


# Memories and testimonies of passbooks, permits and *platkeps* in apartheid-era Batho, Mangaung

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The memories and testimonies of black people who were on the receiving end of racial discrimination provide important evidence of their lived experiences during the apartheid era (1948–1994). They ‘revisit’ apartheid South Africa because of recurring memories of traumatic experiences. Sadly, they relive the painful incidents emotionally when such memories are triggered. The National Museum in Bloemfontein has interviewed more than 150 Batho residents about their experiences of Batho’s apartheid past, specifically their experiences of racist municipal laws and regulations. Although discriminatory municipal policies are rooted in the racial sentiments of Bloemfontein’s colonial (1846–1910) and segregationist (1910–1948) periods, they are also based on national legislation, notably the *Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923*. Direct quotes from interviews allow interviewees to speak for themselves. The interviewees’ testimonies of their experiences have generated information about, among others, the carrying of passbooks; visits to the pass office; maltreatment by municipal police (*platkeps*); being arrested for not having a passbook; spending time in police cells for committing *loaferskap* (idleness) or for housing an overnight guest without a lodger’s permit; being victims of violent house raids; and being harassed by the night curfew siren. Because most interviewees’ parents and grandparents were subjected to similar discriminatory laws and regulations, traumatic experiences are a multi-generational phenomenon.

**Contribution:** The oral history methodology was used to reconstruct aspects of Batho’s apartheid history. By tapping into people’s memories and testimonies, this article aims to present a history from ‘below’ of Mangaung’s oldest existing township and, thereby, contribute to local historiography.

**Keywords:** Batho; apartheid; memories; testimonies; influx control; passbooks; permits; *platkeps*; curfew.

## Introduction

What was it like to be on the receiving end of apartheid laws and regulations that controlled one’s daily life? How did it feel to be humiliated by police who treated you as a second-class citizen who did not belong in a ‘whites-only’ South Africa? Is it possible for South Africans born after 1994 to imagine life as a black<sup>1</sup> person in a racially segregated ‘location’<sup>2</sup> during apartheid? In his novel, *The Go-Between* (1953), Leslie P. Hartley (1895–1972) wrote: ‘The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there’.<sup>3</sup> Although Hartley’s quote referred to British society at the end of the Victorian age, it is relevant to South Africa and other countries that experienced profound socio-political changes. Hartley and the American historian, David Lowenthal (1923–2018) described the past as a ‘foreign country’.<sup>4</sup> The past can never be fully understood by those who live in present times because they do not belong there. Post-1994 democratic South Africa and pre-1994 apartheid South Africa are two very different countries. For those who grew up in the former, the latter is a ‘foreign country’. Whether genuine empathy<sup>5</sup> with apartheid victims or

1. In this article, the terms ‘black(s)’ or ‘black people’ refer to all people of colour who were legally and socially discriminated against on the basis of race. For more information, see K. Breckenridge, “The Book of Life: The South African Population Register and the Invention of Racial Descent, 1950–1980,” *Kronos* 40 (2014), 226–27; D. Posel, “What’s in a Name? Racial Categorisations Under Apartheid and Their Afterlife,” *Transformation* 47 (2001), 50–67.

2. In the historical South African context, the term ‘location’ referred to a segregated living area for people of colour. The colloquial term *kasi* was also used to refer to such a living area. Locations were usually situated on the margins of whites-only towns and cities. L. Molamu, *Tsotsi-Taal: A Dictionary of the Language of Sophiatown* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2003), 50, 57.

3. L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1972), 9.

4. D. Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 3–4.

5. Sean Field uses the term ‘empathic imagination’. S. Field, “‘What Can I Do When the Interviewee Cries?’: Oral History Strategies for Containment and Regeneration,” In *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa*, edited by P. Denis and R. Ntsimane (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008), 153–56.

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historical imagination of the apartheid past will guarantee an authentic apartheid experience is debatable.<sup>6</sup> Such an experience requires an emotion beyond empathy: one has to become the victim.<sup>7</sup>

For the purpose of this article, it is reasoned that black South Africans, who have experienced apartheid, revisit the 'foreign country' that South Africa was before 1994 either voluntarily or as a result of involuntary recurring memories of traumatic incidents. Psychologist, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, argues that many apartheid victims '... reflect daily on the destruction visited upon their lives'.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, they experience a '... daily invasion of traumatic memory'.<sup>9</sup> Disturbing memories of the apartheid past and flashbacks of personal experiences of discrimination and humiliation mean that some people relive painful and traumatic incidents emotionally when such memories are triggered. Oral historian, Sean Field, argues that although apartheid has officially ended, '... the emotional traces of past discriminations still reside in and between people'.<sup>10</sup> Apartheid affected South Africans in different ways; while some (mostly black people) were victims of the system, others (mostly white people) were beneficiaries.<sup>11</sup>

The fact that apartheid was a lived reality for many black South Africans means that they still think about it; they talk about it and they are being interviewed about it. In the process, their testimonies – fact or not – become oral histories. While Field describes this type of oral history as 'lived practices',<sup>12</sup> Gobodo-Madikizela refers to it as 'lived experience[s]'<sup>13</sup> of traumatic memory because it has become part of people's daily lives. The main argument is that these 'lived practices' and 'lived experiences' also become *relived* practices and *relived* experiences when people revisit their experiences of apartheid. Therefore, apartheid memories become a *relived reality* when such memories are triggered by familiar images, sounds and smells: the image of a police van, the sound of the night curfew siren and the smell of the pass office. Through these sensory triggers, which still abound in post-apartheid South Africa, the apartheid 'foreign country' is revisited and relived. While victims of painful and

traumatic experiences may be retraumatised when they relive such incidents, they also find that sharing their testimonies with others can help them contextualise, frame and make sense of traumatic memories.<sup>14</sup>

