his scooter and I was the lookout when he took a picture at the entrance of the prison. The picture said ‘Natives for sale’. Now, what happened was that people who had been arrested for pass offences would be sent to Modderbee prison and then farmers would go there and buy labour. They would pay the equivalent of the fine, which the prisoners couldn’t afford to pay, and then the farmer would get them to go and work on his farm for the duration of their term because he had paid the fine. Now, that picture, Ernest couldn’t use it in South Africa because of the Prisons Act, which said you couldn’t publish or even take a photo of a prisoner or a prison or anything related to a prison, unless it was with the permission of the prison authorities. I think he managed to send that picture abroad. I don’t know which publication used it.”

Thloloe and Cole were friends, they socialized, and worked together, until Cole emigrated. Thloloe said: “When he went into exile, it came as a surprise to me, because he was not a very political person. He just took pictures. So I was surprised to learn he’d gone into exile.”²³

In 1961 Cole met Canadian-born photographer Struan Robertson. Cole ran out of film during an assignment and asked Robertson if he could borrow a roll. Robertson was very impressed when the very next day he got his cassette back, loaded with film. The two photographers became friends, and when Cole was looking for studio space with darkroom facilities, he asked Robertson if they could share his space. So it was in this studio that Cole worked on the pictures and the layout he took with him when he left South Africa, and that became the basis for his book *House of Bondage* (1967). Cole and Robertson shared the studio from April 1964. Late in 1965 Cole asked for a rent reduction, as he felt he couldn’t take assignments but had to concentrate on his book project. Robertson agreed to let Cole use the studio for free.²⁴

Alf Kumalo, who was quite close to Cole, commented on the relationship

between Cole and Robertson: “One person that got closer to him than all the other guys was Struan Robertson. He printed pictures in Struan’s darkroom.”²⁵

According to Julian Bahula: “In the early sixties, after we’d moved from Eersterust to Mamelodi, I got involved with two musicians, Philip Tabane and Abbey Cindi, and I became a musician. The three of us became the *Malombo Jazz Men*, Philip on guitar, Abbey on flute and myself, Julian, on drums. We became South Africa’s top jazz group. Ernest was always with us and he became a close friend of all three of us, and he took lots of photographs of us during our rehearsals.” He also documented them when they won the 1964 Castle Lager Jazz Festival at Orlando Stadium, Soweto. Bahula also spoke about assisting Cole during his photography: “He couldn’t take pictures outside a police station; he would have been arrested. The pictures were taken in the streets of Mamelodi where they used to arrest unemployed people. Sometimes Ernest would ask me to accompany him if he wanted to go and take some pictures of the municipal police arresting unemployed people. Because we, the *Malombo Jazz Men*, were a famous jazz group in South Africa, and as we’re from Mamelodi, all the municipal police knew us. So they wouldn’t bother him when he was taking the pictures if I was there too. Some of these pictures are in *House of Bondage*.”²⁶

Cole’s family were aware that things were changing for Ernest but at the time were uncertain about what he was up to. His elder sister, Catherine Hlatshwayo remembers her brother being very secretive and that he started to behave strangely in the early 1960s:

“The funny thing is that he was stretching his hair. My mother worried, she said ‘talk to him and ask him’. He said to me, ‘You know what? It’s time for me to have a pass.²⁷ I don’t want this pass,²⁸ I want to be a Coloured.’ That’s why he stretched his hair. So he went into the offices, came back to me and showed me, ‘I’m a Coloured, so they can’t arrest me for the pass laws’.”²⁹

It is hard to say exactly when this happened, but it was an important change

for him as it allowed him to move around more freely. However, he always took the receipts for his camera purchases with him, as he was often stopped by the police, who wanted him to verify that he owned the equipment he carried.

Catherine Hlatshwayo continued: “When he started this business of politics, taking pictures of all the apartheid things, the Special Branch started following him. He was arrested many times but he didn’t have to stay inside for long because of cop Ken Sinnamonds, or *Drum* editor Mr Hopkinson, who always went and got him out of jail. The real trouble started when he took a picture of a traffic cop dancing with an African lady, and they were busy drinking African beer.”³⁰

The family soon became aware that his work was important. Catherine Hlatshwayo recalls: “One series of pictures I still remember are ones Ernest took at a potato farm in Bethal. They used to threaten people to death there and bury them right on the farm. And there was a strike – people didn’t eat potatoes from this farm anymore, because of Ernest’s photos.”

Sam Kole retold the well-known story of Cole’s methods: “There are certain places where he took a brown bag, put his camera into it and covered his camera as if he was having something to eat, while his camera was in the bag and he was taking pictures with it, in the mines and in jail.”³¹

Sophina Mphakati explained: “There are other pictures which the old lady [Mrs Kole] buried, so we do not know whether they are still there. When things were bad, we used to burn things or dig a hole, so some of the things are underground.”³²

Cole was soon working for both domestic and international magazines and newspapers. Among others, there were articles in *Drum* in 1960, where Ernest Cole and Peter Magubane are mentioned as photographers,³³ and in 1962 in *The Sunday Express* (London), *Drum*, and in South Africa’s most outspoken anti-apartheid newspaper, *New Age*.³⁴

In 1963 Cole was injured in a scooter accident on his way home from work.³⁵ Thus he learnt from the inside how hospital care worked for black people, with terribly long waits for transportation and surgery, and overcrowded wards. This knowledge he later used when documenting a black hospital in Pretoria. Matjie and Louie Bapela remembered Ernest Cole coming on his Lambretta to Mamelodi in the mid-1960s. Louie Bapela recalled: "I sort of opened a spot, or a shebeen, so I sold liquor, only for those who were interested in jazz, jazz lovers only; the rest, I didn't serve them. At that time Julian (Bahula) was playing jazz with the Malombo Jazz Men, so after they had finished playing they usually came to me for refreshments. Even the reporters, like Alf Kumalo, usually came here. And all those musicians, they met here at my place."

Matjie Bapela continued: "I used to be like a sister unto Ernest. And then, weekends, he came to my place to listen to this jazz. And sometimes he could not go back in the evening – he was wanted by the police and he couldn't go back – we had to take his scooter and just put it away, and he had to go and find a sleeping place for the evening so the police wouldn't arrest him. They wanted him high and low, to arrest him, and then we had to hide his scooter. Many a night he used to come late in the evening, asking for shelter. Sometimes even policemen came in late at night. They wanted to search each and everybody, but they had a little photo of Ernest. So, they were not sure who Ernest was but they were looking for him. And we had to give him a hiding place sometimes where he could sleep. By three the following morning he would come and fetch his scooter. He was always on the run."

Louie Bapela recalled one situation: "I remember especially one Easter. I think it was a political party and there was a bomb. I think it was at the station. I was with him that night and he said: 'Man there's an explosion somewhere. I am going to look for it,' late at night. He left with his scooter to go and look for that explosion around the station somewhere. And when I got there Ernest sent me to report to the paper that there was an explosion and

to deliver the pictures he had taken. Ernest went to my place because he was wanted.”³⁶

In May 1965 Cole was issued with a passport, valid for three years.³⁷ The first stamp in his passport was from Caledon Bridge, Basutoland, dated 17 September 1965. He went back to Johannesburg two days later. Julian Bahula explained that things were even worse in Basutoland, and so journalists and photographers went there to get their stories.³⁸ Alf Kumalo also referred to it as one of the countries to which journalists and photographers went on assignments for *Drum*.³⁹

Kumalo followed Cole’s work on the stories for his book project, and he was “really highly impressed” by the story from Frenchdale, a place where political prisoners were forced to live. According to Kumalo, Cole decided himself which stories he wanted to cover. Cole’s story about the young tsotsis who robbed white people drew particular mention from Kumalo, who knew some of Cole’s subjects. Cole had to become friends with them and promised that his story wouldn’t be published in South Africa before they accepted him. He spent a great deal of time on this story, shooting and re-shooting. Kumalo said: “That only happens to people who are passionate. Ernest had an abundance of passion for photography.”⁴⁰

In 1965, Joseph Lelyveld came to South Africa as the *New York Times* correspondent. A couple of months later Ernest showed up in his office. Lelyveld recalls: “I didn’t know of his pictures. Then he told me, early on, what he was doing, what his plan was – to do the equivalent of the Cartier-Bresson book.”⁴¹ When we met he was more than halfway, he was largely through it. I saw most of those pictures in South Africa.”⁴²

During the eleven months Lelyveld was in South Africa he worked with Cole on some assignments: “Ernest had two things in the spring of 1966 in the *New York Times*, two layouts. One in connection with an article about Helen Suzman and one where the pictures are all signs saying ‘Nie Blankes’ or ‘Non Whites’. It is two pages of just signs. He did it for me but it became part

of *House of Bondage* – although it was initially to illustrate an article I was writing.”⁴³

In 1966, Cole realized that his situation in South Africa was quite dangerous. If he wanted to save his pictures and the book dummy he had prepared in Robertson’s studio, he knew that he would have to leave the country. Lelyveld was expelled from South Africa in 1966 and left from Jan Smuts Airport for Rome on 26 April.⁴⁴ Lelyveld says: “I smuggled a good portion of his work out of the country when I was expelled. Ernest came to see me off at the airport that night – I don’t remember when he gave me the stuff. I think it was contact sheets. I just held them for him in London where he picked them up a few weeks later.”⁴⁵

At this point Cole was planning his departure from South Africa as a pilgrimage to Lourdes in France. He couldn’t tell anyone about his plans and his sister Catherine says that the family didn’t know until the last minute and that no one went to the airport. In Jürgen Schadeberg’s film *Struan Robertson* recalls that he was at the airport with some family members, including his mother, Martha Kole.⁴⁶ Theo Kole recounted what he was told about Ernest’s farewell to his family and friends: “He was moving from family to family. He never told them he was going away. Just talking to them. It was a goodbye but he wouldn’t tell these guys.”⁴⁷

On 26 April 1966 Cole obtained a tourist visa for Kenya, valid for three months but restricted to three weeks, depending on the ticket. On 9 May 1966 he left from Jan Smuts airport, having been issued a visa for 14 days for Nairobi. In his passport there is also a stamp from Nairobi airport on that date.

In his biography of Cole, Struan Robertson wrote: “He carried with him many of his prints and the layout sheets of the book. To avoid the danger of a search at the airport and possible confiscation of his negatives, the bulk of the material was left in my care to be sent on later.”⁴⁸

EUROPE, 1966

On 11 May 1966 Ernest Cole arrived in London, where he got a visa for two months but no work permit. The same evening he was invited to dinner by Joseph Lelyveld.⁴⁹ Cole told him briefly about his plans: “He told me he was going to take his stuff to Magnum. He said it was simply because Henri Cartier-Bresson was Magnum.”⁵⁰

Another of Cole’s South African friends, Jürgen Schadeberg, who had moved to London in 1964, invited him to his apartment soon after he arrived. Schadeberg also invited Ian Berry, whom Cole knew from *Drum*, and some other photographers who had been in South Africa, and they all looked at the pictures Cole had brought. The other photographers, however, didn’t show any interest in Cole’s pictures. Not until they saw *House of Bondage*, about a year later, did they realize the impact of the pictures.⁵¹

After a couple of days in London, Cole went to Paris to visit the offices of Magnum.⁵² No one there had the time to look at his pictures, but as he was leaving the Magnum office he met French Magnum photographer Marc Riboud, who, on being told that Cole was leaving later that day for London, told him to show the pictures to John Hillelson, Magnum’s representative in London.⁵³ Hillelson got a phone call from Magnum in Paris saying that “there was a South African photographer who was insistent on showing his photographs to somebody in Magnum and he was coming to London and they’d asked him to come and see me, and would I have a look at his photographs.”⁵⁴ Hillelson recalls Cole coming to his Fleet Street office a couple of days later: “I was very excited by the pictures and my first reaction was to show them to the biggest client we had in London, the *Sunday Times Magazine*.” He and Cole visited Michael Rand, the then art director of the *Sunday Times Magazine*, and they both remembered that: “Cole had with him a collection of his prints, divided into chapters as for the book he wished

to have published – in fact one could call it a rough dummy.” The *Sunday Times Magazine* was a colour supplement, but they looked at the pictures and decided that it was a very important story and so published a cover and five spreads of Cole’s pictures.⁵⁵

Cole spent a couple of months in Europe before going to New York. Even while he was travelling he maintained some contact with his family.⁵⁶ From his passport it is clear that he travelled quite extensively, between London and Paris and then to Copenhagen.⁵⁷ What he did in Paris and Copenhagen has not been confirmed, nor whether he travelled elsewhere in the Nordic countries, which, at that time, might have been possible without his passport being stamped. The only person I have traced who met Cole during this period was the South African refugee Wana Makoba, who met him at the *Jazzhus Montmartre* in Copenhagen.⁵⁸ Cole later referred to his stay in Copenhagen when applying for visas and alien passports in Scandinavia.⁵⁹

