

AWG CHAMPION AND TOWNSHIP POLITICS IN DURBAN IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

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Abstract

This article will consider the often contradictory role of Arthur Wessels George Champion (AWG) Champion, former leader of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) in the African National Congress (ANC), as a local politician serving on statutory Urban Bantu Councils. Champion was an elected member of the Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council from 1968 to 1975. He was still applying the political strategy of the 1930s and early 1950s where statutory Native Advisory Boards were used throughout the country by African leaders as platforms to fight for daily needs in the locations/townships. The 1960s was however a period of strict apartheid when the National Party-led government also tightened its control over local government through the establishment of Bantu Administration Boards to administer African residential areas and control Urban Bantu Councils. The policy of "separate development" (apartheid) also stressed ethnicity as it linked all Africans with homelands. From 1970 up to his death in 1975, Champion advocated links between the Zulus in Durban and the statutory KwaZulu Traditional Authority in the Zulu "homeland" under its Chief Executive Officer and later Chief Minister, Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, Champion stressed Zulu unity and the use of statutory bodies as counterweight against policies of apartheid ("separate development"). This made him a controversial figure in the ranks of the government as represented by local officials of the Port Natal Bantu Administration Board, black independent trade unions, the Residents' Associations sympathetic to the African National Congress and the "underground" ANC in Durban. Champion worked very hard to represent his constituency as a councillor in the Urban Bantu Council system but failed to use statutory bodies to oppose apartheid and achieve equality and human dignity for his people. The powerful apartheid state had tightened its control over black political activity during the 1960s and 1970s.

Keywords: AWG Champion; Ningizimu² Urban Bantu Council; Residents Associations; African National Congress; *apartheid* and "separate development".

Slutelwoorde: AWG Champion; Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council; plaaslike verenigings; African National Congress; apartheid en "afsonderlike ontwikkeling".

1. INTRODUCTION

AWG Champion was a member of the first Location Advisory Board in Durban after the 1929 Durban Beerhall Riots.³ He played a pivotal role in ensuring that

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2 *Ningizimu* means "south" in isiZulu language and refers to the southern townships of Durban.

3 S Marks, *The ambiguities of dependence in South Africa: Class, nationalism and the state in twentieth-Century Natal* (Johannesburg, 1986), pp. 78-79. See also MW Swanson, "The Durban

African workers were allowed to enter Durban.⁴ Champion also opposed the dipping of Africans⁵ entering the city and became one of the leading members of the Joint Location Advisory Boards. At that time (1930s to 1950s) membership of the Location Advisory Boards was not seen as an act of collaboration with the South African government.⁶

Champion believed that the Urban Bantu Councils could be used effectively by urban Africans to fight for permanent rights in urban areas. He called for the formation of united Urban Bantu Councils that would co-ordinate African demands for permanent residential, housing and business rights in urban areas.⁷ While doing this, he clashed with those who regarded Urban Bantu Councils as toothless structures of local government.⁸ He focused in most cases on popular resistance against apartheid,⁹ placing those who participated in Advisory Boards and Urban Bantu Councils in the periphery.¹⁰ This article highlights the political career of AWG Champion, a diligent participant in Advisory Bodies and Urban Bantu Councils, as a local politician in the context of the 1960s and 1970s.¹¹

The 1960s and 1970s were periods of contesting nationalism that was also marked by the rise of collaboration politics within the policy of “separate development”. In Natal, a Zulu National Party (ZNP) was formed by the Africa Foundation of South Africa to campaign for a Zulu homeland. Lloyd Ndaba became the ZNP leader and in 1969 he unsuccessfully sought the support of Champion.¹² This biographical study examines the role of Champion, former Industrial and

system”. Roots of urban apartheid in Colonial Natal”, *African Studies*, 1976, pp. 159-176, Compactus, UNISA Library, Level 1.

4 *Ibid.*

5 P Maylam, “Explaining the apartheid city: 20 years of South African urban historiography”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21(1), March 1995, p. 24. In this article the author highlights the racial hysteria, “sanitation syndrome” and moral panic identified by MW Swanson which informed racial segregation policies in the early 20th century South Africa. Champion opposed the dipping of Africans who were seen as carrying diseases into the Durban city.

6 G Baines, “The contradictions of community politics: The African petty bourgeoisie and the new Brighton Advisory Board, c 1937-1952”, *The Journal of African History* 35(1), 1994, pp. 79-97.

7 AWG Champion, *The views of Mahlathi* (Pietermaritzburg, 1982), pp. 93-94.

8 NT Sambureni, “From mainstream politics to local politics: Resistance and collaboration in Durban, 1960-1975”, *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 17, 1997, pp. 37-59.

9 I Edwards (ed.) *The people’s city: African life in twentieth-century Durban* (Pietermaritzburg, 1996), pp. 234-236, 258-259.

10 AL Torr, *The social history of an urban African community: Lamont, 1930-1960*, MA, University of Natal, 1985.

11 Killie Campbell Africana Library, AWG Champion Collection, KCM 99/6/7/1-122, file 7, box 1 [of 3], official correspondence, 1960-1974.

12 Champion, *The views of Mahlathi*. Introduction, and also see *Africa South* IV(10), p. 5, 1969 and Constitution of the Africa Foundation of South Africa. The Africa Foundation of South Africa was headed by Bishop WG Dimba who was based in Johannesburg. The Africa Foundation of South Africa vigorously campaigned for the separate development policy, supporting the idea of

Commercial Union (ICU) and African National Congress (ANC) leader, who also tried to cut out a political career within the local government structures of the apartheid state, the Advisory Boards and later the Urban Bantu Councils in Durban.