In 2007, the National Museum in Bloemfontein launched the Batho Community History Project (hereafter the Batho Project) as a community-based oral history project. The main objective of the Batho Project was to access and record information on the cultural, social and political history of Batho, Mangaung's oldest surviving township,<sup>15</sup> using the oral history method.<sup>16</sup> It entailed the conducting of one-to-one interviews by the author, oral history assistants and graduate students by using a prepared questionnaire. Interviewees were identified after pre-interview discussions were held with them. All interviewees voluntarily agreed to be interviewed and interviews were conducted only after informed consent was obtained from them.<sup>17</sup> In 2014, the Batho Liberation Heritage Project (hereafter the BLH Project) was launched to access and record information on Batho's struggle history (1960–1994). This project focusses on people, buildings and sites connected to Batho's liberation and struggle history.<sup>18</sup> To date, a total of 150 men and women above the age of 50 have been interviewed for both projects.<sup>19</sup> Most of them were still living in Batho when they were interviewed.<sup>20</sup>

The objective of this article is to allow the interviewees' 'voices to be heard'<sup>21</sup> by means of direct quotes from the interviews; it makes extensive use of transcriptions<sup>22</sup> of interviews as the primary source of information. Therefore, the unique testimonies of those who experienced Batho's liberation and struggle history, are the main focus of this article. Whereas some interviews were conducted in the interviewees' mother tongues (Sesotho and/or Setswana) and translated into English, other interviews were conducted in English which, in most cases, was the interviewees' second language. The restriction imposed on certain interviewees by this handicap, especially on those interviewed by the author, is acknowledged. However, most trauma victims found it challenging to express their apartheid experiences in words, regardless of the language

6.S. Field, "Beyond 'Healing': Trauma, Oral History and Regeneration," *Oral History* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 37–8; P. Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died that Night: A South African Woman Confronts the Legacy of Apartheid* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 85.

7.D. Du Bruyn, "'Oh, That Law, It Was Terrible!': Memories of Pass Laws, Permits and Policemen in Apartheid-Era Batho (Mangaung)," *Culna Online*, 31 March 2023, no p. no. <https://nationalmuseumpublications.co.za/oh-that-law-it-was-terrible-memories-of-pass-laws-permits-and-policemen-in-apartheid-era-batho-mangaung.html>.

8.Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died ...*, 86.

9.Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died ...*, 87.

10.S. Field, *Oral History, Community, and Displacement: Imagining Memories in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.

11.D. Posel, "The Apartheid Project, 1948–1970," in *The Cambridge History of South Africa* (vol. 2), 1885–1994, edited by R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager and B. Nasson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 319–24, 331–34, 355–57, 363.

12.Field, *Oral History, Community, and ...*, 4; S. Field, "Turning Up the Volume: Dialogues About Memory Create Oral Histories," *South African Historical Journal* 60, no. 2 (2008), 180.

13.Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died ...*, 87.

14.M. Klempner, "Navigating Life Review Interviews with Survivors of Trauma," in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by R. Perks and A. Thomson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 198–210; S. Field, *Oral History, Community, and ...*, 144; S. Field, "'What Can I do ...'", edited by P. Denis and R. Ntsimane, *Oral History in a ...*, 161–65.

15.In the present South African context, the term 'township' refers to a designated living area historically reserved for people of colour.

16.D. Du Bruyn, "Oral Testimonies as a Source of Community History, with Special Reference to the Batho Project, Bloemfontein," *South African Journal of Cultural History* 24, no. 2 (2010), 6.

17.The *Code of Ethics for Oral History Practitioners in South Africa* as prescribed by the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) was observed at all times. Before each interview, the interviewee and the interviewer signed an interview protocol, namely a *Gift and Release Agreement*.

18.*The Batho Liberation Heritage Route* (brochure, National Museum, 2020), 1.

19.Ethical clearance obtained; refer to NMB ECC 2020/04 & NMB ECC 2022/03.

20.Du Bruyn, "'Oh, That Law, It ...'", no p. no.

21.Refer to Sean Field's arguments about transforming interviewees' private voices into public voices. Field, *Oral History, Community, and ...*, 149–51.

22.Transcriptions of the interviews are available for public scrutiny on request.

used.<sup>23</sup> For the sake of clarity and legibility, the quoted text was partially edited.

An oral history interview is not only a dynamic and complex process but also an intrinsically subjective one. The interviewees' testimonies or 'voices' are affected by a phenomenon referred to by oral historians as 'intersubjectivity'.<sup>24</sup> According to Lynn Abrams, the inherent subjectivities of the interviewer and interviewee interact '... to produce an effect called intersubjectivity'.<sup>25</sup> Field argues that '... oral histories are not recovered, but are co-created through intersubjective dialogues'.<sup>26</sup> Concerning the one-to-one interviews that were conducted for the oral history projects mentioned earlier, factors such as race, gender, age, language, social class, power relations, emotions, the mood of the interview, the level of trust between interviewer and interviewee, the nature of memory, and the questions that were asked influenced the dialogues and contributed to the intersubjectivity effect. Importantly, this phenomenon shaped the information – fact and non-fact – that was co-created and retrieved from the interviewees. Although not considered a weakness, as will be explained later, the intersubjectivity effect must be kept in mind when oral testimonies are used as sources for apartheid-era historiography.<sup>27</sup>