Hillelson told the people at Magnum in New York, the office in charge of another very big market including *Life Magazine*, about Cole. They asked to see the pictures, so Hillelson sent them to New York. The day they arrived, Lee Jones, Director of Magnum’s New York office, realized the impact of Cole’s work and immediately sent a message to Hillelson: “I just received it and Sam (Holmes) and I are re-editing it.”⁶⁰

In the Magnum archives there are spiral binders with copies of interoffice correspondence between Magnum New York and Magnum Paris.⁶¹ In one, from 1966, there is some interesting communication on US sales of Cole’s material to *Look* and *Life*, and about the initiative to publish the book *House of Bondage*.⁶²

On 5 September, Cole left Copenhagen. On his way to Paris he and Russ Melcher, Magnum Paris Bureau chief, visited *Stern Magazine* in Hamburg, Germany, on 6 September, the very day the South African architect of apartheid, Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, was stabbed to death by Dimitri Tsafendas during a parliamentary session in the House of Assembly in Cape

Town. Cole and Melcher had just left the *Stern* office when this news was released. They were called back, as *Stern* suddenly had an interest in Cole's pictures. They sold a number of pictures to *Stern* for an article that was published on 2 October 1966.⁶³ The day after Cole arrived in Paris, he got a visa for the USA, left Paris for London, and arrived in New York on 10 September 1966.⁶⁴

Struan Robertson, who was one of those who took care of Cole's negatives, remembered sending them to New York later.⁶⁵ Russ Melcher, however, remembered the negatives coming to the Magnum Paris office about two weeks before he and Cole went there in September. They were sent on to a special address in New York close to the UN building, and Cole was told how to get them when he arrived. It was all very difficult and dangerous, and top secret.⁶⁶

John Hillelson recalled: "Ernest then left with his pictures for New York where Magnum's Lee Jones sold the story to *Life Magazine* and negotiated with The Ridge Press/Allen Lane for *House of Bondage* to be published. Magnum had agreed to handle Ernest's pictures for book and magazine publication."⁶⁷ James Fox recalled that: "Lee Jones had a friend called Jerry Mason, who was Editor in Chief of Random House Publishing Company, and he was shown all the prints and contacts and met Ernest, and that is how it started."⁶⁸

USA, 1966–1969, THE FIRST YEARS IN EXILE

In New York Cole met James Fox, the new Magnum archivist, who had just arrived from Paris. Before sailing for New York, Fox had spent a couple of months with his sister in Pretoria so he had become familiar with the atmosphere of the segregated society and its limitations, which opened a door to friendship between Fox and Cole.⁶⁹

Late in September 1966 Lee Jones reported to Russ Melcher in Paris: “After a very nerve wracking time for Ernest (and us) we have settled on publication in *Life Magazine*. Ernest is at this moment working with the *Life* editors on his contacts and text. They envision a minimum of 10 pages.”⁷⁰

They also sold the story to a number of other magazines, although few stories have been found in print.⁷¹ Lee Jones also mentioned in her message that: “It appears likely, though no contract is yet signed, that Ernest’s beautiful story will be done in book form by Ridge Press and Random House.”

When he saw the material, Russ Melcher commented: “beautiful editing and printing”, and wrote in a letter of enthusiastic reactions from *Paris Match* and an order for prints. Cole was subsequently invited to Paris for an interview at *Paris Match*. Melcher also commented that: “the *Stern Magazine* issue with a six page layout of Cole’s story was on the desk of Therond [*Paris Match*], when I arrived, which was unfortunate.”⁷²

For James Fox, talking about Ernest Cole is like “a journey back in time, sitting there writing captions.” Although he and Cole had a lot to talk about, Fox complained that Cole didn’t stay in touch. “Once he got his grant [from the Ford Foundation] that Cornell Capa helped him to get, he was either drinking or he was starting to get on drugs and it was all the Vietnam war people and the racial problems in the big cities, etc., and I think he was trying to keep a low profile. Then I heard that he had managed to get across to Canada and that he had been to Sweden, but then I never knew he came back. After the book was printed, he also had his grant that helped him. He wanted to work his way out and he was doing the route of the black communities. He only met people in the black communities, he stayed with them or he shared places and he obviously got into the wrong set of people. They were on an anti-Vietnam protest and all that kind of thing. And so, from what I gathered, he became somewhat of a, I wouldn’t say vagabond, but I am not sure whether he even presented anything for the grant he got – the

material he shot in America.”⁷³

The journalist Keorapetse Kgositsile, who went into exile in the early 1960s, recalled: “When Ernest came to New York, when he got the offer to put that book together, initially he got in touch with me to do the text. He wanted a South African to write the text, someone who knew clearly what informed the photographs. In fact, when the photographs were ready, and they had all been selected and so on, he gave me a copy, to start working on it.”

The introduction was, however, never realized. Kgositsile explained: “Then I didn’t hear from him. I think he must have been a bit embarrassed when the change was made, so he never told me that there was a change. So when I found out that it was being handled differently I was a little frustrated and angry, because I was *excited!* The photographs excited me, and I was looking forward to working with him on this.”⁷⁴ Joseph Lelyveld, who became the *New York Times*’ correspondent in New Delhi after he had been expelled from Johannesburg, recalled: “By the time I was in New York the book was already being designed. It was then that I agreed to write the thing I wrote.”⁷⁵

Magnum’s Lee Jones wrote a letter to John Hillelson after publication in the *Sunday Times Magazine*⁷⁶: “Delighted to hear that Ernest Cole’s pictures set off some fireworks. ... The book contract with England has been signed. The sale was made by Jerry Mason [Random House] to Penguin’s editor in chief, Anthony Godwin.” She also wrote: “Ernest was quite unhappy about the text in the *Sunday Times*. You should know that he probably would not want that particular text to be used again.”⁷⁷ Hillelson says that Cole kept himself very much to himself. He cannot remember having a meal with him, or even a sandwich. He and his wife Judith, who also worked in the Hillelson agency, didn’t remember how many times Cole visited them; he mainly came in and walked out again, not staying for long.⁷⁸ As far as Magnum was concerned, Hillelson thought that Lee Jones had parted company with Cole after publication of the book.⁷⁹

Cornell Capa, Vice President of Magnum New York, helped Cole to apply for

a grant from the Ford Foundation for documentation of the migration of black people from the rural areas to the large industrial cities in the American South.⁸⁰ He first applied in the spring of 1967, his application was authorized within a couple of weeks, and he soon started his documentation, both in Harlem and extensively across the United States. Cole was in contact with the representatives of the Foundation every now and then, as the grant had to be renewed and the payments were made in tranches. The Ford Foundation seems to have been proud of giving a grant to Cole, especially after *House of Bondage* had established his reputation. The grant was for “A Study of the Negro Family in the Rural South” and “A Study of Negro Life in the City”, which was intended to be produced in book form rather than on the commercial market of photojournalism. Cole gave his reasons for this in a letter to the Ford Foundation:

To begin with, it is necessary to briefly sketch the background against which I see photography. To me photography is part of life and any photograph worth looking at twice is a reflection of life, of reality, of nature, of people, of the work of men from art to war. Photography has contributed much to our commonwealth of knowledge and experience and every photographer is a potential contributor to this. Few people seem to understand the frustration faced by the photojournalist, especially with publications trying to make a statement of “social significance”, etc. And, the media through which one must communicate is, naturally, the picture magazine. Here the photographer’s immediate and biggest obstacle is the editor. Another difficulty the photo-journalist faces is that his work, regardless of an editor’s good intentions, is usually drastically cut “due to lack of space”, thus reducing the essence of the story or having it spiked in favour of something more topical and current....⁸¹

The Ford Foundation funded Cole’s work for a number of years. He applied for new grants and extensions, and got funding at least until late 1971.⁸²

When Ernest Cole's South African passport expired on 6 May 1968, he applied to the South African Embassy for renewal of his passport. This was denied as *House of Bondage* had been banned in South Africa. Cole later commented:

"I've been advised that my passport will not be renewed but that I could obtain an emergency travel certificate to permit my return to South Africa. Following publication of my book, *House of Bondage*, I am afraid to return to South Africa for fear of arrest, imprisonment, or worse."⁸³

Cole's American visa had been extended until 5 May 1968, as long as he had valid travel documents.⁸⁴ He applied for a residence visa, but the process was very slow.⁸⁵ In October 1968, when *House of Bondage* was published in Great Britain, he tried in vain to get the necessary papers to go there.⁸⁶

In 1968 Jürgen Schadeberg visited New York, trying to find some work opportunities. He visited Ernest Cole, who looked "miserable". He had confronted American reality and realized that the apartheid system was there too. It wasn't any better: there was no freedom. Schadeberg left a box of pictures with Cole in case there was a chance for Cole to show them to somebody.⁸⁷

Aubrey Nkomo, who shared an apartment with Ernest Cole in New York for more than a year, said:

"He was a very neat man, the kind of roommate that we all would like to have. Socially he was kind of isolated. He had friends but not many, both Americans and South Africans, also within the South African community. He ate irregularly and when he did eat, he ate very little, and he was very tiny as compared to me. I would tell him, 'man, you gonna die in this place from this winter' and he tells me, 'I have been in winters before, in Sweden'. He was reflective, very religious. He only read his bible. He would confess and he would quote. And he loved African traditions – he would say, 'you guys are

too modern, our people would not do that, or our people would do 'a, b, c', in certain situations'...I had met him when I did my graduate studies at Syracuse University. We ran into one another at a meeting within the South African community. I had known him since 1968, but we only moved in together in 1969. He was very happy that I was going to share the apartment with him because the nature of his work was such that sometimes he would be in the United States and occasionally he would go to Sweden for quite extended periods, so we lived together. What helped us politically was that although we were outside of South Africa, we never lost contact with the struggle of the people, nor our families. The only problem was that, because of the nature of his work, he was deeply concerned by conditions in South Africa which did not seem to change, and he was also upset by the fact that there were organisations where people used his work when promoting their events or whatever they were doing without his permission and without recognition. That upset him a lot. He would even tell me: 'Look even your organisation, the ANC, uses my work. I don't mind, but hey man, they ought to give me recognition.' That upset him! And another thing that bothered him was that, apart from his late cousin, Dingang Malick,⁸⁸ there was no one with whom he spoke old IsiPedi, his own language. Dingang would come to the apartment when his wife wanted to go shopping. On such visits he would speak IsiPedi with Ernest. Anybody who you would have met would tell you that Ernest would only speak English and Afrikaans, but that is not correct."⁸⁹

Nkomo went on: "For him to be able to take the kind of photographs that he had, he had taken many, many chances which could have landed him in tremendous trouble with the South African police. For example, many photographers, especially black ones, if there was a demonstration or something like that, and they took pictures, the police very often might destroy their film. If they were very upset with you they might break your camera or they might decide that you are interfering in their normal execution of their duties, and they would arrest you. So, nor was it an easy life, nor was it an easy profession to follow."⁹⁰

Nkomo and Cole became quite close, and Nkomo said: "At that time he was

putting together some more work on South Africa and he was trying to make a study on black life in urban areas and in the Southern states, but he met resistance, people were not cooperative and he would remark that sometimes, 'you know my brother, it is sad that had I been a white photographer, many of the same people would gladly be my subjects, but I am black, like them, and they are reluctant.' Because he was a very private person, he would not have verbalised that to many people." Nkomo remarked about the project: "What was the product? It was more difficult to get the study that he wanted. You see, at the time in the United States, people were more interested in showing that integration was taking place, some liked us to believe that integration was complete, and that really there was no difference between black and white beyond pigmentation, whereas that is not true. And, insofar as he was interested in that truth, he wasn't getting the kind of cooperation that he needed. And that is why he didn't make as much headway as he should have."⁹¹

THE INTERNATIONAL YEARS, 1969–1974

On 25 November 1968 Ernest Cole wrote a letter to the Alien Commissioners in both Sweden and Norway, explaining his situation as a stateless person, living in New York for the past 26 months. In his application for a third preference residence visa he said about his time in the US: "[W]hile this experience has been insightful to me, I cannot afford to remain here much longer since the nature of my work requires me to travel."⁹²

Without wishing to be negative about life in this country, it is quite evident to me that it will be difficult for me to work here at this particular period of my life. In my observation of the Black man's life in South Africa as presented in *House of Bondage*, my personal attitude was committed to exposing the evils of South Africa. When I left home I thought I would focus my talents on other aspects of life,

which I assumed would be more hopeful, and some joy to it. However, what I have seen in this country over the past two years has proved me wrong. Recording the truth at whatever cost is one thing but finding one having to live a lifetime of being a chronicler of misery and injustice and callousness is another. And such matter is about the only assignments magazines here want to offer me because the subject matter of my first book happened to be centred on a “race” issue, the color of my skin – another incidental matter – and the fact that I endured and escaped the living hell that is South Africa.