The 1960s and the 1970s were different eras as grounds of engagement between the then South African government under the National Party and African political leaders were narrowed by the banning of African national organisations in 1960, after the anti-pass campaign and the Sharpeville and Langa shootings. The South African government then vigorously implemented the policy of separate development, introducing homelands and separate representation for urban Africans in the form of Urban Bantu Councils (UBCs). The new government policy linked all Africans to homelands.¹³

This was also a period during which his erstwhile organisation, the ANC, was regrouping at covert level under conditions of illegality as it was banned in 1960.¹⁴ Champion was fiercely opposed by the Residents' Associations, which were linked to the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), the radical trade unions and the ANC.¹⁵ His strategy of operating within structures of government to articulate African interests was also opposed by a younger generation of political activists who were members of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), which in 1968 formed the university student wing of the black Consciousness Movement (BCM). The BCM asserted black solidarity, deriving its political philosophy from the United States of America's black protest movement. The BCM advocated the creation of a unitary state in South Africa under a black majority rule and its leaders were Stephen Bantu Biko and Barney Pityana.¹⁶ These organisations referred to Urban Bantu Councils as toothless bodies and toy telephones. The terms, "toothless bodies" and "toy telephones", implied that these statutory bodies had no political influence.

Champion was a unique figure because of his long history of involvement in both local and national politics in South Africa. He gained his nickname *Mahlath'amnyama*, (place of refuge for those in trouble) because of his long involvement in fighting for the daily needs of African urban residents.¹⁷ There were also Urban Bantu Councils in other towns of South Africa and they were mainly composed of members of the African petty bourgeoisie (clerks, teachers and

ethnic self government homelands for Africans. Most of its leaders were based in Johannesburg and the *Africa South* was its mouthpiece.

13 *Summary of the Report of the Commission for Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu Areas (UG 61 of 1955) [Tomlinson Report]*.

14 Sambureni, pp. 37-59.

15 *Ibid.*

16 T Karis and GM Gerhart (eds), *From protest to challenge: A documentary history of African politics in South Africa, 1882-1990* 5 (Indianapolis, 1997), pp. 466-470.

17 Champion, pp. 89-125.

shopkeepers).¹⁸ Champion belonged to this group as he was a Chesterville location-based businessman in Durban, where he operated a shop.¹⁹

Champion, however, had a mobilising mission. He wanted to strengthen the bargaining power of members of Urban Bantu Councils by forging links between African townships as he has done in the days of Joint Advisory Boards, when he served residents in Lamontville, Chesterville and Cato Manor.²⁰ However, the Urban Bantu Council legislation prevented the Umlazi and KwaMashu UBCs from holding joint sittings.²¹ This was a source of great frustration on his part in the 1970s.

From 1970 up to his death in 1974, Champion found an ally in Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, the then Chief Executive Officer of KwaZulu and later Chief Minister, who was also using the structures of “separate development” in the KwaZulu “homeland”, to create a political base that was beyond the objectives of a “homeland” as envisaged by the National Party government.²² Champion and Buthelezi used symbols of Zulu nationalism and the early history of the ANC to develop a conservative brand of African nationalism that was willing to operate within structures of government.²³ Champion became central to the reconstitution of Inkatha Yenkululeko YeSizwe in the 1970s and assisted Buthelezi in establishing a political base in Durban townships.²⁴ The research shows how the contending nationalisms operated in unstable township politics and tried to win the hearts and minds of African residents. This article also examines the connection between sanctioned politics of the apartheid state at township level and politics of the liberation struggle with Champion as a focal point.

18 Killie Campbell Africana Library, KCM 99/6/21//7-120, box 3 [of 3], file 21, “Incomplete account of the life of A.W.G. Champion”, undated.

19 Telephonic interview: Bathokozile Bernice Champion, daughter of AWG Champion, Inanda, 1 April 2005.

20 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, Durban Corporation, box 8, file 16/1/2/6, 16/1/3. Correspondence between AWG Champion and Durban Corporation officials regarding the management and regulations affecting Native locations. The correspondence covers the 1940s. See also UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, representation, box 31, file 25/5/3, correspondence Champion–lawyer Cecil Cowley, regarding the dismissal of a nurse, 28 February 1944 to 17 March 1944 and MW Swanson, *Champion of Durban: An African politician and the ICU*, paper presented at the African Studies Association, Los Angeles, 18 October 1968, pp. 2-19.

21 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, box 17, 16/6/3/8, Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council, memorandum signed by AWG Champion to Port Natal Bantu Administration Board in which he called for joint sittings for Ningizimu and KwaMashu UBCs, 21 May 1974.

22 B Temkin, *Gatsha Buthelezi: The Zulu statesman* (Cape Town, 1976). Also see UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, 20/6/1. See Buthelezi’s letter to Champion, 22 June 1970 and Champion’s letter to Buthelezi, 24 May 1972.

23 S Marks, “Inkatha and contemporary politics”, *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 11, 1988, pp. 175-187.

24 Structured interview: Chief MG Buthelezi, Mahlabathini, 31 January 2005 and 1 February 2005.

2. BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Arthur Wessels George Champion was born in 1893 in Inanda, outside Durban. Inanda was founded as a mission station of the American Board of Missions in the late 19th century.