Secondary sources such as newspapers, periodicals and books provide historical context. Historical works on apartheid should include oral testimonies as primary sources or otherwise risk being incomplete. Importantly, the voices, emotions and feelings of apartheid victims and beneficiaries should be included.<sup>28</sup> During the past four decades, South African oral historians have used the oral history method in their work on various rural and urban communities across South Africa. Notable examples include the work of Isabel Hofmeyr on Valtyn, a Ndebele-Sotho chiefdom near Mokopane (Potgietersrus)<sup>29</sup>; Belinda Bozzoli's oral interviews with a group of female migrants in the town of Phokeng (North West Province)<sup>30</sup>; Charles van Onselen's social history of a sharecropper in the former western Transvaal (North West Province)<sup>31</sup>; Hilton

23. Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died ...*, 85, 164.

24. L. Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 54; Field, *Oral History, Community, and ...*, 4.

25. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 54.

26. Field, *Oral History, Community, and ...*, 4.

27. P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 140, 156–57; P. Denis, "Introduction," in *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa*, edited by P. Denis and R. Ntsimane (Scottsville: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press, 2008), 4; Field, *Oral History, Community, and ...*, 157, 160, 171; Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 54–56, 58–60; J. Wells, "Are We Nation-Building Yet? The Role of Oral Historians in Documenting the Transition Out of Apartheid," in *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa*, edited by P. Denis and R. Ntsimane (Scottsville: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press, 2008), 27–32, 33–36; D. A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 7–8, 74–75; A. Schinkel, "History and Historiography in Process," *History and Theory* 43, no. 1 (2004), 40, 48–51.

28. Field, *Oral History, Community, and ...*, 1–4. For prevailing debates in the field of apartheid historiography, refer to the special issue of the *South African Historical Journal* 69, no. 2 (2017), on apartheid.

29. I. Hofmeyr, *"We Spend Our Years as a Tale that Is Told": Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993), 25–37.

30. B. Bozzoli, "Interviewing the Women of Phokeng," in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by R. Perks and A. Thomson (New York: Routledge, 1998), 155–65.

31. C. Van Onselen, *The Seed Is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894–1985* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997), 3–649.

Biscombe's study of the original brown community of Die Vlakte in Stellenbosch<sup>32</sup>; and Sean Field's work on the communities of Windermere and Guguletu in Cape Town,<sup>33</sup> to name but a few. Municipal and governmental records from Bloemfontein's colonial (1846–1910), segregationist (1910–1948) and apartheid (1948–1994) eras also contain valuable contextual and primary information. However, these records should be used with caution. The inherent biases and shortcomings of archival records created by the colonial, segregationist and apartheid administrations are acknowledged. South African archivist Verne Harris argues that the archive may be used to contextualise but, at the same time, the archive is also the law determining contexts.<sup>34</sup>

Although the relevant discriminatory municipal policies and regulations were rooted in the city's pre-1910 colonial and pre-1948 segregationist periods, they were also based on important national legislation. The *Natives (Urban Areas) Act (no. 21 of 1923*<sup>35</sup>; amended and tightened in 1930 and 1937<sup>36</sup>) is significantly linked to the purpose of this article because it is considered the blueprint for racial segregation in South African towns and cities. Municipalities based most of their policies and regulations concerning location residents on this Act, notably the Location Regulations of the Municipality of Bloemfontein (hereafter the municipality). Because of its longevity, this piece of legislation regulated, controlled, and effectively criminalised the lives of black people for more than six decades. The Act and, by implication, the multiple laws and regulations that were based on it, were only repealed in 1986.<sup>37</sup>

## Historical background

Although racial segregation and discrimination were imposed informally and on an *ad hoc* basis by successive Dutch (1652–1795; 1803–1806) and British (1795–1803; 1806–1910) colonial administrations<sup>38</sup> long before the National Party was voted into power, the post-1948 apartheid legislation was enforced much more ruthlessly. After the National Party came to power in May 1948, it implemented a range of apartheid laws and regulations that were meant to racially segregate and suppress the black majority and to safeguard the white minority. On the one hand, some of the most notorious apartheid laws and regulations were used as

32. H. Biscombe, *In Ons Bloed* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2006), 1–232.

33. Field, *Oral History, Community, and ...*, 23–79.

34. V. Harris, *Ghosts of Archive: Deconstructive Intersectionality and Praxis* (London: Routledge, 2021), 52.

35. *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1923 with Tables of Contents (Alphabetical and Chronological) and Tables of Laws, etc., Repealed and Amended by These Statutes: Natives (Urban Areas) Act (no. 21 of 1923)*, 140–97.

36. For example, see *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1930 with Tables of Contents (Alphabetical and Chronological) and Tables of Laws, etc., Repealed and Amended by These Statutes: Natives (Urban Areas) Act, 1923, Amendment (no. 25 of 1930)*, 178–201.

37. B. Freund, "South Africa: The Union Years, 1910–1948. Political and Economic Foundations," in *The Cambridge History of South Africa (vol. 2), 1885–1994*, edited by R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager and B. Nasson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 236; edited by H. Giliomee, B. Mbenga and B. Nasson, *New History of South Africa* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2022), 364; R. Davenport and C. Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 271, 310, 511 and 644.