The total man does not live one experience. He is moulded and shaped by the diversity of other experiences into some form of the whole man. I will most probably return to the U.S. in the future to complete the cycle of study of my observations made here over the past two years.

But right now my earnest desire is to have a breath of fresh air.⁹³

Many Swedes became involved in Cole’s application and tried to help him obtain a Swedish alien’s passport. The cathedral dean of Västerås, Gunnar Helander,⁹⁴ one of the founders of the Swedish South Africa Committee, wrote to the Alien Commissioner, as did the Tiofoto picture agency,⁹⁵ the magazine *Vi*,⁹⁶ the picture agency IMS⁹⁷ associated with Magnum, and the Friends of the Museum of Photography,⁹⁸ all of whom testified to Cole’s importance to the world, to Sweden and to photography in general, and declared that he would be able to earn his living with Sweden as his base.

On 1 March 1969 Ernest Cole left New York for London.⁹⁹ From there he responded to a letter from photographer and filmmaker Rune Hassner in Stockholm and sent him a package with 65 photographs. The pictures were sequenced slightly differently from *House of Bondage*. The only mention of what the pictures should be used for was that: “... the project you mention seems to be for a good cause”. He also asked Hassner to take special care

of the glossy prints that were “very dear to me”, and added that if more pictures were needed they could be taken from the book, all except the one on page 165, “which when printed out of context becomes sensational. It was printed against my will, when the rest of that series was pulled out because of shortage of space.”

In this letter (on his own stationery from South Africa), Cole wrote that he now understood that Hassner was the person who had tried to contact him in New York the year before. He also wrote that he planned to stay in London for 10 days and then leave for Stockholm, Copenhagen and Oslo, a trip of about two months altogether.¹⁰⁰ It is clear from this letter that Cole and Hassner had not yet met.

In Oslo Cole met Hans Beukes from Namibia purely by chance. Beukes had heard about Cole and suspected that the South African he met crossing the street might be him, and so asked the question when they were abreast of each other. As Cole didn't yet have a hotel room, Beukes invited him to stay at his house.¹⁰¹ About a week later Cole left for Stockholm, where he met with Rune Hassner and Tiofoto, among others. When he arrived at the train station in Stockholm, Cole was met by filmmaker Eva Hassner, Rune Hassner's wife and collaborator.¹⁰² She remembered that Hassner helped Cole get a place to stay, that Cole often visited them, and that he also gave lectures. The photographer Stig T. Karlsson told me some years ago that he was one of the photographers who looked after Cole when he was in Sweden, and that Cole at some point stayed with him and his wife in Vaxholm.¹⁰³

On 14 April 1969 Cole signed an agreement with Tiofoto that they would represent him.¹⁰⁴ A week later Cole was back in Oslo, where Beukes arranged an interview for him with the Norwegian newspaper *Dagbladet*. *Dagbladet* published a picture of Cole on the front page.¹⁰⁵ Cole also applied for a new visa to Sweden, so that Rune Hassner would be able to interview him for his series of documentary programmes for Swedish television, *Bilder för miljoner* (Images for Millions), about major international photographers.

Cole obtained the visa and was soon back in Stockholm for Hassner's interview; from there, he went directly back to New York.¹⁰⁶ The series was broadcast on Swedish television during the spring and summer of 1969;¹⁰⁷ the programme on Cole was shown on 8 June 1969.¹⁰⁸

That same year, John Hillelson received a letter from Tom Blau, who ran Camera Press in Holland, saying that Cole had worked for Camera Press for several years whilst he lived in South Africa, which no one knew when Cole started working with Magnum, and that Cole now wanted to withdraw his pictures from Camera Press. Obviously they had not been very successful in marketing Cole's pictures, because they had not sold much, he wrote.¹⁰⁹

Also in 1969, Cole left Magnum, having retrieved all his negatives. Hillelson, who became his agent in London, said: "He knew what he wanted. I did not find it difficult to get on with him. I was frustrated by him because there were many things he would not do. I felt he could save himself but you can't make people do what they are disinclined to do."¹¹⁰

Cole and Hassner stayed in contact during the summer of 1969. Cole wrote to Hassner that he was planning to go to the American South to photograph during July, then back to New York for August and off to Stockholm at the beginning of September to stay there for a few months, taking his negatives and some of his things.¹¹¹ In this letter he also wrote: "I have now made up my mind 100% to go into motion pictures."¹¹² I think it will solve a lot of my problems 'cause it will hold my attention as I am very interested."¹¹³

Cole wrote to John Hillelson about his work in the South: "I am working on a series about the cultural revolution (black) in America – an A to Z kind of approach. I'll be going down to the Deep South for a month or maybe just two weeks to make advance preparations for a series. I intend to spend most of next year on Family Life Down South."¹¹⁴ Hillelson commented on this: "I believe that he had a grant for this but he never told me about it."¹¹⁵ In this letter, Cole also wrote that he was very unhappy about the printers recommended to him by Magnum. They had scratched some of his

negatives, so he was forced to do his own printing and he was looking forward to going to Sweden in September where Tiofoto would do his printing.¹¹⁶

The problems associated with obtaining valid identity certificates and visas seem to have followed Cole, but, as he wrote to Rune Hassner, he was back in Stockholm in mid-September.¹¹⁷ There he met, among others, Rune Jonsson, photographer, teacher and writer, who showed him Galleri Karlsson, used by the Friends of the Museum of Photography. The Galleri wanted to exhibit his pictures; Cole, however, was not too enthusiastic about the space, and no exhibition was ever held.¹¹⁸

In September 1969 Cole was invited to Gothenburg by the western branch of the Association of Swedish Photographers. During his visit to Gothenburg, Cole spent an evening with photographers, teachers and students in one of the studios at the vocational school for photography.¹¹⁹ During the day they had repro photographed all the pages in *House of Bondage* so that they could project the slides while Ernest Cole talked about the pictures and the situation in South Africa. Cole also talked about how he, as a black photographer, had to hide his camera and his negatives during the years he was photographing, how the blacks were oppressed under apartheid, and how he managed to escape with his cameras and important negatives. Afterwards there was a lively discussion with a lot of questions, and Cole talked about his American project, with financial support from the Ford Foundation, and about his aim of producing a book about the situation for black people in the US.¹²⁰

On 22 October 1969, for the first time, Cole had an address of his own in Sweden. He rented a room from a woman in Skärholmen, Ingrid Wigh. They became friendly and she had very kind things to say about him. She remembered him as shy, reflective, pipe smoking, a not very open person who did not really socialize. The only friends of his she knew of were members of Tiofoto, some South Africans, and some people from New York. Cole had explained to her that he had prepared quite a lot for the book in

South Africa and smuggled it out, and that *Life Magazine* had been very helpful in getting the book together. Wigh said that Cole stayed in Sweden for about three months and then left, often saying that he needed to go to New York. She also explained that his habits and priorities were very different from those of the Swedes. For him, survival and food for the day were still key priorities. She also described him as a practical man: when he needed a shirt he went to buy a couple.¹²¹

On 26 October, Cole returned to New York in order to add some pictures to the exhibition planned for the gallery he had recently seen. He was also going to collect “the unique and irreplaceable document material in the form of his pictures from South Africa that shouldn’t be sent in any other way.”¹²²

At this time, Cole also planned for some film work to be done at Filmcentrum in Stockholm. In New York, Cole applied for a new visa, but this was not approved until mid-December, when he left directly for Sweden. During this stay he was issued with his first Swedish alien’s passport and could thus move around the world freely, with the exception of South Africa.¹²³

According to Joseph Lelyveld, when in New York Cole was living in a place called Westbeth, in the West Village – a former telephone company building which housed a vibrant artists’ community, including Diane Arbus. Cole was one of the original residents.¹²⁴ Jack Dowling, the present Visual Arts curator at Westbeth, has confirmed that Cole is listed in the 1970 Westbeth Welcome edition of the first Westbeth News as living in Apt. A414, a large one-bedroom apartment not normally given to a single individual but to a couple.¹²⁵

Aubrey Nkomo, who was sharing the apartment with Cole at this time, said: “And he also had a studio in the Village with a lot of expensive equipment. Somebody broke in there and ransacked the place, and he was spiritually devastated. They took his equipment and his work. He reported it to the police, but, you know, it is difficult for the police to trace things like cameras and so on because they can hide them or take them across state lines,

unless there was something unique, then it is easier for them to trace. This was about 1970 or 1970–71.” According to Nkomo Cole would sometimes sleep at the studio.¹²⁶ In 1972 Nkomo left New York for New Jersey.

From that point in time, it becomes more difficult to follow Cole’s travels, as there is very little documentation. All his travel documents seem to have been destroyed, including his alien passports. However, applications for extensions to his Swedish alien’s passport and some visas are extant, so at best his first and last trip to Sweden each year are known. There is also some communication with Hans Beukes, whom Cole had so fortuitously met in Oslo in 1969. Beukes, who kept an eye on what was happening on the Scandinavian scene, had among other things promised to send Cole a translation of Rune Hassner’s writings about *House of Bondage*. In his letter, he also included a translation of a personal column in the Swedish magazine *Foto* in which the writer urged his readers to “point their cameras in a more purposeful way at people around them, to show how they live and what they do and in this regard he mentioned your book as worthy of careful study.”¹²⁷

In Cole’s response to Beukes he wrote that he was sorry not to have answered sooner, in a way also seen in other letters of his: “because one day in this city is like two hours and if I put off something, especially a letter, for tomorrow it’s very hard to get back to it because too many things jam up my schedule. I think it’s about high time I get myself a secretary but what a pity I can’t afford one.” Cole also mentioned having been in San Francisco in April and wrote that about a week after being back in New York he was off to Stockholm, London and Copenhagen: “I made Stockholm alright but I couldn’t get near London or Copenhagen because Rune Hassner didn’t even give me a chance to put down my suitcase let alone find a hotel room. Within less than an hour of my arrival at the Tiofoto offices (from the air terminal) he was right there to escort me to the museum where my exhibit is supposed to be held or hung for the October 9th opening. So this really confused the hell out of me I must admit. Confused because I actually went to Stockholm to turn down the offer and then proceed to London within 5 days where I planned to spend a week and then another week in Copenhagen, 2 days or

so in Göteborg back to Stockholm for a few days then back to New York to start photographing '*lat die Spanners waai*' (to let the chips fly). But after he had shown me the space for my work I decided to change my mind there and then because not only won't I get a chance like that again I thought, but it was also a very good opportunity to present the South Africa file in its complete form for the first time ever, this way providing me with a complete set for future use and thereafter I can lock up or away my negs and forget about making prints on South Africa for a long time. I'll talk to you more about this. So now my schedule has changed. I have to be back in Stockholm no later than August 5th to start printing etc for Oct. 9th. And that really makes life complicated for me." The letter ends: "I allowed my mind to play tricks with me again. I was terribly restless. I couldn't even write home and I still haven't written. What a Shame."¹²⁸

On 27 July, Cole wrote to Hassner with the corrected text for the exhibition at Liljevalchs and some notes in order to explain the context of the pictures.¹²⁹ In answer to Hassner's question about the American pictures, Cole left it open, writing that: "... it depends 100% on the space. I don't just want to show new material just for the sake of showing it but I want it to be related in some way or another. So that the viewer walks away with a message in his head and not just with a head full of images." He also wrote that he would leave from New York on 4 August and that he would take his enlarger.¹³⁰

Cole was in Sweden for most of the autumn of 1970.¹³¹ Hans Beukes visited him in the darkrooms at Tiofoto in the early autumn, when he was busy printing his pictures for the exhibition at the Liljevalchs Konsthall in the heart of Stockholm. Cole also participated in the installation of his exhibition. The captions were written in collaboration with Lennart Allen, who was initially asked to help with the translation of Cole's captions. They met in Vaxholm a couple of times to work on the texts and had a good time together. Cole went to Allen's home for dinner occasionally. As they worked so well together, Allen also became involved in the hanging of the exhibition, together with two young photographers, Björn Enström and Peter Gullers. Allen said he had the impression that Cole, a very shy person, had arrived in a big – and for

him very different – world with too much attention.¹³² Björn Enström also recalled that after all their hard work they wanted to celebrate and went to Operakällaren, the restaurant in the Royal Opera House, but were not let in as Cole was black, so they had to walk on to a less fancy restaurant in Gamla Stan (the Old Town) for a meal. Björn Enström and Ernest Cole also spent some leisure time together, looking around and going to a jazz club.¹³³