His parents had a strong missionary background through his father George, who was adopted by a Congregational Church missionary, George Champion. Champion's ancestral name was Mhlongo but his father kept the surname of Champion, the surname of the missionary who adopted him.²⁵

His first job after leaving Adams College, where he had studied for his secondary education, was that of a policeman in the Babanango district in Zululand, Natal. He was assigned to report on the activities of King Solomon kaDinuzulu, heir to the Zulu kingship. He later moved to Johannesburg, where he worked as a clerk at Crown Mines. He then became an active community leader, met Clements Kadalie during the formation of the Industrial and Commercial Union (ICU), joined the African National Congress and rose through its ranks. Champion gained prominence as chief organiser of the ICU in Natal and later became its Provincial Secretary in the 1920s.²⁶

Champion entered formal structures of local government politics through his involvement in the ICU. He served on the Native Advisory Board (NAB) after the 1929 De Waal Commission of Inquiry. The De Waal Commission was instituted by the Hertzog government to investigate the reasons behind the beerhall riots.²⁷ Champion gave evidence to the Commission and that put him at the centre of local politics in Durban. One of the recommendations of that Commission was that Africans should be given representation in the local government of Durban. Champion was to become that representative. Authorities were suspicious of his activities as they linked him to the 1929 beerhall riots. He was banned in September 1930 and prohibited from the Natal province. Champion lived in Johannesburg and returned to Durban in 1933 after his banishment was lifted. He then resumed his membership of the Durban Joint Local Advisory Boards.²⁸ Champion was elected to the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC) in 1937. He served as ANC Minister of Labour, representing the ANC in the Non-European Conferences in the 1920s, where he protested against the 1926 "Native Bills" of Native Affairs and of Prime Minister JBM Hertzog. Champion also served on the Native Representative

25 Telephonic interview BB Champion, Inanda, 1 April 2005.

26 UNISA Library Archives, Documentation Centre for African Studies, AWG Champion Collection, box 1, file 1/3, short autobiographical sketches, n.d.

27 MW Swanson, "The urban origins of separate development", *Race X*(1), 1968, pp. 31-40, Compactus, UNISA Library, Level 1.

28 National Archives of South Africa, Natal Files, volume 7606, reference 49/328, AWG Champion, Agitator, 1929-1940 and part two, 1942-1943.

Council in the 1940s and was Provincial President of the ANC from 1945-1951. In 1951 he lost the Provincial Presidency of the ANC to Chief Albert John Luthuli by ten votes.²⁹

Champion continued to serve on both the government created Advisory Boards, the Native Representative Council and on the ANC structure from the 1920s to 1951. He was not alone in using Advisory Boards as political platforms as the Communist Party of South Africa nominated Advisory Board candidates in places like Cape Town, the East Rand and Port Elizabeth.³⁰ It should also be noted that during the 1940s and early 1950s a number of prominent ANC members served on government created bodies like Advisory Boards. Champion served with Chief Albert Luthuli, who later became ANC President, Dr James Moroka, former ANC President and ZK Matthews, Provincial President of the ANC in the Cape on the Native Representative Council, a statutory body chaired by the Secretary of Native Affairs during the premiership of General Smuts in the 1940s.³¹

As a member of the local government statutory bodies, he was caught up in the violent upheavals of the late 1950s and early 1960s; especially the forced removals from Cato Manor to KwaMashu from March 1958 and to Umlazi in 1962. The removal of Africans from Cato Manor had created a spirit of political consciousness and left lasting political scars among the residents.³² Africans were being removed from their old homes, their social networks were being broken up and KwaMashu and Umlazi were viewed as dormitory townships and potential Bantustan areas.³³ The Urban Areas Act of 1923 classified Africans in urban areas as migrants.³⁴ The Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 defined that Africans belonged to ethnic “homelands” and were stateless in South Africa.³⁵ “Homelands” were rejected by urban Africans as the majority of Africans regarded themselves as South Africans by birth. Residents also complained that there were no economic opportunities in KwaMashu and Umlazi as these townships were far from places of work.³⁶ The possibility of being incorporated into a “homeland” was real as Umlazi

29 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, box 1, autobiographical notes, file 1/3/1, “The soul is irrepressible” (unpublished memoir), 17 August 1969.

30 Maylam, pp. 32-33.

31 M Wilson (ed.), *Freedom for my people: The autobiography of ZK Matthews: Southern Africa, 1901-1968* (Cape Town, 1981), pp. 139-141; 153.

32 NT Sambureni, *The apartheid city and its labouring class: African workers and the independent trade union movement, 1959-1985*, PhD, UNISA, 1997, pp. 178-182.

33 NT Sambureni, “Listen whiteman, you have launched a war you cannot win: Forced removals and the outbreak of riots in Natal, 1959-1963”, *Contree: Journal of South African urban and regional history* 38, December 1995, pp. 23-27, Compactus, UNISA Library, Level 1.

34 L Torr, “Lamontville”, in Edwards, (ed.), *The people’s city*, pp. 258-259.

35 Karis and Gerhart (eds), pp. 347-352.

36 Torr, pp. 260-261.

was planned in the 1950s as part of the KwaZulu homeland.³⁷ According to DM Hart half of the population of Cato Manor was repatriated to Umlazi and 40 per cent to rented houses in KwaMashu. In Umlazi Africans could buy plots and build houses, whereas in KwaMashu they were only able to rent properties. This was an attempt to make “homeland” life unavoidable and attractive.³⁸

The apartheid state in South Africa was at the height of its power in the 1960s³⁹ and on the other hand, African liberation movements were rebuilding underground structures and covertly operating in South Africa through trade unions, “underground” cells, and Residents’ Associations. There were also attempts by other African township residents to continue their participation in Advisory Boards (statutory bodies).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The AWG Champion Collection⁴⁰ at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and another collection under the similar name at the Killie Campbell Africana Library⁴¹ at the University of KwaZulu-Natal contain documents on the activities of Champion as well as the minutes of the Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council, which was chaired by Champion, his correspondence with local authorities in Durban and residents who sought his help when faced with eviction orders. These collections assisted the author in reconstructing the role of Champion in the local politics of Durban from the 1960s up to his death in 1975.

Champion’s book, *The views of Mahlathi*,⁴² is his autobiographical work, arranged by MW Swanson, and clarifies his role in local government and his attitude towards issues such as race relations, homelands and business rights for Africans in urban areas. Champion advocated for full African rights in urban areas; he was against the eviction of widows, and the excessive powers of Township Managers. He also demanded full business rights as African traders were forced to rent space from the municipality.⁴³

Champion extensively used the media to expose the effects of apartheid laws in Durban and also opposed the suppression of African business in Durban. From

37 Sambureni, *The apartheid city...*, pp. 172-184.

38 DM Hart, ‘Master plans’: *The South African government’s razing of Sophiatown, Cato Manor and District Six* (PhD, University of Syracuse, 1990), p. 178.