38. Giliomee et al., *New History of South ...*, 69–334.

measures to control the influx of black people into whites-only South Africa and, on the other hand, they were used to regulate the lives of black people living there.<sup>39</sup>

The *Natives (Urban Areas) Act* authorised all cities and towns in the Union of South Africa (est. 1910) to ‘... define, set apart and lay out one or more areas of land for the occupation, residence and other reasonable requirements of natives’.<sup>40</sup> The ‘areas of land’ were the racially segregated locations that were laid out some distance from whites-only towns and cities.<sup>41</sup> The municipality was ahead of its time, so to speak, when it established Batho in 1918 as a ‘model location’<sup>42</sup> on the basis of ‘general segregation principles’.<sup>43</sup> In fact, Batho became a national ‘blueprint’ for location layout and sound location administration.<sup>44</sup> In order to ensure the effective ‘... control, management and use of the location’,<sup>45</sup> the Town Council of Bloemfontein (hereafter the Council) framed the Location Regulations (also known as ‘Model Regulations’<sup>46</sup>) under section 23(3) of the *Natives (Urban Areas) Act*.<sup>47</sup> This document contained all the regulations, orders and instructions that permitted the implementation of the Act in Batho.<sup>48</sup>

By the time the National Party implemented formal apartheid in the 1950s, Batho had been well established. The municipality’s claim that Batho’s residents lived in a ‘model location’ was utterly misleading because it did not make life easier for them; in fact, they were subjected to the same segregationist and apartheid laws and regulations that were applicable to other locations such as neighbouring Bochabela. Interviewees testified that the apartheid measures were enforced with nothing short of an iron fist throughout the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The oppressive control measures in question are related to ‘influx control’<sup>49</sup>; an umbrella term for the laws and regulations that restricted black people’s rights to live and work in South Africa’s whites-only urban areas.<sup>50</sup>

39. Freund, “South Africa: The Union ...”, 236; D. Hindson, *Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), 64–81; Du Bruyn, “‘Oh, That Law, It ...’”, no p. no.

40. *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1923 with Tables of Contents (Alphabetical and Chronological) and Tables of Laws, etc., Repealed and Amended by These Statutes: Natives (Urban Areas) Act (no. 21 of 1923)*, 142.

41. Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern ...*, 390.

42. For more details, see D. Du Bruyn and M. Oelofse, “A Hygienic Native Township Shall be Developed”: The Founding and Development of Batho as Bloemfontein’s ‘Model Location’ (c. 1918–1939),” *Historia* 64, no. 2 (2019), 47–81.

43. Free State Provincial Archives (hereafter FSPA): MBL 3/1/19, *Mayor’s Minute 1926–1927*, 12.

44. FSPA: MBL 3/1/43, *Mayor’s Minute 1951*, 41; D. Du Bruyn, *Mangaung’s Batho Township: A Treasure Trove of Black History* (Bloemfontein: National Museum, 2023), 9.

45. FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Location Regulations Framed by the Town Council, Bloemfontein Under Section 23(3) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act no. 21 of 1923*, 1.

46. FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Letter from the Native Pass Office to the Town Clerk & Treasurer, Municipality of Bloemfontein*, 05 May 1924, 1.

47. FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Location Regulations Framed by the Town Council, Bloemfontein Under Section 23(3) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act no. 21 of 1923*, 1.

48. Du Bruyn, “‘Oh, That Law, It ...’”

49. FSPA: MBL 3/1/42, *Mayor’s Minute 1950*, 38; MBL 3/1/61, *Mayor’s Minute 1969, Report: Non-European Administration Department*, 1; MBL 3/1/62, *Mayor’s Minute 1970*, 83.

50. D. Posel, “Influx Control and Urban Labour Markets in the 1950s,” in *Apartheid’s Genesis, 1935–1962*, edited by P. Bonner, P. Delius and D. Posel (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1993), 412; Giliomee et al., *New History of South Africa ...*, 376–77.

## Pass laws, reference books and *dompas*

As early as 1872, a municipal regulation compelled Bloemfontein’s ‘native servants’<sup>51</sup> to carry a ‘ticket’<sup>52</sup> as a form of identification. Subsequently, a control system by means of an identity card, referred to as a ‘pas’<sup>53</sup> in Dutch or ‘pass’<sup>54</sup> in English, was made compulsory for all people of colour above the age of 16. The pass system, which also applied to black women<sup>55</sup> and even to black visitors from outside Bloemfontein,<sup>56</sup> was kept in place for the entire period that preceded apartheid. Whereas the pass laws were mostly used as a measure to enforce influx control, they were also used at times to address the chronic shortage of cheap black labour supply to Bloemfontein’s whites. This was the case during the 1910s, when a ‘residential pass’<sup>57</sup> permitted the carrier’s residence in the location. In effect, passes were used to force black people to work for a white ‘Master or Mistress’<sup>58</sup> for very low wages. Where there was no labour shortage, the pass system was used to control the number of black people in urban locations. After the implementation of apartheid, the pass system was refined and tightened.<sup>59</sup>

Interviewees such as Moitheri L. Machogo (b. 1949), have lived through apartheid oppression during all four decades of National Party rule. She explained that Batho residents had witnessed apartheid laws and regulations being tightened during the 1950s but, even more so, after 1961 when South Africa became a republic<sup>60</sup>:

Apartheid was there but not as ‘open’ as it became after the republic [came into being] because even during that time when the British was [sic] in power, it was there but ‘mild’. After that; that was when the Boers told themselves that we were *kaffirs*,<sup>61</sup> you understand?

Among the apartheid laws that were tightened were the pass laws. All interviewees testified that as far as they could

51. *The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette*, 25 July 1872, 3.