Cole's exhibition was part of the celebration of the Swedish Photographers' Association's 75th anniversary. The main part of the exhibition was of the work of Swedish photographers. In addition to Ernest Cole, there was one other foreign photographer, the American Paul Strand.¹³⁴ However, with a hall at the venue having been devoted exceptionally to Ernest Cole's suite of images from South Africa, his work enjoyed most of the media interest. On 23–24 October 1970 there was a conference in Stockholm in connection with the anniversary and the exhibition. Håkan Berg, a teacher at the photo school in Gothenburg, participated with his students. He photographed Cole with Swedish photographers, including Rune Hassner, KW Gullers and Kerstin Bernhard at Liljevalchs Konsthall. At this point Håkan Berg had met Cole both in Gothenburg and in New York, where Cole took him to dinner in Harlem. Halfway through the meal Cole disappeared and never came back. But he later gave Berg a signed copy of *House of Bondage*, dedicated to him on 31 October 1969, which Berg had to collect from the owner of a men's outfitters at Times Square.¹³⁵

Cole apparently made some Scandinavian friends during this time. Hans Beukes met with him once more that autumn, on a study trip to New York in November. Cole then told him that he was working on a project to document the everyday life of black Americans, funded by the Ford Foundation.¹³⁶

Part of the exhibition, *Foto, Film, Bild*, with Rolf Winquist, Ernest Cole, Björn Enström, Peter Gullers, Lars Pettersson, Rune Hassner and others, was later shown in the Gothenburg Konsthall, from 20 March to 18 April 1971.¹³⁷

Although I have never seen pictures from either of these exhibitions, some information about how they were displayed can be drawn from the pictures

included in the collection of the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, to which part of the exhibition was donated by the Association of Swedish Photographers in 1971.¹³⁸ The pictures were mounted on cardboard, and two holes were drilled for the nails with which they were hung when exhibited. On the back of many of the pictures the typewritten captions used for the exhibition can still be seen. From these texts it is clear that the series had slightly different titles to those used in *House of Bondage*.¹³⁹

In October 1971 Cole was apparently short of cash, since he hadn't sent money to his mother and he couldn't pay for records he had asked 'Big Brother' (possibly Geoff Mphakati) to send him from South Africa.¹⁴⁰ This was also the time when Cole wrote to the Ford Foundation asking for an extension to be able to complete his project. He wrote: "The first half of my travel and study award is now finished. I would therefore like to request from The Ford Foundation an extension so that I can complete the second half of my project."¹⁴¹

When in Stockholm, Cole spent time with other people in exile from Africa, including Wana Makoba, who came to Copenhagen from South Africa. They met a couple of times at the legendary *Jazzhus Montmartre* during Cole's very first summer in exile. When Cole came to Sweden, Makoba had already been there for a few years and made friends with other Africans, some of whom still live in the Stockholm area: Tauna Niingungo from Namibia and Ibrahim Elkarim from Sudan. In the 1960s and 1970s they lived at a hotel, ate out and got together occasionally on Fridays to have dinner at a cheap Italian restaurant. When Cole was in Sweden he occasionally went to the restaurant with them. They said: "He visited Sweden and did his photography and went back, so none of us knew him very well." His acquaintances described him as very shy and said they neither knew him well nor knew much about him.¹⁴²

At the beginning of 1971, South African photographer Alf Kumalo, Cole's old friend and colleague from Johannesburg, visited New York for the first time. He stayed about seven months and during this period spent time with Cole.

He told me: “The book was still selling, it was still fresh, it had just been done and Ernest was excited.¹⁴³ He gave me two copies, we actually went to Random House and got two copies there. I visited him regularly.” Kumalo also said that Cole was healthy, that there was nothing wrong with him. Kumalo, too, was taking pictures, and told me how the two of them went to Harlem once to photograph some houses that were on fire. He also learnt from Cole to be careful in New York, where the policemen used their guns to shoot, not just to threaten. Kumalo also said they lectured on photography at a school in Harlem where they were considered very important. He went on: “Ernest was right at the top, helping those guys photography-wise. And they liked him very much.” Kumalo also mentioned the photographer Kwame Brathwaite as one person with whom Ernest Cole was in contact in Harlem.¹⁴⁴

Photographically, Kumalo explained: “What he did was taking pictures, but he also wanted to follow some guys and do a feature, a book, on them. That’s what he wanted to do. I don’t know how far it went, but I know he did start working on that feature. He worked on that for quite some time, because even when I didn’t see him I was told he was still working on that project.” But Kumalo never saw any of the pictures, and he continued: “I also remember that we got into a puddle of water in an area where there were many South Africans. Ernest was so bitter, he was saying: ‘Is this the America that we see in *Ebony*?’ because *Ebony* is beautiful and glossy. ‘Now we go to America to slum. It’s water everywhere, dirty water. We have to put bricks to go through wherever we are going.’ Ernest was saying to me: ‘Is this the America of *Ebony*?’ He said it in Afrikaans with so much anger. He was annoyed.” This was, however, not where Cole lived. “He lived in a very beautiful place. It was tops, his place was great.” Kumalo said Cole had bought the place, and that he stayed there for a long time. He also commented on Cole’s life: “He had a very good life, and the whole thing was spick and span: clean, nice, very impressive. But he wasn’t happy about being in America. He actually wanted to go elsewhere, and he was also worried about people who were spies, and so on.”¹⁴⁵

THE DIFFICULT YEARS, MID-1970s UNTIL COLE'S DEATH

Kumalo came back to New York in 1974 or 1975, “because I used to go to Mohammed Ali’s fights. When I went back I didn’t know how to trace Ernest. Most of the time they’d say he was in Sweden. I couldn’t track him down.”¹⁴⁶

Wally Serote, a South African then studying at Columbia University in New York, said: “I met Ernest Cole in New York and he stayed with me 1975 – 1977. At that time he was most reclusive and seemed to be drugged. Nothing about Sweden. On looking back it was most strange. I was studying and really came late to the flat, when he would be asleep. When I left in the morning he would be asleep. Ernest was not well at all. He seemed most depressed and hardly spoke.”¹⁴⁷ South African musician Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) and Cole met both in South Africa and in New York where Ibrahim’s apartment was an unofficial ANC centre. Cole used to go there regularly but suddenly stopped. It turned out that he was then living in the subways. People left messages wherever they thought Cole might see them, and after some time he turned up again, but there was no communication. At this point Cole didn’t have a camera and he didn’t want to use a camera.

The artist Peter Clarke, who lives in Ocean View, south of Cape Town, was in New York in 1976, visiting Wally Serote. He recalled: “I spent a few days at his house and one evening we went to visit Abdullah Ibrahim, the musician. And while we were at Abdullah’s house there was a phone call, and Abdullah said to us: ‘It’s Ernest Cole’. I had not met Ernest Cole up to that time, but I knew *of* him because I’d seen his photographs in *Drum*. So I was curious about this photographer, this *very* good photographer, excellent photographer. We waited and after a while Ernest arrived by taxi, but he was in a very bad state. He was like somebody who was terribly exhausted, physically and mentally, somebody who was almost in a state of collapse. Abdullah brought him in and then he just said to him: ‘Alright, come in and lie

down over there on the bed.' So, that was my first view of Ernest Cole. He went to lie down on this bed and he slept, because Abdullah explained to us that Ernest Cole was homeless at that stage, and he had nowhere to stay. He was spending time in the subways in New York. He was just desperate and destitute. So that was my brief encounter with Ernest Cole. We did not get a chance to have a conversation or anything like that. But I was just struck by the fact that this brilliant person could end up like that: a refugee who was homeless and for whom there was really no hope at that stage, 'cause it seemed like he had nothing. It haunted me long afterwards when I thought about what happens with people like that. You know, they go away from home and go out into the world, and in many cases you don't even know what happens to them afterwards. They just become lost, so he was a loss to South Africa. 'Cause I keep thinking of him as a great photographer, a brilliant photographer, in fact, and somebody who should have been taken more seriously and somebody who would have been a valuable cultural asset to South Africa, if he was still here. That's the end of the story."¹⁴⁸ This picture of Cole was confirmed by Hans Beukes, who unsuccessfully tried to get in touch with him in 1976 when he visited New York.¹⁴⁹

One of Ernest Cole's friends who tried his best to help and accommodate Cole, whenever possible, was Joseph Lelyveld. He said that Jürgen Schadeberg was the only person with whom he ever dealt regarding Cole. Together, they raised money when necessary, and when Lelyveld wanted to communicate with somebody to get more help for Cole, he always got in touch with Schadeberg, although they met only once. Lelyveld also confirmed that for much of the 1970s Cole was homeless and living on the streets, and that he had put a lot of time and effort into locating Cole and trying to help him to a decent life.¹⁵⁰

In the early 1970s, when the printing for the exhibition in Stockholm was finished, Cole tried to find storage for his negatives but, unfortunately, it didn't work out.¹⁵¹ In the mid-1970s, probably in 1976, when he could no longer pay for his room at the Pickwick Arms hotel in New York, he left his things behind, including his negatives and prints, as he had no fixed address. In

1977 Cole asked for help and Joseph Lelyveld joined him in a search for his belongings. Under the law of the City of New York, hotels have to register the things guests have left with them and keep them for a certain period of time. There is a procedure for disposing of them.¹⁵² In his book *Move your Shadow* (1985), Lelyveld wrote: “One afternoon we went together to a cheap boarding hotel where he had stashed his few possessions, including negatives and the only picture he had of his mother in Pretoria; the manager took down a ledger and showed us that they all had gone in an auction of unclaimed articles, held according to New York’s regulations for such sales. Ernest was left with only the clothes on his back.”¹⁵³

Lelyveld told me: “There were negatives in the stuff that was lost at the Pickwick Arms. That’s what Ernest told me; and there were letters from his mother and all the personal photographs that he had of his family. And this stuff was never recovered. The stuff left here he must have left in 1976. He lived in the subway. I mean, he was in terrible shape. He was in, not exactly rags, but he had dirty clothes, he hadn’t bathed for a very long time, and he looked like a street person. He never lived on the street but he told me that he slept on the subways.”¹⁵⁴

Lelyveld arranged for Cole to stay in one of the rooms of the apartment his brother had for a summer (1977). However, Lelyveld recalled: “Ernest was probably bipolar or something, I don’t know what it was, but this is where the mystical comes in. He had this idea that no one in New York observed the sky. It was a soulless city and somebody had to watch the sunrise and somebody had to watch the sunset. That was his job, he was doing it for all the people of New York. And so he sat there at the window watching the sunset. This felt spooky to my brother. He also spent a lot of time in the bathroom. There was only one bathroom and Ernest would go in there and lock the door and stay there for an hour. That was very inconvenient for my brother who suddenly said he couldn’t handle it any more, so I put Ernest into the YMCA on 44th Street for a while.”¹⁵⁵

At some point Cole lost his travel documents, his green card (he didn’t have

a passport), so in 1977 Lelyveld helped him to get a new one: “I got him a new green card that same summer, which wasn’t easy to do. And in fact I had a very strange experience with him. I was staying in a hotel close to 55th and Park. We had an appointment that I had set up to meet the head of the whole immigration office. Ernest was supposed to meet me – he was staying with my brother then – and we were going to meet this big official to get him a new green card and I was pulling strings in a way that I really shouldn’t have, through the *New York Times*. We had asked the attorney general’s office how to get him a new green card and we had an appointment, and he didn’t show up. So, I took a taxi up to where my brother lived, but there was nobody at home. I was kind of frantic and I was looking around and there was Ernest, on Broadway. And, I said: ‘Come on Ernest. Let’s get in the cab. We are late. We have this appointment.’ And he said ‘Wait a minute.’ I think he got into the cab and he apologized for not having come to meet me and he said it wasn’t easy for him to travel. I said, all right let’s just go, so we got into the cab and went all the way downtown, to lower Manhattan and we arrived at this great big building, the immigration building. There was a line outside with all the people trying to get their papers in order or get new papers. And we had an appointment to go right up there and I said, ‘Come on Ernest, we’re late’ but he said sorry again and, ‘Just wait a minute. We have just been travelling horizontally very fast across New York, now you want me to go vertically. I must readjust my thinking before I can go up.’ So I stood there watching him readjusting his thinking and I kept on saying, ‘Ernest, come on, hurry up!’ And finally he agreed and we went up to get his green card.”¹⁵⁶

John Hillelson read me a letter from Cole: “There is something I meant to tell you earlier but I’ve forgot. London is filled with organizations supposedly working for the liberation of South Africans, please don’t sell them a single photograph, or any of my photographs, no matter how much they offer.” Hillelson also found a letter he had written to Cole in 1978 and which was returned with the information that he had moved from Sloan House in New York, address unknown.¹⁵⁷

Around 1978 Julian Bahula met Cole in New York, and, seeing that he didn't look well, invited Cole to come and stay with him and his wife, Liza, in London. Bahula said: "I don't really know what had happened to the guy."¹⁵⁸ Around the same time, in 1979, Lelyveld and Schadeberg were in contact about Cole and his situation, and Schadeberg suggested that Cole should apply for a British alien's passport and move to Europe.¹⁵⁹