39 W Beinart, *Twentieth century South Africa* (New York, 2001), pp. 170-200.

40 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, box 13, 16/6/3/3/1, Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council.

41 Africana Library, Campbell Collection, KCM 99/6/7/1-122, file 7, box 1 [of 3], official correspondence 1960-1969 between Champion and Durban City Council authorities and Director of Port Natal Administration Board, SB Borquin, on local government matters.

42 Champion, *The views of Mahlathi*. Cf. foot-note 7.

43 *Ibid.*

1964-1975 Champion wrote a column for *Ilanga*, under the headline “Okubonwa uMahlathi”. *Ilanga* is a Zulu newspaper that was established by Dr JL Dube to articulate African interests.⁴⁴

A significant number of urban historians have focused on Natal, namely MW Swanson, P Maylam, Ian Edwards, Louise Torr, Nelson Sambureni and B Xaba, extensively covering African life in the townships of Durban during the period under review, recording the harshness of township life in early Durban and later in KwaMashu and Umlazi. Swanson clearly outlined the basis of the Durban system of local government in regard to Africans. Firstly, it was segregationist, based on control of African movement to Durban. Africans in locations were viewed as aliens, as government policy linked them to Native Reserves which later became homelands. Any funding of African locations was to be supported from the Native Revenue Account (NRA). This NRA was financed through beerhall profits. Municipalities had a monopoly over beerhall profits and Champion justifiably argued that a government based on Christian values could not sell liquor to people as the use of liquor had negative moral consequences.⁴⁵

In many instances there was an uncoordinated response on the part of Africans to the system of local government under the successive segregationist governments and the National Party.⁴⁶ These scholars also deal with the participation of Africans in the Urban Bantu Councils. The new townships were under tight control of Township Managers. Law enforcement was prioritised as residents lived under curfew regulations, visitors were checked and the municipality controlled trading licences and collected rentals. White officials, called Township Managers and Superintendents, controlled the townships.⁴⁷ Nelson Sambureni extensively deals with township politics and how Urban Bantu Councils were challenged by ANC-aligned Residents’ Associations.⁴⁸ These developments challenged collaboration politics in Durban townships and laid the foundation for future tensions between ANC-aligned structures and Inkatha in the 1980s.

44 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, box 38, 28/3/2/4; box 39, 28/3/2/7. Correspondence with *Ilanga Lase Natal* and MSS, letters to the *Natal Mercury*, 12 July 1968 and *Ilanga*, 5 February 1971.

45 Swanson, “The Durban system...”, pp. 159-176.

46 Swanson, “The urban origins...”, pp. 31- 40.

47 I Edwards, “Cato Manor, June 1959”, in Edwards (ed.) *The people’s city*, p. 123 .

48 Sambureni, “From mainstream politics...”, pp. 49-57. See also his PhD, *The apartheid state....*

4. CHAMPION AND THE INTRODUCTION OF URBAN BANTU COUNCILS IN DURBAN TOWNSHIPS

The roots of a separate system of local government in Durban could be traced back to 1871,⁴⁹ when colonial authorities took a decision to establish a segregated location for Indians. The basis of African urbanisation in South Africa has always been the provision of labour through influx control and there was no serious effort to treat Africans as permanent residents in the city. On the other hand, the zoning of the city saw the white population being allocated prime land for housing and business. Africans were confined to locations and their movement into the city was controlled through pass laws and curfews. The Natal government passed the Urban Areas Act of 1908. According to this legislation, municipalities acquired the beer-brewing monopoly and kept the beer profits in the Native Revenue Account. The beer profits were used to erect eating houses for Africans, barracks for workers as well as clinics. The Durban Corporation appointed officials to enforce the influx control which ensured the exclusion of unwanted Africans in the city. This was called the “Durban system”. Africans were therefore forced to finance their own administration in Durban.⁵⁰

The National Party, which assumed office in 1948, strengthened its hold over the African locations and townships by passing the Urban Bantu Council Act of 1961 which was a sister legislation of the Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959. The intention of the Urban Bantu Council Act of 1961 was to strengthen state control over African local government as the Bantu Administration Boards became agencies of the Department of Bantu Administration at local government level. The Bantu Self-Government Act accorded political rights to Africans in ethnic homelands. The Act gave the government the authority to identify territories as future homelands.⁵¹

The apartheid government under the National Party was perfecting a segregated system that was started by the Urban Areas Act of 1908. It was also an attempt to establish a system of local government that would accommodate the election of African councillors in a ward system.⁵²

The architects of apartheid used the term “Bantu” when referring to “African” people: the official terminology of the National Party from the 1940s to the 1970s. The National Party regarded the Urban Bantu Councils as an improvement on the much criticised Native Advisory Boards, which were rejected earlier by township

49 P Maylam, “Explaining the apartheid city: 20 years of South African urban historiography”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21(1), Special Issue: Urban studies and urban change in Southern Africa, March 1995, p. 23.

50 Swanson, “The Durban system...”, pp. 159-176.

51 Karis and Gerhart, pp. 653-657.

52 Sambureni, “From mainstream politics...”, p. 49.

residents as accomplices of segregation and toothless bodies.⁵³ There was a close link between the implementation of the Urban Bantu Council Act of 1961 and that of the promotion of the Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959. These two acts ensured that Africans were outsiders in urban areas and were treated as ethnic units.⁵⁴ The Urban Bantu Councils also accommodated urban representatives of chiefs and thus prescribed the connection of urban Africans with the Bantustans or the homelands. These councils were to be chaired by Africans but managed by white officials appointed by the Department of Bantu Administration. They had Standing Committees, which had the power to make recommendations on matters regarding public transport, trading and other business undertakings.⁵⁵ Champion urged African residents of Durban to accept the Urban Bantu Council Act of 1961 with all its imperfections.⁵⁶ He believed that the Urban Bantu Councils could be used to challenge the restrictive laws that governed the townships of KwaMashu and Umlazi.