52. *The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette*, 01 August 1872, 2.

53. *The Express*, 26 October 1876, 2.

54. *The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette*, 28 February 1884, 5.

55. J. Wells, *We Have Done with Pleading: The Women’s 1913 Anti-Pass Campaign* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991), 6–7; D. Du Bruyn, “Charlotte Maxeke’s Bloemfontein Links and Their Significance to Women,” *Culna* 76 (2022), 38.

56. See public notice published in *The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette*, 28 February 1884, 5.

57. Adelaide Tambo Public Library, Bloemfontein (hereafter ATPL): Corporation of Bloemfontein, *Municipal Regulations 1912: Native Regulations*, 2.

58. Terms used to refer to white employers during the colonial and segregationist periods. FSPA: MBL 10/2, *Regulations for the Town of Bloemfontein 1882: Regulations for the Natives within the Bloemfontein Municipality*, 18.

59. FSPA: MBL 3/1/42, *Mayor’s Minute 1950*, 38–39; K. Schoeman, *Bloemfontein: Die Ontstaan van ’n Stad, 1846–1946* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1980), 85, 131 and 235; *The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette*, 28 February 1884, 5; S. T. Platje, *Native Life in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982), 110–16; J. C. Wells, “Why Women Rebel: A Comparative Study of South African Women’s Resistance in Bloemfontein (1913) and Johannesburg (1958),” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 10, no. 1 (1983), 59, 66–67; Wells, *We Have Done with ...*, 6–7; Du Bruyn, “‘Oh, That Law, It ...’”

60. National Museum Oral History Collection (hereafter NMOHC), interview, M. L. Machogo (resident, Batho)/K. J. Pudumo (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 26 April 2017.

61. Also spelt ‘kafir(s)’, a derogatory and offensive term used by some whites to refer to people of African origin.

remember such laws had been part of their daily lives. In fact, the experience of pass laws is a multi-generational phenomenon in Batho because such laws had also been part of the daily lives of the interviewees' parents and grandparents. The same argument applies to other apartheid laws and regulations.

The *Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act (no. 67 of 1952)* repealed the multiple provincial pass laws<sup>62</sup> and, instead, introduced a single national pass law. Commonly known as the *Pass Laws Act*, the new Act required<sup>63</sup>:

[E]very native ... who has attained the age of sixteen years and is resident in an area defined therein, to appear before an officer ... in order that a reference book in such form as the Minister may determine may be issued to such native.

This Act made it compulsory for all black people between the ages of 16<sup>64</sup> and 65 to carry a reference book at all times when they lived and worked in whites-only South Africa.<sup>65</sup> While the Act used the official term 'reference book',<sup>66</sup> it was also called a 'pass' or 'passbook' by those who had to carry it and by the bureaucrats who had to check on those who had to carry it.<sup>67</sup>

Alinah S. Motleleng (b. 1938) recalled the terms 'pass' and 'passbook' being used but, according to her, most Batho residents disdainfully called the booklet a *dompas*. All black people were '... expected to carry that identity document called *dompas*',<sup>68</sup> she explained. *Dompas* is an Afrikaans colloquial term for a passbook and the word – literally meaning 'stupid pass'<sup>69</sup> – was commonly used by black people.<sup>70</sup> Terms such as *dompas* are associated with the urban vernaculars spoken in South Africa's major locations during apartheid. One example is *tsotsitaal* that emerged in Johannesburg's Sophiatown during the 1940s.<sup>71</sup> These vernaculars are described as 'antilinguages'<sup>72</sup> because they

62. T. R. H. Davenport, *The Beginnings of Urban Segregation in South Africa: The Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 and its Background* (Occasional paper number fifteen, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1971), 10.

63. *Extraordinary Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa, CLXIX(4888), Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act (no. 67 of 1952)*, 49.

64. Before apartheid, the registration age was 18. C. Glaser, "When Are They Going to Fight?: Tsotsis, Youth Politics and the PAC," in *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935–1962*, edited by P. Bonner, P. Delius and D. Posel (Braamfontein: Raven Press, 1993), 299.

65. Posel, "The Apartheid Project ...," 364; Breckenridge, "The Book of Life ...," 232.

66. *Extraordinary Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa, CLXIX(4888), Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act (no. 67 of 1952)*, 49.

67. Breckenridge, "The Book of Life ...," 225–27; Omond, *The Apartheid Handbook: A Guide to South Africa's Everyday Racial Policies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), 122–23; Simpson, *History of South Africa: From 1902 to the Present* (Cape Town: Penguin Books, 2021), 154.

68. NMOHC, interview, A. S. Motleleng (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 08 March 2012.

69. J. Dlamini, *The Terrorist Album: Apartheid's Insurgents, Collaborators, and the Security Police* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020), 215.

70. Breckenridge, "The Book of Life ...," 225–26; Molamu, *Tsotsi-Taal: A Dictionary of ...*, 25; Posel, "The Apartheid Project ...," 364. In addition to *dompas*, colloquial terms such as *stinker* and *zangaan* were also used in certain parts of South Africa. Molamu, *Tsotsi-Taal: A Dictionary of ...*, 25.

71. C. Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935–1976* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2000), 70–71; E. Hurst-Harosh, "Tsotsitaal and Decoloniality," *African Studies* 78, no. 1 (2019), 112; Glaser, "When Are They Going ...?"; Bonner et al., *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935–1962*, 299.