Cole came to London in 1979 and spent some time there. He stayed with the Bahulas for a few months. Liza Bahula recalled: "When he came and stayed with us, he was not mentally all right. I think he was mentally ill and needed treatment. He was very very sick, really." She continued: "I think he was a little obsessive about the book. He was generally obsessive about what he thought about everything at that stage. I don't know what happened to the copy of *House of Bondage* Ernest had with him. He had a hang-up about it and his copy of the book had lots of notes in the margins about what he didn't like, what it should have been like and things like that."¹⁶⁰

Julian Bahula showed me a picture of Ernest Cole sitting on their sofa between two of Julian Bahula's relatives from Mamelodi, the wives of his cousins, Mary and Joyce Kekana, taken in June 1979. He also commented on how different organizations used Cole's pictures without either permission or a credit line. "I knew that Defence and Aid [the International Defence and Aid Fund, IDAF] were using some of Ernest's photos, so I suggested he go to see Barry Feinberg at Defence and Aid to get some help."¹⁶¹ One day Cole just went out without saying where he was going, and he didn't come back. They thought he might have gone to Sweden. However, Liza Bahula was sure that he went into some sort of treatment first. "It may have been a sort of retreat with nuns or something. I don't know where it was or what actually happened. It was all very mysterious. He just sort of disappeared."¹⁶² Julian Bahula says, "He said he was going to Defence and Aid, to see the director, Barry Feinberg, and I think Barry Feinberg helped him with some money. The next thing I heard of him was when I was told the disturbing news of his death."¹⁶³ Barry Feinberg confirmed that he helped Ernest Cole financially to get back to New York.¹⁶⁴

Jürgen Schadeberg recalled his last meeting with Cole, in the summer of 1979, when Cole came to London and was granted a residence permit, possibly after he left the Bahulas. Schadeberg arranged for a meeting with Anthony Sampson, ex-editor of *Drum* (after Tom Hopkinson), British writer and journalist, and with Colin Osman, founder and editor of *Creative Camera*, who wanted to do an article about him.¹⁶⁵ The *British Journal of Photography* was interested in helping, but nothing seemed to matter to Cole; he remained apathetic. Schadeberg arranged for him to stay with his girlfriend for a few weeks but claimed that Cole just sat at the window looking out, not socializing at all. One day Cole disappeared from the apartment in west London. Schadeberg got a phone call from the police and immediately went to a police station in east London, but when he arrived, 30–40 minutes later, someone else had already picked up Cole and his companions.¹⁶⁶

South African artist Lefifi Tladi came to Sweden in 1980. He knew Cole's work quite well as he was a close associate of Cole's friend Geoff Mphakati. Tladi met Ernest Cole briefly in his studio in Stockholm, probably in 1984, just before Cole was about to leave the country.¹⁶⁷

South African Sam Gulube came to New York in 1979 to study and he met and got to know Cole. Gulube and his friends arranged for him to stay with some friends in Harlem, among them Michael Zulu, and Cole was invited to the ANC meetings to have coffee or tea with them and take part in their discussions.¹⁶⁸ Gulube recalled: "He was a very quiet man, very reserved, but when he started talking he would talk a lot of sense, I mean the content of his expression – he could actually express himself very well. And, somehow, he wouldn't like to talk about himself in terms of what he was doing. He was happy to talk about South Africa, but not about himself." He and Thabi Nyide, both students in New York at that time, explained the tough situation for Cole: "The isolation in exile, the lack of family and structure. Just moving with friends who come and go out of New York. I think it affected him tremendously. He reached a point where he had no people to live with and to work with. Probably people used him.... We felt, oh, what a pity, another

black talent from South Africa being abused and then dropped in the street of New York to look after himself.” Thabi Nyide pointed to the difficulty in penetrating Cole: “We couldn’t delve into the personality of Ernest and really find out what happened. A lot of us were students, we had sympathy with each other, but I am not sure that we always got to the depth of what was ailing any one of us. Perhaps Ernest would have benefitted from a much more profound search about what was troubling him. This guy was probably the most sick of us.” Gulube also said: “At that time we were trying to do some projects with the UN Special Committee against apartheid. They prepared an anti-apartheid exhibition of pictures, and [Cole’s] pictures had been used in all kinds of books that had been issued by the International Defence and Aid Fund from London as well as the UN Special Committee against apartheid. We wanted him to do that project with us, because I would say that he was getting a little bit disturbed mentally, probably from the stress of poverty and suffering, and we wanted him to just focus on the project and have it completed.” But, according to Tabi Nyide, Cole wanted to “... do his work on his own”. Gulube also remembered that Cole had a lot of pictures: “He would always be carrying this bag and some of the pictures that he had taken. This could have been in 1979, 1980. Later on he was not doing well at all, so I don’t even know if he had a camera.”¹⁶⁹ Sam Gulube left New York in 1985.

Joseph Lelyveld travelled around the world, working in India, London, and then back in South Africa as foreign correspondent for the *New York Times*, so he didn’t have much contact with Cole over the years. However, they met the day Lelyveld was leaving New York for London, around 1985. Lelyveld wanted to give Cole a copy of his book, *Move Your Shadow* (1985), to show Cole what he had written about him. So he found Cole and gave him the book and signed it for him, and recalls that “he was very pleased and he didn’t complain.” Then Cole fell asleep sitting on one of the dining room chairs in the middle of Lelyveld’s living room. The Lelyvelds were moving out, and before long there was nothing left in the apartment except Ernest Cole, asleep on the only remaining piece of furniture. Lelyveld shook him awake and said “Ernest, we have to go now”, and he got up from the chair with his

book under his arm. Lelyveld doesn't think he saw Cole again until he came to him in desperate need of a doctor in 1989.¹⁷⁰

Bochabelo Nkomo, nephew of Aubrey Nkomo, came to New York from South Africa to study in 1984. About a year later he met Cole. Nkomo explained that students coming from South Africa usually met on weekends to socialize, and Cole would often join them. He sometimes spent the whole weekend with them. They didn't know where he lived and sometimes he stayed with them for a week and then just disappeared. Then they might see him on the street and invite him to come to one of their apartments, where he was always welcome; but he usually said that he could manage by himself.

Bochabelo Nkomo said that, when he met Ernest Cole, "... it was not going well for him. He was not doing any work and he was not mentally himself. You could tell that something had happened." But Nkomo never found out what.¹⁷¹

In 1986 South African photographer Rashid Lombard visited New York, coming to Magnum for an internship. One of the reasons for his visit was that he wanted to meet Ernest Cole. At Magnum, Lombard claims that he saw some pictures by Cole taken in the US: "I was one of the interns, I was assigned to Eli Reed, so I sat in the office with Magnum photographers Eli Reed, Philip Jones Griffiths and Susan Meiselas. Bruce Davidson, when I met him, said, 'Ernest Cole; come with me', went straight to a file and got all these pictures taken in America."¹⁷² Magnum, however, maintain that they haven't had any pictures taken by Cole since he left them in 1969.¹⁷³ Lombard also recalled a meeting with René Burri and their talk about Cole: "Ernest Cole – where is he? I'd like to see him. I helped him come over from Europe to America."¹⁷⁴

Like most South African artists who arrived in New York, Rashid Lombard got in touch with Abdullah Ibrahim. Lombard recalled that "Abdullah Ibrahim told me, 'Don't worry, if it's not once every month, once every second month he comes and visits me.' And one night I just got a call. Abdullah said: 'Come

over now.' I went over and there I found him, looking as good as ever. And the first thing he said to me: 'Oh, thank God it's not another student I'm meeting!' I said: 'What? I'm a student of the world!' So we talked about music and books and photography. But he was in good health. You know, I was told that he's like homeless, and he was homeless, but not homeless in the sense that he was sleeping in the subways. You know, he was taken care of at a church in Manhattan, on Riverside Drive there's a church, it's quite well organized."¹⁷⁵ The Riverside Church confirms that there was "a homeless shelter for ten men in the 1980s, but no record of who stayed there."¹⁷⁶

Lombard stayed in New York for eight months, rather than the three he had initially planned. He showed me the pictures he took of Cole and their meetings: "It's New York in the background. That's the first night we met. I said to him: 'Let's go have a drink, let's celebrate.' And he said: 'Yes, let's go have coffee and doughnuts.' 'Just have a fucking beer, *please*.' 'No, coffee and doughnuts.' He had a tea and a doughnut, I had a beer, and another beer, and he said: 'No no no, I've stopped drinking.' And then we started walking."

Lombard and Cole spent quite a lot of time together, "... just meeting. He came to my apartment where I was staying with some friends. And that's where my camera was. I used a Canon, and he picked it up and asked if there was film in it, and took a few shots, and I obviously took pictures of him just *looking*. At the time he left South Africa I think he was using a Leica. But he was amazed at the equipment, so he took about two or three shots, and then I took some of him. We spent a lot of time together, just talking about South Africa."¹⁷⁷

I haven't found much information about Cole from the late 1970s and 1980s, but most of what I know comes from the late 1980s. Aubrey Nkomo, who was away from New York until 1978, said: "He was off my radar until quite late, the late 1980s, and his life had closed in on him. He no longer had his equipment and he was staying with friends, and he had changed completely, he had withdrawn into himself, tremendously withdrawn into himself. That

was when Cyril Khanyile, a medical doctor who was then practising in New York, with offices in Harlem, took him in and offered him refuge. His life had become a shadow and it was sad.”¹⁷⁸

Dr Khanyile, as Aubrey Nkomo has pointed out, was one person who, other than Lelyveld, played an important role in the latter part of Cole’s life. They first met in the late 1970s. “I think my first meeting with Ernest was at a friend’s place, and he was having what I thought were hallucinations and I arranged to give him some medicine, some anti-psychotic medicine, which sort of messed him up. I think maybe his distrust, and all that stuff, stems from that experience, in retrospect. Because I gave him a shot to help these apparent hallucinations, you know how we doctors are, I made him feel horrible. And he never really told me that directly.”¹⁷⁹

Khanyile went on: “At some point, something very terrible happened in Ernest’s view, that sort of changed him completely, so that he was traumatized, hurt or disturbed psychologically. And one thing that kept coming up was the thing of the book *House of Bondage*. While everybody was all excited about the work and how it was bringing to the fore so much information from behind the scenes, Ernest was nevertheless not only interested in the story being told, but also how it was being told! There’s a certain aspect of Ernest which was very rigid; things had to be his way, or no way. And I think when he was faced with a situation where, even though the creative juices came from him and the impetus to tell the story came from him, it was somebody else who was going to decide how this story was going to be told. I think, reflecting upon it, that was something that really hurt him, perhaps a naiveté. Business has its own imperatives and mandates! So does the creative spirit – these forces aren’t always in synch. It was a dream all his life, to do this work and to have it come out, but what he had envisioned did not come to pass. Ernest wanted the pictures and only the pictures to tell a story. And when you look at pictures from his book you look at a train station and even if you haven’t been in apartheid South Africa you can sense what it is. You have people packed like sardines, or worse, and even up on the crossway. And then you have another – for whites only –

with relaxed white people, and not crowded. But, I mean, the powerful way he was able to capture things, I think, on an artistic level and even historical level, he knew what he had and that he had a special eye to capture moments, events, and even history in the making.”¹⁸⁰

In the late 1980s, when Cole was homeless, Khanyile offered to let him stay in his apartment:¹⁸¹ “He often stayed briefly with different people, but basically and largely he did not have a specific place that he could call home. So, my intent was to get him a stable residence, to get him into treatment and get him some benefits and just make life easier for him because there was a room, there was food, there were people, he could come and go, whatever.”¹⁸²

When Cole was staying with Dr Khanyile he was not working, and he was not getting any welfare benefits. Khanyile recalls how he tried to get Cole a welfare grant: “I said: ‘Ernest, why don’t we apply for a grant?’ For him to get a grant, he would have to be seen by a professional who would fill out the forms to okay him to get a grant. And that was the Harlem Hospital experience. He faithfully went to those visits and part of the deal was, I said: ‘Okay, I’m going to pay you twenty dollars each time you go there.’ And he was interested in that twenty dollars and would demand it when he came back. The psychiatrist that he saw at Harlem Hospital, I did not know who she was and we never talked about what she found, but I know that she did help out, because he did get the grant subsequently... But when the cheques came – he didn’t cash them, they just piled up. When I found the stack of cheques, uncashed, nine or so, and I wanted to take him to the bank to open an account, he would say, ‘No, not you’. And it wasn’t until I asked Veretta [Veretta Garrison-Moller] to intervene, and with Veretta he was able to open an account and he took all that money, deposited it but he never spent a *cent* of it.”¹⁸³

Dr Khanyile explained: “I saw him as a national hero and my intention was that we had to begin to take care of our own. And it was the same thing with Dumile [the artist Dumile Feni]. He also stayed in my apartment during that

time. It wasn't that I was well-off or anything, but I could do that without difficulty."¹⁸⁴

Many have spoken about the 1960s as a culturally active period in South Africa, but explain that young people of today do not know about artists like Ernest Cole or Dumile Feni because they had been in exile. Cole's book had been banned in South Africa and, as a result, it is still little-known.