The first elections of the Urban Bantu Councils in Durban were held in 1968. Champion contested elections in both the KwaMashu and the Ningizimu Urban Bantu Councils. He lost his deposit in KwaMashu where the voter turnout was 10% and won an uncontested seat in Chesterville, an area which fell under the Ningizimu (South) Urban Bantu Council. The voter turnout in Chesterville was 20%. He again took part in the election of 1973 under the banner of his party *Imbokodo* (the grinding stone) and won his chairmanship by a single vote. Councillors from Lamontville voted against him but he had support in Chesterville, Jacobs, Glebelands, Smith's hostel and Dalton. He was opposed by the *Isikhumba* Party.⁵⁷

The causes of this low voter turnout were numerous. Firstly, the UBCs were not accepted, as they fell directly under the Bantu Administration Boards and had no direct links to city municipalities, where most Africans resided and worked for a living. Secondly, the record of Advisory Boards demonstrated that appointed officials, not African Councillors, wielded power at local government level. Moreover, statutory bodies at local government level had no record of success. As bodies with advisory powers only, they had failed to stop the forced removals

53 Edwards, "Cato Manor, 1959", Edwards (ed.), *The people's city...*, pp. 110-112.

54 TRH Davenport, *South Africa: A modern history* (Cape Town, 1987), p. 407.

55 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, box 13, 16/6/3/1, Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council, Ningizimu UBC Constitution.

56 Sambureni, "From mainstream politics...", p. 49.

57 Torr, "Lamontville- A history" in Edwards (ed.), *The people's city...*, pp. 110-112. Also see UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, box 38, 28/3/2/9, *Ilanga*, "Okubonwa uMahlathi", column, 3 October 1973. Champion writes to his constituency, thanking them for voting for him again.

from Cato Manor to Umlazi and KwaMashu townships.⁵⁸ Any government created local government structure in the Durban of the 1960s was bound to face a crisis of legitimacy in the eyes of African residents, especially the working class.

There were also other systemic local government factors which produced a weak local government system for Africans. Louise Torr asserts that the inefficiency of the Bantu Administration Boards as managers of local government also added challenges facing all participants in the UBC.⁵⁹

The banning of political organisations in 1960 as well as the political trials, created an atmosphere of political apathy in many townships. Most of the political activists were either in prison or in exile.⁶⁰

Street committees were established in the Durban townships of Umlazi and KwaMashu by the ANC “underground”.⁶¹ The existence of underground militant leadership of the ANC and South African Communist Party and their propaganda further weakened the Urban Bantu Councils in KwaMashu and Umlazi.⁶² Champion’s conservative political base was challenged. The KwaMashu Residents’ Association was formed in 1962 and led by Cleopus Ndlovu and FTR Dlamini and it openly opposed participation in Urban Bantu Councils(UBCs).⁶³ The Umlazi Residents’ Association was formed in 1973 during the Durban labour strikes. The 1972-1973 Durban strikes led to increased worker militancy and the formation of the Metal and Allied Workers’ Union (MAWU) and the Transport and General Workers’ Union (TGWU). This threatened the local power and influence of the UBC among township residents.

There was also an administrative change in 1973 when the ties between the Durban City Council and the Urban Bantu Council in Umlazi and KwaMashu were severed by the Department of Bantu Administration and Development (later Department of Cooperation and Development). In 1973, the Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council was placed under the Port Natal Bantu Administration Board without its councilors being consulted. The Port Natal Bantu Administration Board also fell under the Department of Bantu Administration and Development in Pretoria and enforced parallel administration since the Durban City Council financed the Ningizimu UBC development by means of beerhall profits, with no subsidy from city ratepayers.⁶⁴

58 Sambureni, “Listen whiteman...”, pp. 23-27, Compactus, UNISA, Level I.

59 Torr, “Lamontville”, p. 259 in Edwards (ed.), *The people’s city...*

60 B Magubane (ed.), *The road to democracy in South Africa 1, 1960-1970* (Cape Town, 2004). Introduction, dealing with South Africa after the banning of the ANC and PAC.

61 R Suttner, “The African National Congress (ANC) underground: From the M-Plan to Rivonia”, *South African Historical Journal* 49, 2003, pp. 140-143.

62 *Ibid.*

63 S Friedman, *Building tomorrow today* (Johannesburg, 1987), pp. 26-43.

64 Torr, “Lamontville” in Edwards, *The people’s city...*, p. 258.

Champion resisted this move as he advocated the integration of Durban as a city. As Chairperson of the Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council he sent a series of memoranda to the Port Natal Bantu Administration Board. In a memorandum dated 21 May 1974, Champion *inter alia* called for the following:⁶⁵

1. A formal introduction of the Port Natal Board to the Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council;
2. joint sittings for the KwaMashu and Ningizimu Urban Bantu Councils as these were not permitted under the Urban Bantu Council Act of 1961;
3. a memorandum that objected to the way funds were allocated to organisations that promoted community development;
4. the Grant-In-Aid that mainly consisted of funds from the sale of “kaffir beer” which should serve the development of black townships and not be used to support pro-apartheid bodies such as the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs(SABRA), a body that sowed disharmony between whites and blacks.⁶⁶

This memorandum demonstrated that the Port Natal Bantu Administration Board simply walked in and took control of the Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council from the Durban City Council without any reference to its Councillors, and also indicated that Councillors had no say in how public monies were spent. The very establishment he served, the UBC, had disabled Champion.