72. Hurst-Harosh, "Tsotsitaal and ...," 114.



Source: From the National Museum Oral History Collection

**FIGURE 1:** The first page of a typical passbook had the bearer's identity card attached to it. This card provided information as required by the *Population Registration Act of 1950*.

challenged oppressive systems. Metaphor is used to create slang words with non-standard meanings. Ironically, many of these terms took words from Afrikaans (the so-called 'language of the oppressor') and aspects of apartheid policy and turned them into witticisms such as *dompas* and other terms that will be discussed later.<sup>73</sup>

The hated passbook was a rectangular black booklet that permitted the bearer's presence in a location and stipulated the conditions under which the person could stay there. In terms of section 13 of the *Pass Laws Act*, the passbook holder's 'identity card' had to be 'affixed in the reference book',<sup>74</sup> usually to the first page.<sup>75</sup> The *Population Registration Act (no. 30 of 1950)*, which classified all South African citizens according to their racial traits,<sup>76</sup> required that the identity card contain the owner's photograph, identity number and, importantly, provide information on the 'group' (ethnic group) and 'tribe' to which the person belonged (Figure 1). Other personal information that appeared in a typical passbook included marital status; name of spouse, parent or guardian; residential address; and, importantly, names and addresses of present and former employers.<sup>77</sup> According to the African National Congress (ANC) veteran and former passbook carrier, Shuping C. Dibe (b. 1929; Figure 2), information about employers and the carrier's employment record was particularly important: '... they called it "service contract"; there was "paper" [in passbook]; they called it "service contract"'.<sup>78</sup>

Juliet M. Bokala (b. 1928) recalled the outrage when she and her family were issued with passbooks<sup>79</sup>:

73. Hurst-Harosh, "Tsotsitaal and ...," 114–18; Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: the Youth Gangs ...*, 70–71; R. Mesthrie and J. Hromnik, *Eish but Is It English?: Celebrating the South African Variety* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2011), 77–78.

74. *Extraordinary Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa, CLXIX(4888), Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act (no. 67 of 1952)*, 51.

75. Breckenridge, "The Book of Life ...," 227.

76. *Extraordinary Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa, CLXI(4422), Population Registration Act (no. 30 of 1950)*, 5.

77. Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern ...*, 390; Du Bruyn, "Oh, That Law, It ...!" no p. no.

78. NMOHC, interview, S. C. Dibe (resident, Batho)/D. du Bruyn (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 26 May 2008.

79. NMOHC, interview, J. M. Bokala (resident, Batho)/M. Wuyts (student intern, Belgium), 07 April 2009.



Source: From the National Museum Oral History Collection

**FIGURE 2:** Mr SC and Mrs SA Dibe in front of their house in Batho, 2008.

We didn't want to take these passes but we were forced to take the passes. Everyone got a book like this, a pass.

The *Pass Laws Act* stipulated that all persons who were obliged to carry a passbook had to '... produce on demand of an authorized officer'<sup>80</sup> such a passbook, no matter where and when it was requested. According to Reverend Kgosimang S. Papane (b. 1933; Figure 3), there was an unwritten rule for all passbook bearers: 'As jy uitgaan moet jy seker maak jy het hom [pasboek] in jou sak in'.<sup>81</sup> Failing to produce a passbook upon request could lead to a fine of up to 10 pounds or imprisonment of up to a month. When found not in possession of a passbook at all, the offender could get a fine of up to 50 pounds or imprisonment of up to 6 months.<sup>82</sup> Nomvula R. Ntuli (b. 1938) testified that the pass laws and the consequences of violating those laws had had a huge influence on her and other Batho residents' daily lives: 'I could not go to town without it [passbook]'. Nomvula and

80. *Extraordinary Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa, CLXIX(4888), Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act (no. 67 of 1952), 57.*

81. "When You Go Out You Had to Make Sure that You Have It [passbook] in Your Pocket" (Free translation); NMOHC, interview, K. S. Papane (resident, Phahameng)/D. Du Bruyn (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 18 August 2009.

82. *Extraordinary Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa, CLXIX(4888), Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act (no. 67 of 1952), 57.*

other passbook bearers lived in constant fear of being caught without a passbook because without one '... you were arrested on the spot',<sup>83</sup> she said.

Batho residents were routinely subjected to unannounced stops and searches by municipal policemen requesting them to show their passes. Juliet Bokala described the fright of such a stop and search<sup>84</sup> :

I remember one morning, when I got to work ... there were many people standing there, policemen. They wanted our passes. When you don't have a pass, you must stand there [and wait] the whole day. Someone was arrested because she didn't have a passbook. Oh, that law, it was terrible!

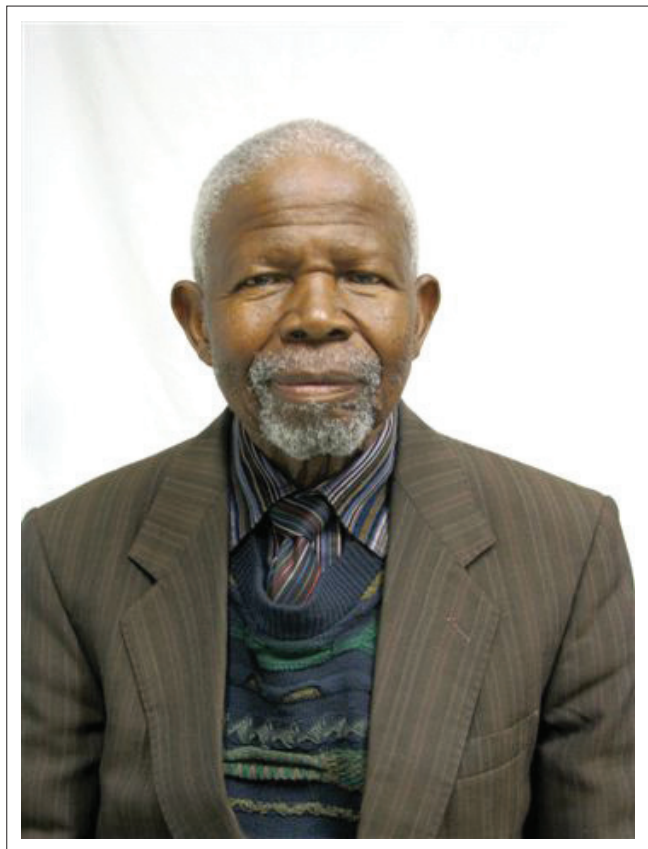
Motlalepule I. Motsikoe (b. 1940) recalled the day her father was arrested for not having a passbook<sup>85</sup>:

So, my father [James Maphike] used to stay in Joburg [Johannesburg]; he was working there. So, he used to come to Bloemfontein in

83. NMOHC, interview, N. R. Ntuli (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 09 December 2010.

84. NMOHC, interview, J. M. Bokala (resident, Batho)/M. Wuyts (student intern, Belgium), 07 April 2009.

85. NMOHC, interview, M. I. Motsikoe (resident, Bochabela)/A.-S. Heyman (student intern, Belgium), 17 April 2009.



Source: From the National Museum Oral History Collection

**FIGURE 3:** Reverend KS Papane, 2009.

December. So, one day he was arrested for pass, for this pass, you know, the pass law. Yes, the minute you don't have that [passbook], you were arrested. So, he was arrested and brought to the [Batho] police station. When he came there, he changed his names. He didn't call [sic] his real names. So, my mother went there with money to go and bail him out.

At the police station, Motlalepule's mother discovered that her husband made matters worse for himself by changing his name: she had to pay a hefty additional fine for his offense.

In Batho, all passes and permits such as a residential permit and a permit to seek work, had to be obtained, renewed, and paid for at the local pass office.<sup>86</sup> As it was the case in South Africa's old locations, 'Pass Office'<sup>87</sup> or 'Native Pass Office'<sup>88</sup> – terms used in official documents during the segregationist and apartheid periods – also became colloquial terms for Batho's municipal office where passes and permits had to be obtained.<sup>89</sup> Regulation 35 of the Location Regulations mentioned the office of the Superintendent of Locations '... or such other place as may be appointed'<sup>90</sup> which, in the case

86. Du Bruyn, "Oh, That Law, It ...," no p. no.

87. ATPL: *Corporation of Bloemfontein, Municipal Regulations 1912: Native Regulations*, 2.

88. FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Letter from the Superintendent of Locations to the Town Clerk & Treasurer*, 05 May 1924, 1.

89. Molamu, *Tsotsi-Taal: A Dictionary of ...*, 80; Simpson, *History of South Africa ...*, 63.

90. FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Location Regulations Framed by the Town Council, Bloemfontein Under Section 23(3) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act no. 21 of 1923*, 7.



Source: From the National Museum Oral History Collection

**FIGURE 4:** An unknown couple in front of the pass office on Lovedale Road, Batho, c. 1970s.

of Batho, was the local pass office (Figure 4 and Figure 5) on Lovedale Road (Figure 6). Tsoeu J. Khoarela (b. 1919) recalled Batho's pass office well<sup>91</sup>:

I also had [obtained] my reference book from the same place [pass office]. Most of my documentation indicates that it was done in Batho.

According to Tsametse Leeuw (b. 1940) Batho's first pass office was:

[S]ituated next door to Mapikela House [Thomas M. Mapikela's house on Community Road; Figure 6]. Then it was transferred [sic] to Lovedale Road when they built a new building.<sup>92</sup>

In addition to 'pass office', the building also had other names. Nomvula Ntuli and Johanna B. Lefosa (b. 1927) claimed that Batho residents also referred to Batho's pass office building as 'Cooper's Place'.<sup>93</sup> 'Cooper' was Richard J. Cooper (1881–1946), who served as Bloemfontein's Superintendent of Locations from 1924 to 1945.<sup>94</sup> Although

91. NMOHC, interview, T. J. Khoarela (resident, Batho)/T. W. Thamahane (oral history assistant, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 23 October 2008.

92. NMOHC, interview, T. Leeuw (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 29 January 2016.

93. NMOHC, interview, N. R. Ntuli (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 09 December 2010; NMOHC, interview, J. B. Lefosa (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 10 December 2010.

94. For more details, see C. Le Roux, "J. R. Cooper as Township Manager of Mangaung at Bloemfontein, 1923–1945," *Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum, Bloemfontein* 26, no. 1 (2010), 1–44.



Source: From the National Museum Oral History Collection

**FIGURE 5:** Batho's old pass office building today. In recent years, the building was repurposed for a crèche and day care centre, 2013.