When Cole was staying with Cyril Khanyile he didn't have a camera. Khanyile explained: "That's when I bought him a camera. He wanted a Leica. I think I couldn't afford it. I bought a Nikkormat, which wasn't really what he wanted. It was a big bulky camera but still he took a lot of pictures with it." Khanyile remembered giving Cole two assignments: to document the homeless, whom – and whose life – he knew; and to document Dumile Feni working on his sculpture "History" (or "His Story") in the apartment. When talking about Cole's pictures with this camera, Khanyile said: "When you look at some of the pictures of the homeless, you see a homeless person sort of begging, and Ernest had that ability to really capture the moment – and even as he's scratching himself you can see he hasn't washed for days, or he's reaching into the garbage to look for scraps. And you have different homeless people in different positions, giving you just a sense of this thing, and the power of it. On the one hand he's a human being just like you, and on another hand he's reduced to living this way for whatever reasons."¹⁸⁵

Like Lelyveld, Khanyile recalled Cole dominating the bathroom: "Ernest was spiritual. He would take time for meditation, and I remember we'd fight about using the bathroom. The house had three bathrooms but Ernest would choose the one that was commonly used by everybody, and he'd go in there and meditate – not for ten or fifteen minutes, but maybe for four hours. And it didn't matter whether you were rushing to go to work or anything, he'd be there. He was a theosophist, he was a Rudolf Steiner."

Khanyile also explained that: "Ernest had a way with people so that while he was very, you know, encapsulated, he had a cocoon around himself, he

could go into different places and reveal whatever aspect of himself he wanted to. And, as a result, with all the things that were different or the idiosyncrasies he had, he still had quite natural ease associating with the South African community, with a whole lot of people. I think, maybe, Ernest had the sense to be cautious about everything.¹⁸⁶ ... Unfortunately, he compartmentalized everything – you'd sort of *know* there is somebody in Sweden, but you'd not know who it was or how to get in touch with him. I remember begging him at some point, 'Let's get hold of the guy in Sweden, let's redo the book.' At least at that time, he was not even willing to compromise. Because, to me, the book could conceivably be redone differently, meaning you could have a narrative at the beginning and then just have the pictures sort of tell the story as he wanted to. He never told me about Joseph Lelyveld until the very end, when Cole's family [mother and sister] were coming and he sort of conferred with me a little bit."¹⁸⁷

Veretta Garrison-Moller lived in the same apartment building as Khanyile and got to know Cole towards the end of his life, about six months before he died. Cole used to come to her apartment to have toast and tea – “he loved tea” – and “he talked a lot. Maybe because I listened. He always sat in the same chair. He wanted to have everything the same every day. He was a man of habits... We got extremely close for some reason. Ernest told his secrets, he often visited me – he almost adopted me. Perhaps because the chemistry between us worked – he seemed to feel confident with me. It was not for many years, but the intensity was greater than some relationships that last longer. He seemed to be comfortable, as I wasn't expecting anything. I was an outsider. There was some kind of unspoken connection between us. I treated him as a human being and had no expectations. I didn't know how big he was. I know more about his photography from afar. He told me about his South African experience. I went to university in Heidelberg, in Germany, where I met many exiles, so I had an understanding and could have empathy. Ernest talked a little about his mother and the reason for his going into exile. He had a deep fear and hatred, a hatred of the police and the oppressors.”¹⁸⁸

Reflecting on Cole, Garrison-Moller said: “When he stayed with other people he wanted to be free like when he was staying with Cyril Khanyile, who helped by giving freely. Ernest didn’t want people to push him. He would tell me, at different times, that people took his things, his cameras, and so on.” She also explained that: “Ernest was intrigued and attracted to homeless people in New York. My observation was that part of him felt that he shouldn’t do better than them. He felt guilty otherwise. It was like ‘keeping it real’. He was close to that kind of lifestyle.”¹⁸⁹

“When Ernest was sick,” she explained, “he didn’t want anyone coming. South Africans are very possessive so he didn’t want to have visits from them. He was very suspicious of them. He didn’t trust Cyril, he said so, and he warned me against him. Ernest had some paranoia.” She also recalled: “There was somebody out there, in California. A woman. Ernest asked me to tell her, so I talked to her when he had died. I do not remember her name.”¹⁹⁰

The person in question was Monica Suder, who met Ernest Cole as early as the late 1960s (1967 or 1968) when she was working at Magnum Photos in New York. She says, “We certainly had a professional and social relationship while I lived in New York. I lost touch with Ernest when I left the country and travelled and later resettled in San Francisco.” By coincidence they got back in touch with each other in the late 1980s and talked quite a bit shortly before he died. They were in almost daily telephone contact and he talked to her about many things. Suder says that Cole was angry and that he was very disappointed with his relationships, his friendships, his career, how people responded to his work, etc.. She mainly listened and tried to soothe his spirit, to get him to be at peace with himself.¹⁹¹

The last time Cole contacted Joseph Lelyveld he was in desperate need of a doctor. “I saw Ernest in 1985, I think, when I moved back to New York briefly. Then I moved to London and moved back to New York in 1987, and I don’t think I saw Ernest immediately. But he showed up at my place, I think in the fall of 1989. He told me he was sick, he didn’t feel well and needed to see a doctor. I did get one for him, and I am the one who got him into New York

Hospital. It was done through my doctor, who was on the staff of New York Hospital. He was brought in as a charity case. They took very good care of him, and he was there for close to a month before he died.”¹⁹²

Lelyveld also mentioned the Iranian-born doctor who cared for Cole during his stay at New York Hospital, Dr Shahin Rafii, who related his experiences of having Ernest Cole as a patient:

Just a few days ago I was thinking about Ernest Cole in the light of the recent uprising in Iran. Ernest was an amazing, brilliant, compassionate freedom-fighter and a talented photographer.

I admitted Ernest in early 1990 to New York Hospital – Cornell Medical Center in New York with the diagnosis of advanced pancreatic cancer. He had no insurance and financially he was not secure. Somehow, I was able to pull several strings and admit him to the hospital without stressing him for financial issues and started treating him with chemotherapy promptly.

Initially, he was distraught and emotionally drained about his diagnosis but gradually with treatment and support he was very interactive and developed an incredible energy and will to fight the cancer. He was always thoughtful and respectful of the doctors and hospital staff.

One of the most remarkable moments of his hospitalization was on February 11, 1990, when Nelson Mandela was released from jail. I ordered a television connection and sat down with him and watched the release of Nelson Mandela from jail. Even though Ernest was receiving chemotherapy and did not feel good he was smiling and was very cheerful celebrating the freedom of Nelson Mandela. In fact, that day I was able to give him therapy without anti-emetics since he was so excited that nothing would faze him.

I have to mention that one of the most important advocates of Ernest was Mr. Joe Lelyveld. Joe was constantly watching over and providing emotional and financial support for Ernest. Without Joe I do not know what would have happened to Ernest.

Unfortunately, as Mr. Cole's pancreatic cancer was advanced it was difficult to contain and he passed away within a few months of diagnosis.¹⁹³ If he had had the diagnosis earlier he might have had a better chance of responding to chemotherapy. Apparently, with his condition he had no access to medical care.

I attended the wake of Ernest and met his family. It was a spiritual experience for me to see how the life of a photographer and freedom-fighter had not gone to waste. I feel lucky and honored to have met him.¹⁹⁴

Cyril Khanyile recalled the last part of Cole's life: "Ernest was staying with me, except for when he'd disappear and go away. And even when he was sick, he gave my address. And that's how I found out that he was sick. And when he was in the hospital they called me to say: 'Well, you know, we need you to arrange for somebody to assist him.' Like a nursing assistant who was going to be there. And I hired some South African boys to assist him. And even the funeral [memorial], the arrangement for the service, I, sort of, was instrumental in setting that up with the South African community."¹⁹⁵

One of the South African students Khanyile hired to be with Ernest Cole in the evenings was Bochabelo Nkomo, who "gave him attention in the evenings when the normal staff couldn't do it, but could leave when he had fallen asleep, usually some hours after midnight." Nkomo also recalled that people from home came to visit, as did Joseph Lelyveld with his wife and daughter. He also remembered that Cole's mother and sister came before he died.¹⁹⁶

When South African photographer Omar Badsha arrived in New York in

January 1990, he went directly to find his friend Dumile Feni, who was also staying with Dr Khanyile. He recalled: “The first obvious question was: ‘Dumile, where is Ernest Cole?’ But Dumile wasn’t very forthcoming. He was very reluctant. So I said: ‘Hey, what’s wrong?’ Then he said: ‘Look man, this chap is sick, he doesn’t want anyone to come and see him or know about it.’ So I said: ‘No, I’m not taking that. I want to go and see him wherever he is.’ So we went to see him, and we went to the hospital. And Ernest said: ‘Oh, I know all about you! You’re fucking full of politics, I hear. Not taking pictures, you’re full of politics.’ He was *very* aggressive, *very* alert and very *provocative*. I had my camera with me, and Ernest asked: ‘Can I look at your camera?’ He felt it, it was a Leica. And, oh, you could see the way he handled it, that it fitted in his hand, it was natural.”¹⁹⁷

Omar Badsha left New York to travel around America for about two weeks. When he returned to New York he went straight to the hospital. He said: “I think it was a Friday. And I went in and saw him. I spent about two to three hours with him. From his bed Ernest said: ‘Carry me.’ And I had to carry him out of his bed. He was just skin and bones, and all these tubes he had. And we had to take him into a little room with the sun coming through and a couple of chairs. We sat there and chatted. It was difficult but nice to talk because you couldn’t talk about the future. Here is a man you know is dying. Then I left, and I said: ‘I’ll come and see you again. I’ll come on Sunday.’ Sunday morning I went to Abdullah Ibrahim, to his flat, and then I told him about Ernest, that he was very sick. We were having breakfast in a little café there. After breakfast we went back to his flat, Abdullah had agreed that we’d go together to the hospital, and as we got into the flat, his wife told us that Dumile had phoned to say that Ernest had died. I was leaving the next day, so I didn’t go to the hospital again. Only later I heard that his mother and sister had come.” Omar Badsha mentions that they later set up a scholarship, called The Ernest Cole Scholarship.¹⁹⁸

When Lelyveld became aware of Cole’s cancer, he started to make plans for sending Cole to South Africa. “That was the plan, but it took me a while. I negotiated with the South African Consulate here and finally got him a travel

permit to go home, because in their eyes he was no longer a South African citizen. And by the time we got the permit for him to go home, he was not able, he was too ill to travel...I know we had put in money for Ernest's ticket to go home, and I thought we used that ticket to pay for their tickets [his mother and sister], but maybe that's not true."¹⁹⁹

Cyril Khanyile agreed. "Joseph Lelyveld did play quite a part in all this. It was he who was in contact with the family, and I think he even paid for their tickets to come and see Ernest. And Ernest had constant contact with Lelyveld at different times. I wasn't privy to that information. So he was staying with me for two or three years, you know, he'd come and go as he pleased, and all the friends were compartmentalized."²⁰⁰

Cole's sister Catherine Hlatshwayo explained that they heard about Ernest's illness from Mr Mphakati when he was already hospitalized. She tells a slightly different version of the story about the payment of the tickets: "We got a message and I am sure that they informed the Special Branch because they allowed us to go and get a visa to go to America, to go to see Ernest as he had terminal cancer. After getting our visas our transport and tickets were arranged for by the ANC by Mrs Wren. Everything was arranged by Mr Mphakati, but I surely went to Johannesburg to go and collect the tickets. My mother didn't pay for her ticket. I had to pay half of the money for mine. We boarded the airplane in the evening here. It was still Jan Smuts Airport then. We went to Heathrow. A gentleman with a card with our names took us to a hotel, called the Lexington Hotel, not so far away from Heathrow. And there we rested. In the evening we boarded airline two to New York. From there they took us to an apartment in a nice Harlem, the nice New York Harlem. So we settled down for the two weeks we were there. And that very evening Dr Khanyile took us to the hospital, the New York Hospital. We saw him. He was talking to us. He was very glad to see us. And we came back to our apartment, arranged by Dr. Khanyile."²⁰¹

Joseph Lelyveld recalls the visit by Cole's family: "I think they arrived on a Friday afternoon and then they went to the home of this doctor where Ernest

had been staying. The mother felt dirty after the trip so they needed to wash up and everything before they came, so it was a few hours before they got there. And then they arrived. All I remember well is just how pleased and moved and satisfied Ernest was to see his mother. It was as if he had kept himself alive till that minute. Like a burden being lifted from him. And, very sweet and soft she put her hand on the back of his neck to feel for something, and then she said; 'Ah, he is dying'. Whatever she had some test or, I don't know what it was."²⁰²