Champion used the memoranda and deputations to highlight the plight of African township residents. His complaints were legitimate but he was dealing with a political system that was not receptive to political engagement with the public representatives of Africans. He also agitated for more powers for Councillors to determine the budgets of townships. His call for a joint sitting of KwaMashu and Ningizimu (Umlazi) UBCs was an attempt to create a joint UBC in Durban and confront the Port Natal Bantu Administration Board as he had done during the days of the Durban Combined Advisory Board. His call for a joint sitting of KwaMashu and Umlazi UBCs was an attempt to revive the unity of Africans serving in statutory bodies. This was the case in the 1940s when there was a national body of Joint Location Advisory Boards. Champion was part of that body. Advisory Boards also enjoyed popular legitimacy in places like New Brighton (Port Elizabeth) where they were regarded as the legitimate voices of the community. However, the UBC Act of 1961 did away with joint sittings. This had implications for the UBCs as they could not operate across location or township boundaries.

65 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, box 17, 16/6/3/8, Ningizimu UBC Memorandum signed by Champion to the Port Natal Bantu Administration Board, 21 May 1974.

66 *Ibid.* See section regarding the rejection of SABRA. Champion stated the body was promoting racial tension.

Champion had his own local political party, *Imbokodo*. It was not a mass-based organisation, as there was no room for mass mobilisation. The political context was different as the apartheid state had tightened its grip over local government in African areas through the UBC Act of 1961, with tight control and surveillance over political activity.

The levels of dissatisfaction and poverty were very high in African areas.⁶⁷ Soil erosion in African townships made conditions unsuitable for community gardens and houses became dilapidated.⁶⁸ The Port Natal Administration Board relied on insufficient Native Revenue Account to build houses and a constant backlog remained.⁶⁹ There was also a shortage of jobs, especially for women. It was difficult for them to be domestic workers or to work in the laundry industry and in the informal sector as Umlazi and Lamontville were far from town. People were obliged to use trains to travel from Umlazi to Durban, whereas Cato Manor was only about eight kilometers from the city.⁷⁰ This was the case in many African townships in South Africa.

It should also be noted that Champion had an authoritarian approach to political debates. He alienated public figures who could have been part of a conservative alliance against radical forces in Durban. Prince Sithela ka Manqina Zulu was a member of the KwaMashu Urban Bantu Council and a representative of King Cyprian ka Solomon of the Zulus in Durban. Champion opposed his involvement in local government affairs as he regarded the prince as too close to the Bantu Administration Board and not a public representative.⁷¹

There was also an element of competition and inability to serve in a team on the part of Champion as he constantly clashed with Sithela on the Paramount Chief Council in Durban (*Ibandla Lenkosi*). The Paramount Chief Council was an informal structure to support the Paramount Chief of the Zulu people in Durban. It was led by Prince Bhayisikili ka Mshiyeni and both Champion and Sithela were members. The body also raised funds for the Zulu royal family events such as weddings.⁷²

On the other hand, Champion had strong qualities as a leader. He fought for the trading rights of Africans businesses in Durban as well as in rural KwaZulu.⁷³ He regarded himself a pioneer of the Bantu Investment Corporation (BIC), a body that was formed by the South African government in 1959 to support African

67 Torr, L "Lamontville" in Edwards I. *The people's city...*, pp. 251-254.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 250.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 255.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 256.

71 Champion, pp. 93-94.

72 Interview: Chief MG Buthelezi, Mahlabathini, 2005.

73 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion, Zululand/KwaZulu, box 25, 20/3/1, Letter Champion-Commissioner-General for the Zulu and Swazi Unit, Mr JJ Boshoff, 19 December 1967.

entrepreneurs in setting up businesses, writing letters to *Ilanga LaseNatal* and the *Natal Mercury* newspapers.⁷⁴ He observed that the BIC was not transferring skills and expertise to Africans but was merely filling shops with stock and employing Africans as managers. Once again, his crusade against the BIC was not a success as the government wholly supported the work of this body in African areas. Champion deplored the presence of Indian traders in African areas as he argued that, unlike African traders, they had fewer restrictions.⁷⁵ African entrepreneurs had to rent business premises subject to annual renewal and were in most cases forced to close down by township regulations and poverty. He tried to use the apartheid policy to exclude Indians from African locations, but the strategy did not work as the policy of apartheid was not based on equal opportunities for all South Africans.

5. CHAMPION AND FORMATIVE YEARS OF INKATHA, 1974-1975

Champion did not have direct communication with the Department of Bantu Administration and Development in Pretoria and had to submit all communication to the unsympathetic Port Natal Bantu Administration officials.⁷⁶ He complained about the enforcement of influx control regulations where workers were forced to leave Durban for the rural areas, the high transport costs and low wages.⁷⁷ SB Borquin, the Director of the Port Natal Bantu Administration Board, brushed aside Champion's complaints about the eviction of widows in Durban townships. His argument was that under Bantu Law, African women could not be allocated houses.⁷⁸ To Champion, this was an affront as black women were part of his constituency.

Faced by this frustrating environment of losing legitimacy in the townships due to the rise of the militant Umlazi and KwaMashu Residents' Associations and

74 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion, box 38, 28/3/2/4; box 39, 28/3/2/7, Correspondence with *Ilanga Lase Natal* and MSS, letters to the *Natal Mercury*, 12 July 1968 and *Ilanga*, 5 February 1971.

75 Temkin, p. 226.

76 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, box 13, 16/6/3/2, Ningizimu UBC, letter Champion–Port Natal Bantu Administration Board, 18 July 1973. Champion protested about the unilateral transfer of Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council from the Durban City Council to the Port Natal Bantu Administration Board. See also KCM 99/6/5/1 - 49, file 5, official correspondence, 1946-1974, box 1 [of 3], minutes of the Administration and Works Committee of the Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council, 15 October 1974. Councillor Shezi complained that inputs from councillors were often ignored by the Port Natal Bantu Administration Board and Champion complained once again about the transfer of the Ningizimu UBC from the City Council to Port Natal Bantu Administration.