Catherine Hlatshwayo talked about their visits to the hospital that weekend: "The following morning we went back to the hospital and in the afternoon we went back again. It was a Saturday. So we stayed for a time with him there, not in the room, it was in the hall. He was already out of his ward. *He could walk!* He came and sat with us in the hall. We were just talking about life in general, Ernest asking where are the people he knows, how many had died and this and that. He was quite normal and quite clear. He wasn't delirious, nothing. And then we went back in the evening, when it was visiting hours. Sunday morning we got a call that Ernest was very sick so we went back to the hospital. And that was the day when he was dying. We just looked at him when he gasped until he died."²⁰³

Cyril Khanyile also recalled that weekend: "It's very interesting, as sick as he was, on that day, to meet them, he arranged with the nurses that they would meet him in the lounge and that he'd be sitting 'like a king in his castle'. But of course he was in a lot of pain, the cancer had grown and it interfered with his movements and a lot of things, but he was able to meet with them and talk. It was very touching."²⁰⁴

Catherine remembered that everyone really looked after her and her mother, and came to visit with them after Ernest's death. "Even some of the black people from South Africa in exile came and visited. A memorial service was also organized in an Anglican church."²⁰⁵ The memorial service in New York was held in The Church of Heavenly Rest, Chapel of the Beloved Disciple, on Fifth Avenue, around 90th Street, just opposite the reservoir in Central

Park. There were two ministers at the service, Dr John Stubbs, a white South African minister from the Anglican Church, and one from the Riverside Methodist Church. Dr Stubbs had not known Cole personally.²⁰⁶ At the memorial service Cole's sister Catherine made a reading, and among the speakers were Joseph Lelyveld and Cyril Khanyile.²⁰⁷

Catherine said: "After the ceremony they cooked, African style, just as we do here in South Africa. They came with food just the same way as we do here in South Africa. They came from all over, those who could come, those who were in exile, they came with pots, having cooked, some of them cooked there."²⁰⁸

Martha Kole refused to bury her son in America, saying: "No, I will not bury him there." They didn't have any other options than to cremate him. They then left his ashes in the Anglican church until they returned home. Catherine had the box with his ashes on her lap in the aeroplane on the journey back to South Africa.²⁰⁹ When they got home, according to Sophina Mphakati: "... the members of the ANC flooded the house."²¹⁰ Catherine recalls: "... and the night before his funeral was when they (the police) started throwing teargas at the windows, through the windows, breaking the windows." Then they had a normal funeral with a real coffin, putting the carton with the ashes in it. Catherine said: "For Ernest's funeral my mother didn't spend a cent, the ANC did it all, everything, the coffin, food and everything."²¹¹

The grave, at Mamelodi cemetery, is very impressive, with polished rocks and a "book" with inscriptions of the facts about his life (name and dates) on one of the pages. On the stone slab covering the grave is an inscription:

Cole
Photographer

Gunilla Knape

This text is a compilation of quotations from interviews and research about Ernest Cole and his life I have undertaken since 2008. It was difficult to find people who knew him or knew about him, because he “compartmentalized” them, i.e. he kept his different relationships apart, not revealing them to each other. There will still be many people whom I have not been able to trace or contact but as this project will be kept alive on the internet, I would be most grateful for input and comments about information that is missing or needs to be revised, mistakes, people to contact for more information, etc.. Please see www.hasselbladfoundation.org

Notes

1. Joint interview with Catherine Hlatshwayo, Sam Kole, Theo Kole and Sophina Mphakati (wife of the late Geoff Mphakati) in Mamelodi, 17 March 2009.
2. Interview with Julian Bahula in Westbury, 25–26 May 2009.
3. Ibid. and interview with Matjie Bapela in Mamelodi, 17 March 2010.
4. Sophina Mphakati in joint interview in Mamelodi, 17 March 2009.
5. Julian Bahula, op.cit.
6. *Ernest Cole: 1940-1990 Photo Journalist*, 1999. Film made by Jürgen and Claudia Schadeberg; Catherine Hlatshwayo, op.cit.; conversation with Philip Tabane in Mamelodi, 17 March 2009 and with Julian Bahula, op.cit.. Also downloaded from <http://www.3rdear music.com/hyarchive/hyarchive/malombo.html>
7. Interview with Moses Mogale in Mamelodi, 27 March 2009.
8. Sophina Mphakati, op.cit.
9. Moses Mogale, op.cit.
10. Interview with Dan Mogale in Wonderpark, 19 March 2010.
11. Shown to me during my visits to Mamelodi, March 2009 and March 2010.

12. Email information: Jürgen Schadeberg, Head of Photography Department, Production Manager, Designer, Picture Editor, and mentor to new young black employees such as Peter Magubane, Bob Gosani and Ernest Cole.
13. "A Century of South African Photography", manuscript by Claudia Schadeberg, 1994.
14. Email communication with Jürgen Schadeberg, 24 August 2009.
15. Interview with Jürgen Shadeberg in Paris, 12 November 2008.
16. Telephone conversation with Ian Berry, 5 May 2009.
17. It is hard to know exactly when Cole was classified as Coloured, but he was referred to as Cole in an article in *Drum* magazine in 1960.
18. Interview with Alf Kumalo in Diepkloof, 18 March 2009.
19. From Rune Hassner's film, "Bilder för miljoner", part 5, "Lewis Hines & Ernest Cole", produced for and shown on Swedish television in 1969.
20. Alf Kumalo, op.cit.
21. Ibid.
22. Interview with Keorapetse Kgositsile in Pretoria, 20 March 2009.
23. Interview with Joe Thloloe in Johannesburg, 15 March 2010.
24. Interview with Struan Robertson in Vancouver, BC, 10–12 March 2008. Cole and Robertson had seen each other on assignments before but the first time they met and talked was on 29 March 1961.
25. Alf Kumalo, op.cit.
26. Julian Bahula, op.cit.
27. ID that Coloured people had to carry, a plastic card similar to a credit card.
28. Dompas, an identification document, like a booklet with information about employer etc., that every black person of approximately 16 or older had to carry at all times.
29. Catherine Hlatshwayo, op.cit.

30. Ibid.
31. Sam Kole in joint interview in Mamelodi, 17 March 2009.
32. Sophina Mphakati, op.cit.
33. “Is it Higher Wages at Last?”, *Drum*, July 1960, Text by Nathaniel Nakasa: Photographs by Peter Magubane, Alan Rake and Ernest Cole.
34. “Where the children of Africa learn to read and write ...”, *Sunday Express*, 18 March 1962, p. 9, for which at least part of the pictures were taken by Ernest Cole; “This is Bantu Education”, *New Age*, 25 Jan 1962; “They Go Home Only To Die”, *New Age*, 15 March 1962 (about mine workers); and “It’s Integration – Result of Group Areas Act”, *Drum*, May 1962, referenced: “Story by Casey Motsisi: Pictures by Ernest Cole”.
35. Struan Robertson, “Ernest Cole in the House of Bondage”, in this volume.
36. Interview with Matjie and Louie Bapela in Mamelodi, 10 March 2010.
37. From Ernest Cole’s South African passport.
38. Julian Bahula, op.cit.
39. Alf Kumalo, op.cit.
40. Ibid.
41. Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The People of Moscow*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1955.
42. Joseph Lelyveld, “One of the least-known countries in the world”, in Cole, *House of Bondage*, p. 16.
43. Interview with Joseph Lelyveld in New York, 17 April 2009; *New York Times*, 20 March and 19 June 1966.
44. Joseph Lelyveld in *House of Bondage*, op.cit., p. 3.
45. Joseph Lelyveld, interview, op.cit.
46. Catherine Hlatshwayo, op.cit.; and Schadeberg’s film, op.cit.
47. Theo Kole in joint interview in Mamelodi, 17 March 2009.
48. Robertson, “Ernest Cole in the House of Bondage”, op.cit.
49. Joseph Lelyveld in *House of Bondage*, op.cit., p. 19.
50. Joseph Lelyveld, interview, op.cit.

51. Interview with Jürgen Schadeberg in Paris, 12 November 2008.
52. According to his South African passport, Cole left London on 14 May for Paris and returned to London on 25 May.
53. John Hillelson, email 11 April 2008, and interview in London, 27 May 2009; Lelyveld also told me about Cole meeting Marc Riboud in Paris, interview in New York, 17 April 2009.
54. Interview with John Hillelson in London, 27 May 2009.
55. Email from John Hillelson, 30 April 2008. The *Sunday Times Magazine* article was published on 27 November 1966.
56. Shulie (one of Ernest Cole's sisters) wrote in a letter of 14 June 1966 that they had received a letter, sent to Geoffrey Mphakati's address for safety reasons. She wrote, "A day before we received your Post Card, that is on the 23 May, two S.B.'s (Special Branch) came this way." She explained that they had asked for him, pretending that they didn't know anything, but the family realized that they had discovered that he was already in London.
57. Cole left London for Paris on 2 July, went to Copenhagen on 19 July, and left there on 5 September.
58. Interview with Wana Makoba in Stockholm, 26 October 2009.
59. Copy of his South African passport and different applications for residence permits.
60. Email from John Hillelson, 24 April 2008, with excerpt from message of 20 July 1966. Sam Holmes was a former Magnum New York archivist who had retired a few years earlier but was brought in to help with editing and classification of large new projects.
61. Email from James Fox, 26 September 2009, concerning archival material from Magnum – spiral binders with copies of interoffice correspondence between Magnum's New York and Paris offices.
62. Email from James Fox, 26 September 2009 including excerpts from a message of 21 July from Lee Jones, Director of the New York Magnum office, to Russ Melcher, Paris Magnum Bureau

Chief: "COLE. Sam Holmes and I have gone over the contact sheets very carefully and are ordering prints. I assume you want to keep your set in Paris. In any case, we'll need more. We have talked the story over with Phillip (probably Phillip Gittelman, Magnum Film Department), who also has studied the contacts very carefully, and we will begin to explore possibilities. We will keep you posted. We need a photograph of Ernest. Could someone please do this for us, as it is important."

63. Telephone interview with Russ Melcher, 4 April 2008; "Robert Kennedy: Wer sagt uns denn, daß Gott kein Neger ist?", *Stern Magazine*, 2 October 1966.
64. Stamps in his passport, the visa was an I-visa for foreign correspondents, valid until 8 March 1967.
65. Robertson, "Ernest Cole in the House of Bondage", op.cit.
66. Melcher, op.cit.; emails from James Fox, 21 and 24 March and 1 April 2008, including a copy of an email from Lee Jones to James Fox, 6 March 2000.
67. John Hillelson, interview, op.cit.
68. James Fox, email 21 March 2008, op.cit.
69. Ibid. James Fox was responsible for Magnum's archives and library in New York, 1966–1971, and then at Magnum in Paris until his retirement in the early 2000s.
70. In Lee Jones's message to Russ Melcher of 22 September, she mentioned: "We also showed the material to *Paris Match* New York representatives, both of whom were extremely enthusiastic though 'concerned about the controversial aspects (!)'."
71. The story, "Den skyhöga muren som inte syns" was published in the Swedish magazine *Se*, 21 December 1966; and "Dit is Apartheid, een fotodocumentaire van Ernest Cole", in the Dutch magazine *Avenue*, January 1967. The article has, however, not been found in *Life*, nor in *Paris Match*. Thanks to Paris Match/Photo in Paris and Lund University Library for help

with this research.