77 Champion, pp. 180-182.

78 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, 16/6/3/3/1, Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council. See letter 6 July 1973 SB Borquin–AWG Champion, "Ineligibility of Bantu women for the allocation of houses".

the failure to get a hearing from authorities, Champion invited Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the Chief Minister of the KwaZulu homeland, in April 1975 to address a joint meeting of the UBC members from Umlazi and KwaMashu at the Durban City Hall.⁷⁹ This was in defiance of the UBC Act of 1961 which did not allow joint UBC meetings. According to archival records, Champion had a long relationship with Buthelezi dating back to the 1950s in the ANC and later continued in the 1960s, when Buthelezi and Champion were closely involved in Zulu Royal House affairs during the kingship of Cyprian Bhekuzulu ka Solomon Zulu. They shared the view that Africans should have permanent status in urban areas. Champion also endorsed Buthelezi in 1970 as the first Chief Executive Officer of the KwaZulu Territorial Authority.

The Umlazi Residents' Association and the KwaMashu Residents' Associations waged a vicious campaign that led to the isolation of UBC members who were labelled as sellouts in the 1970s. Houses of councillors were petrol bombed and members were ostracised by the community.⁸⁰ The ANC "underground" distributed memoranda opposing rental increases, demanding changes in housing policies, fighting for the rights of unlicensed traders, and physically attacking those who were perceived as government collaborators.

Clearly, there was a power struggle between Champion and Residents' Associations that were supported by the trade union movement leadership from SACTU and ANC activists. The Residents' Associations also managed to establish political influence among African Durban residents as they were not tainted by any association with the organs of state. It was easy for them to attack Champion's participation in the UBC as they were outside these structures. These developments were a serious setback to the political aspirations of Champion as he understood the importance of legitimacy in the eyes of the African Durban residents. On the other hand he did not believe in political violence. He then devised a new strategy of working with Buthelezi, who operated from KwaZulu but never ceased to address the issues affecting urban Africans.⁸¹ These were socio-political rights, the release of political prisoners, land rights, housing and quality education for Africans in towns.

Archival evidence shows that Champion increasingly became the main contact for Buthelezi in Durban politics as he was Chairperson of the Ningizimu UBC. This political relationship was to create future tension between urban radical nationalism as represented by the ANC, Residents' Associations, and the

79 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, correspondence MG Buthelezi and AWG Champion in English and isiZulu, box 25, 20/6/1; Champion–Buthelezi, 4 April 1975, inviting him to address the joint meeting of kwaMashu and uMlazi UBCs.

80 *Ibid.*, pp. 54-57. UBC members were referred to as members of the Useless Boys Club and "izimpipi" (informers).

81 OD Dhlomo, "The strategy of Inkatha and its critics", *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 18, 1983, pp. 49-59.

trade unions on the one side and conservative Zulu nationalism as represented by Buthelezi and Champion. He used his column in *Ilanga*, “Okubonwa uMahlathi” to bolster the image of the first Chief Executive Officer of the Zulu Territorial Authority, Chief MG Buthelezi.⁸²

AWG Champion was elected to the Central Committee of *Inkatha Yenkululeko YeSizwe* in 1975. The fact that he pursued *Inkatha* politics in Durban meant that Champion was promoting Zulu ethnic nationalism in an urban and multi-cultural environment. Champion, though marginalised by the Port Natal Bantu Administration, found a formidable political ally in Buthelezi who had a broader political platform than a UBC Councillor.

W Beinart,⁸³ Nancy Clark and William Worger⁸⁴ identify the rise of collaboration politics in the Natal region as an important factor. This period marked the rise of Chief Buthelezi, the *Inkatha* leader, as a regional political player in Natal within the structures of the Zulu “homeland”. Champion was instrumental in organising Durban townships’ support for Buthelezi under the banner of the Urban Bantu Council and his use of the press since he was a *Ilanga LaseNatal* columnist. The re-constituted *Inkatha* combined elements of Zulu ethnic nationalism, incorporated the names of Dube and Seme (Zulu-speaking former presidents of the ANC) and elements of the Black Consciousness philosophy to interface with the radical nationalisms of the ANC and the Black Consciousness Movement.

Inkatha, the movement of Champion and Buthelezi, was to later challenge the ANC and the Black Consciousness Movement in Natal and became a key national political player in the 1970s. Champion called for the constitutional inclusion of Natal-based urban Africans into the Zulu Territorial Authority in a federal system and challenged the boundaries of the Zulu homeland.⁸⁵

82 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, MSS for *Ilanga*, Newspaper in Zulu, box 38, file 28/3/2/6, Okubonwa uMahlathi column articles from April to October 1970. In all the articles Champion was supporting Zulu nationalism, its revival within the Zulu Territorial Authority, the link between urban and rural Zulus and the leading role of Chief Buthelezi as a national leader. See also AWG Champion Collection, box 25, 20/6/1, correspondence on topical issues such as Zulu Royal House matters between Champion and Buthelezi dating back from 1960.

83 W Beinart, *Twentieth - Century South Africa* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 222-224.

84 NL Clark and WH Worger, *South Africa. The rise and fall of apartheid* (Edinburg Gate, 2004), pp. 67-68, 99.

85 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, MSS for *Ilanga*, Newspaper in Zulu, file 28/3/2/6, “Okubonwa uMahlathi” column, 23 June 1970 and file 28/3/2/6, “Umhlangano wokuqala kamazibuse” (first session of the self-governing territory). See also Champion, *The views*, pp.131-133.

6. CONCLUSION

Champion died while still serving as a Councillor for the Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council. He was living at his home in Chesterville when he died on 28 September 1975 at the age of 82 years.⁸⁶ In its tribute *Ilanga* ranked him with Dr JL Dube and Pixley ka Isaka Seme, both former Presidents of the African National Congress, as a great leader of the African people. Chief Minister of KwaZulu, MG Buthelezi, paid tribute to Champion as a leader that never bore grudges. Buthelezi referred to the 1951 ANC conference where he, as part of the ANC Youth League, supported Chief Albert Luthuli's candidacy and opposed Champion for the provincial presidency of the ANC. A lesson from Champion's local government record is that he worked tirelessly for his constituency, operating from 318 Grey Street, Durban. He constantly engaged authorities on issues such as the dismissal of people from their jobs, application for housing, rentals, and access to health and education. The Urban Bantu Council system was, however, not a legitimate structure to give him political space to effectively represent African interests in Durban. On the other hand, one could endorse Barnes when he states: "Looking beyond the political rhetoric⁸⁷ that has surrounded the Advisory Boards, the historical reality has been more complex." Advisory Boards and later Urban Bantu Councils granted African communities limited platform to mobilize around everyday issues. He emerged as a politician who used this limited platform but failed to change his tactics of deputations and petitions in order to fight for African rights under the apartheid system that was increasingly authoritarian in the 1960s and 1970s. He also could have been a rallying force of African politics in the late 1960s to 1970s, but the political platform for urban Africans was too limited under the UBC system.

On the other hand, one has to analyse the difficult conditions under which Champion operated. His political scope was limited by an array of security legislation. He had the ambition of reviving the Zulu National Fund (ZNF) in 1967 to assist needy and gifted students with bursaries and support African businesses.⁸⁸ The ZNF was formed to advance the cause of education and progress in general. The other prominent member of the ZNF was Mr H Selby Msimang, a former Provincial Secretary of the ANC and founder member of the Liberal Party.

86 *Ilanga LaseNatal*, 1 October 1975. The newspaper paid tribute to AWG Champion as a fearless campaigner for black rights. It also carried the message of Chief MG Buthelezi on the death of Champion. The editorial ranked with African leaders such as Dr JL Dube and Pixley ka I, Seme.

87 G Barnes, "The contradictions of community politics", *Journal of African History* 35, 1994, pp. 79-97.

88 KCM 99/6/7/1-122, file 7, box 1 [of 3], correspondence 1960-1974, Champion's letter 15 May 1965– HS Msimang informing him about the Security Branch investigation and that they thought he (Champion) was trying to establish a political party and wanted a list of contributors.

Champion's efforts were thwarted by an ever suspicious Security Police. He was questioned and had to abandon the project.

The 1960s and 1970s were thus a difficult period in township politics as Champion had to confront a strong apartheid political system that had the support of most of the white population, a growing economy and with African organisations banned and forced to operate underground. Champion also faced growing political forces in townships that were against his political strategies.

The major legacy of Champion in local politics is that he sowed the seeds of a different stream of a Zulu-based African nationalism that was to be articulated by Inkatha from 1975 up to the present. He was deeply rooted in Zulu culture, a Zulu nationalist, and he believed that South Africa would eventually be a united country under the leadership of experienced leaders like himself and educated chiefs like Buthelezi.⁸⁹

Champion also shared with Buthelezi the vision of a permanent African population in urban areas that will work with those based in "homelands" for a new political order in South Africa. The foundation for tensions between Inkatha and the Black Consciousness Movement, the trade union movement and the ANC-aligned Residents' Associations in Durban townships could be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s. The collaboration politics of AWG Champion during the period under review did not create conditions for African liberation but mainly contributed to rivalry between contending nationalisms and state-sanctioned township politics in Durban.

The seeds of the 1980s conflicts in Durban townships between the ANC-aligned United Democratic Front and Inkatha were actually sown during the 1960s and 1970s. The battle was for the soul of the African constituency and whether this constituency would follow leaders who operated within structures of government to achieve black liberation or supported those who favoured militant action outside the structures of apartheid. Champion was prominent during the period under review and his political tactics shaped the political landscape of Natal and South Africa in general. He is one of those few early nationalist figures who left an imprint long after his death. Finally, Champion was a life-long African politician who remained in public life for more than 50 years, working at different political levels. His history deserves to be recorded and it contains important lessons for current public figures in South African politics.

89 UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, box 38, MSS for *Ilanga*, file 20/6/1/2, letter Champion–Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, 24 May 1972. In the letter he endorses Buthelezi as the ideal national leader who possesses both education and royalty. See also letter Buthelezi–Champion, 24 June 1970, where Buthelezi wants Champion to discuss with him the land consolidation proposals for KwaZulu.

Champion was central in the struggle for equality and human dignity at local government level but did not succeed. There is a strong view that Champion failed because he chose to work within the structures of the National Party in the era of apartheid. On the other hand, there is also a similarly strong view that Champion was a man of his time and firmly believed in using apartheid structures to achieve change.

Champion's strategy of using the state structures to oppose apartheid unfortunately did not yield positive outcomes. He wanted a single integrated system of government in Durban, but he never lived to see the fulfilment of that dream. Firstly, the Urban Bantu Councils, like the Native Advisory Boards before them, were never accorded genuine powers by the government. Secondly, the state deliberately blocked the unity of purpose within the Urban Bantu Councils by emphasising ethnicity and territorial zoning to check their use by leaders like Champion who wanted to further their political interests within the UBC.⁹⁰

90 KCM 99/6/5/1-49, file 5, minutes of the Administration and Works Committee, 15 October 1974, p. 3 and memorandum of the Ningizimu Urban Bantu Council–Port Natal Bantu Administration Board, 11 April 1973. Also see UNISA Library Archives, AWG Champion Collection, "The soul is irrepressible", unpublished memoir, 1969.