72. Email from James Fox, 26 September 2009, including excerpts from a message of 27 September 1966 (Paris log from Russ Melcher) to Lee Jones at Magnum NY. Ernest Cole (copy ex Marc Riboud) “Therond [Director, *Paris Match*] ‘invites Cole to come to Paris from New York for interview’ at *Match* expense. Therond would like to receive also, soonest, some pictures showing Cole in South Africa. Are there any?”
73. Interview with James Fox in Paris, 25 January 2010.
74. Keorapetse Kgositsile, op.cit.
75. Joseph Lelyveld in *House of Bondage*, op.cit.
76. The story was published in the *Sunday Times Magazine*, November 27 1966.
77. Interview with John Hillelson, 27 May 2009.
78. Ibid., in which he also said that he obtained a signed copy of *House of Bondage* when Cole was in London in 1969.
79. In a postcard from Ernest Cole to John Hillelson of 17 June 1969, he wrote “Magnum handed over the prints. They were handed to me quite a while ago and most of them are not around anymore.”
80. James Fox, email 11 March 2009 and interview op.cit.
81. Excerpts from Cole’s letter to Thomas Cooney, The Ford Foundation, of 17 September 1968.
82. Request for second half of extension of grant, of 22 November 1971. Last record available.
83. Letters from Ernest Cole to The Alien Commissioner, Swedish Government, Stockholm, and to The Alien Commissioner, Norwegian Government, Oslo, both dated 25 November 1968.
84. Cole’s initial I-visa was extended as an I-94 visa. However, it expired when his South African passport expired.
85. With the assistance of an attorney in New York, Cole applied for a third Preference Residence Visa under the US Immigration and Nationality Act on 9 July 1968.
86. Letter to William Atwood, Editor in Chief, *Look*, 22 October

1968. In this letter Cole mentions that his book was going to be published “at the end of this month”.
87. Jürgen Schadeberg, interview, op.cit. These pictures were later found in the suitcase Cole had left at the airport and returned to Schadeberg.
 88. Dingang Malick studied at Lincoln University and worked for a newspaper in Bridgeport, Connecticut.
 89. Interview with Aubrey Nkomo in Kyalami Estate, 20 March 2010.
 90. Ibid.
 91. Ibid.
 92. The third Preference Residence Visa was issued under the US Immigration and Nationality Act, 9 July 1968, but it would take at least another fifteen months after he wrote this.
 93. Letter to The Alien Commissioner, 25 November 1968.
 94. Letters from Gunnar Helander, cathedral dean of Västerås, to the Alien Commissioner, 31 November 1968 and 27 January 1969.
 95. Letter of recommendation from Rune Hassner regarding his interview for the film *Bilden som vapen*, 28 April 1969.
 96. Letter to the Alien Commissioner from Hasse Enström, of the magazine *VI*, 9 May 1969.
 97. Letter of recommendation from Ingvar Farge, General Manager IMS (International Magazine Service), 11 February 1969, with additions 3 March 1969.
 98. Letter from Carl-Adam Nycop, chairman of the Board of the Friends of the Museum of Photography in Stockholm, 9 May 1969.
 99. Cole didn't have a passport, only an ID-certificate signed 17 February 1969 by Stanley N. Zwaik, Notary Public, State of New York, and a “Form of Affidavit to be in lieu of Passport”, signed 19 February, and valid until 10 May 1969, from the British Consulate General in New York.
 100. Letter from Ernest Cole to Rune Hassner, written in London, 2

March 1969, in response to Rune Hassner's letter of 22 February.

101. Interview with Hans Beukes, 6 May 2008. In Beukes's diary for 1969 is a note that Cole stayed from 21 until 31 March.
102. Telephone conversation with Eva Hassner, 22 February 2008.
103. Personal communication with Stig T. Karlsson.
104. Letter from Sven Andersson, Tiofoto picture agency, 29 April 1969.
105. Cole was back with the Beukeses on 20 April, and the article in *Dagbladet* was published on 24 April 1969.
106. The visa was valid from 23 April until 13 May. Cole left Sweden on 14 May for New York (a copy of the visa was pasted in the passport).
107. "Rune Hassner, Bilder & ord", *Visuellt* no. 7, p. 52 ("Bilder för miljoner" was produced by Rune Hassner; sound Eva Hassner [16mm b/w]. Swedish radio).
108. "Rune Hassner, Bilder & ord", *Visuellt* no. 7, p. 52 ("Bilder för miljoner", part 5. "Hine och Cole och bild som vapen" (30.00 min), shown in Sweden, SR, 8 June 1969; Finland, YLE, 13 April 1970; Norway, NRK, 20 June 1970; Iceland, RUV, 30 October 1970.
109. John Hillelson, interview, op.cit.
110. Ibid.
111. Letter from Ernest Cole to Rune Hassner, dated 17 May 1969, which should probably have been dated 17 June 1969, as Cole mentioned that he had already been in New York for a month and he had returned from Sweden on 15 May 1969.
112. Ibid., Hans Beukes, email 22 July 2009. Beukes wrote that Cole had brought a 16mm film camera when visiting him, which could have been in 1970–71.
113. Letter from Cole to Rune Hassner, dated 17 May 1969, op.cit.
114. Letter from Ernest Cole to John Hillelson, 21 June 1969.
115. John Hillelson, interview, op.cit.
116. Letter from Ernest Cole to John Hillelson, 21 June 1969, op.cit.

117. The application was sent on 21 May. Cole obtained a 3-month visa, valid as soon as he had a valid identity certificate. On 3 September he got his visa and was back in Stockholm on 10 September.
118. Interview with Rune Jonsson, 28 February, and letter of 3 March 2008, in which Jonsson reported from the meeting and confirmed that it was on 18 September, after consulting his diary from 1969.
119. Håkan Ludwigson, personal communication, in the Museum of Art in Gothenburg, 23 April 2008; Håkan Berg, teacher at Sven Winqvist's photo school, 25 June 2008; and telephone conversation with Göran Lidén, 26 June 2008. The lecture was held at the Göteborgs Stads Yrkesskolor avd. för fotografer (later Sven Winqvist's photo school). Ludwigson initiated the lecture and offered Cole a bed for the night. Lidén, chair of the western branch of the association, recalled a lunch at the renowned restaurant "Bäckahästen" in the city centre with the chair of the association, Inga Ohlsén, and Håkan Ludwigson.
120. *Svensk fotografisk tidskrift* (magazine for the Association of Swedish Photographers), 11 December 1969.
121. Telephone interview with Ingrid Wigh, 12 May 2008.
122. Letter to the Swedish Consulate General in New York from Sven Andersson, Tiofoto picture agency, 31 October 1969. In this letter it is also specified that Cole had been promised commissions by Tiofoto.
123. Copy of application/approval. Cole applied for the visa on 6 November, it was approved on 16 December, and he was back in Stockholm on 18 December. His passport was valid from 15 January 1970 and was renewed once a year between then and 15 January 1975.
124. Interview with Joseph Lelyveld in New York, 17 April 2009.
125. Email communication with Jack Dowling, June–August 2009. Cole himself referred in his letters to 463 West Street, Apt. 413-A (e.g. letter to Hans Beukes, 5 July 1970).

126. Aubrey Nkomo, op.cit.
127. Letter from Hans Beukes to Ernest Cole, 19 March 1970.
FOTO och Filmteknik no. 3, March 1970.
128. Letter from Ernest Cole to Hans Beukes, 5 July 1970.
129. Ernest Cole, "Förödmjukelsernas helvete", Foto/Film/Bild, exhibition catalogue, Liljevalchs 9 October – 9 November 1970, pp. 6–7.
130. Letter from Ernest Cole to Rune Hassner, 27 July 1970.
131. Telephone conversation with Ingrid Wigh, Cole's landlady in Skärholmen, 12 May 2008.
132. Telephone interview with Lennart Allen, 5 June 2008.
133. Email from Björn Enström, 26 June 2008, and telephone conversation 27 June 2008.
134. Programme *Foto/Film/Bild*, Liljevalchs 9 October – 9 November 1970. The curatorial team consisted of Rune Hassner, Sten-Didrik Bellander, Pål-Nils Nilsson, Lennart Olson and Lars Swanberg.
135. Telephone interview with Håkan Berg, 19 June 2008.
136. Email from Hans Beukes, 7 March 2008.
137. *Förteckning över utställningar på Göteborgs konstmuseum samt Göteborgs konsthall 1967–1995 och Stenasalen*. Upprättad av Kristoffer Arvidsson 2008-12-04. (From listings of exhibitions at Gothenburg Museum of Art and Art Gallery by Kristoffer Arvidsson). The Cole exhibit was hung by Björn Enström and Peter Gullers.
138. Håkan Petersson, conservator, Moderna museet, Stockholm, 29 May 2008.
139. Like *Gold* instead of *Mines*, *Stray Mule Hunting* instead of *Police and Passes*, etc.
140. Letter from 'Big Brother', 24 October 1971.
141. Letter from Ernest Cole to The Ford Foundation, 22 November 1971.
142. Interview in Stockholm, 26 October 2009, with Wana Makoba, South Africa, who came to Sweden in 1966; Tauna Niingungo,

- who came from Namibia in 1964; and Ibrahim Elkarim, who came from Sudan in 1965.
143. Both the Ridge Press/Random House edition (American), and the Penguin Press edition (British), were published at this time.
 144. Kumalo, op.cit.. I was, unfortunately, unable to reach Kwame Brathwaite and Sikhulu Shange (who Kumalo also mentioned as a contact in New York – he once had a shop in Harlem but was now selling on the street).
 145. Ibid.
 146. Ibid.
 147. Email from Wally Serote via Lindi Baloyi (Executive Assistant to the CEO), 8 April 2010.
 148. Interview with Peter Clarke in Ocean View, 24 March 2009.
 149. Email contacts and conversations with Hans Beukes.
 150. Joseph Lelyveld, interview, op.cit.
 151. Hans Beukes, email 7 March 2008 and in conversation. Cole once asked Beukes if he could store his negatives in the basement of Beukes's house, which would have been a perfect hiding place. At that time, Beukes hoped to return to Africa to settle, and said so to Cole.
 152. Joseph Lelyveld, interview, op.cit.
 153. Joseph Lelyveld, *Move Your Shadow*, 1985.
 154. Joseph Lelyveld, interview, op.cit.
 155. Ibid.
 156. Ibid.
 157. John Hillelson, interview, op.cit. Sloan House, was at 356 West 34th Street.
 158. Julian Bahula, op.cit.
 159. Jürgen Schadeberg, interview, op.cit.
 160. Interview with Liza Bahula in Westbury, 25–26 May 2009.
 161. Julian Bahula, op.cit.
 162. Liza Bahula, op.cit.
 163. Julian Bahula, op.cit.
 164. Telephone conversation with Barry Feinberg, March 2009.

165. The only article found in *Creative Camera* was a thematic double issue of July/August 1984, no. 235/236: *Drum* – South Africa's black picture magazine. Included was “Ernest Cole – The Mines”, pp. 1456–7.
166. Jürgen Schadeberg, interview, op.cit.
167. Interview with Lefifi Tladi in Stockholm, 12 January 2009.
168. Telephone conversation and email communication with Sam Gulube, April–May 2010.
169. Jürgen Schadeberg, film, op.cit. and from interview with Sam (David) Gulube and Thabi Nyide by Struan Robertson, 15/11/98, from the Ernest Cole Family Trust Archive.
170. Joseph Lelyveld, interview, op.cit.
171. Telephone interview with Bochabelo Nkomo, 24 April 2010.
172. Interview with Rashid Lombard in Cape Town, 25 March 2009, but not confirmed by Bruce Davidson in email or telephone contacts.
173. Email communication with, among others, Eli Reed and James Fox, Spring 2009.
174. Rashid Lombard, op.cit., but not confirmed by René Burri in email contact via Magnum.
175. Rashid Lombard, op.cit.
176. Email communication with Victor Jordan, Riverside Church Archive, 1 April 2009.
177. Rashid Lombard, op.cit.
178. Aubrey Nkomo, op.cit.
179. Interview with Cyril Khanyile in Pretoria, 17 March 2009.
180. Ibid.
181. The apartment was at 1274 Fifth Avenue, New York City.
182. Cyril Khanyile, op.cit.
183. Ibid.
184. Ibid.
185. Interview with Cyril Khanyile in Pretoria, 17 March 2010.
186. Cyril Khanyile, 2009, op.cit.

187. Ibid.
188. Telephone interview with Veretta Garrison-Moller, Alexandria, Louisiana, 2 April 2009.
189. Ibid.
190. Ibid.
191. Telephone interview with Monica Suder, San Francisco, 14 April 2009, and email contact 12 March and 26 April 2009.
192. Joseph Lelyveld, interview, op.cit.
193. Letter from Shahin Rafii 'to whom it may concern', 1 January 1990, in which Rafii explains that "Mr Cole has advanced unresectable gastric cancer with diffuse involvement of the liver and abdominal organs."
194. Email from Shahin Rafii, 24 June 2009. Cole was admitted to the hospital on 16 January 1990.
195. Cyril Khanyile, 2009, op.cit.
196. Telephone interview with Bochabelo Nkomo, 4 April 2010.
197. Interview with Omar Badsha in Cape Town, 24 March 2009.
198. Ibid. The Ernest Cole Scholarship was presented to Santu Mofokeng in 1990, to study at the International Center of Photography in New York.
199. Joseph Lelyveld, interview, op.cit.
200. Cyril Khanyile, op.cit.
201. Catherine Hlatshwayo, op.cit.
202. Joseph Lelyveld, interview, op.cit.
203. Catherine Hlatshwayo, op.cit.
204. Cyril Khanyile, op.cit.
205. Catherine Hlatshwayo, op.cit.
206. Telephone conversation with John Stubbs, New York, 11 May 2010.
207. Programme from the memorial service. Testimonials: Douglas Harris, George Halling, Melba Kgositsile, Joseph Lelyveld, Cyril Khanyile, John Zuzo (some spoke at the reception). On the programme was also the address at which the family would receive guests: 351 W 114th St, Apt. 2A.

208. Catherine Hlatshwayo, op.cit.
209. Ibid.
210. Sophina Mphakati, op.cit.
211. Catherine Hlatshwayo, op.cit.