Cooper's main office was located in the pass office building, he also had an office at his home on the corner of Lovedale Road and Dr Belcher Road. In actual fact, the name 'Cooper's Place' referred to Cooper's home office and not the pass office that was located further down Lovedale Road.<sup>95</sup> For Nomvula and Johanna, the pass office and Cooper's home office were in the same place. Tsametse recalled that Batho's pass office was also jokingly called 'Ten Hall': 'Yes, we called it "Ten Hall" because its original name was "Town Hall"'.<sup>96</sup> The name – a corruption of 'Town Hall' – wryly referred to the impressive town hall in the whites-only part of town.<sup>97</sup>

In the testimonies given by Nomvula, Johanna, and Tsametse fact and 'fragments of fact',<sup>98</sup> as Gobodo-Madikizela describes it, blended to form a mosaic of truths and half-truths intertwined with traumatic memories. Sean Field describes this blend of fact and

95. Le Roux, "J. R. Cooper as Township ...", 11.

96. NMOHC, interview, T. Leeuw (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 29 January 2016.

97. Du Bruyn, "Oh, That Law, It ...", no p. no.

98. Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died ...*, 86.

non-fact as a '... mishmash of historical fragments'<sup>99</sup> that has its own truth and meaning. These 'fragments of fact' are fluid and may be remembered, reconstructed, denied, or forgotten.<sup>100</sup> Every time the three women walked past Batho's old pass office building long after apartheid had ended, memories of humiliation and dread were still triggered. These memories or 'visual traces of memory',<sup>101</sup> as Field refers to them, are, in fact, the interviewees' mental visualising of their apartheid experiences. Tsametse, who could still describe the interior and smell of Batho's pass office, spoke on behalf of other Batho residents when she recalled a visit to the despised face-brick building<sup>102</sup>:

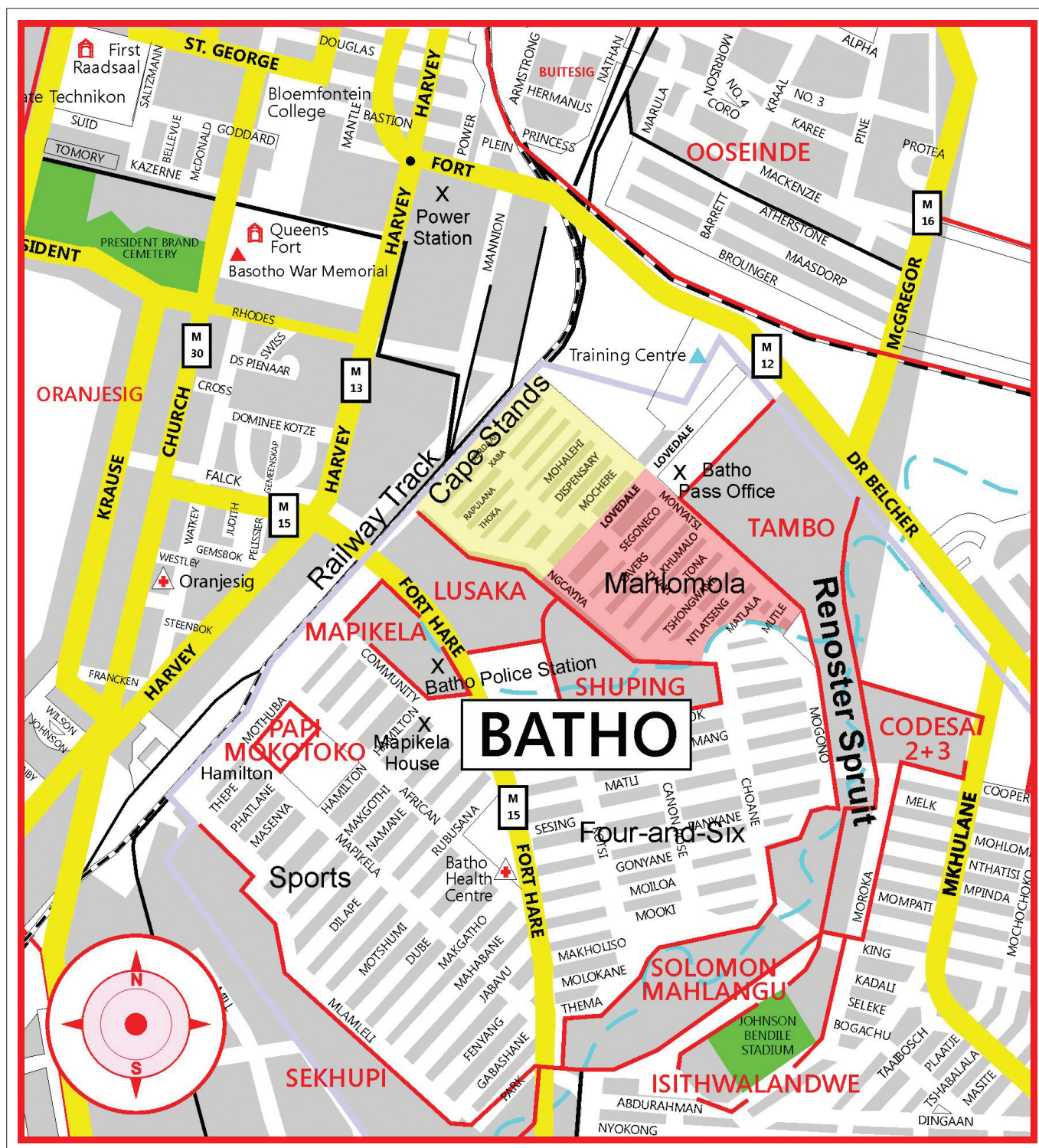
When you did not pay [*house rent or permit fees*] then you were taken there [*by the police*]; then you will [*sic*] be charged

99. S. Field, "Oral Histories: The Art of the Possible," In *African Oral Literature: Functions in Contemporary Contexts*, ed. R. H. Kaschula (Claremont: New Africa Books, 2001), 253.

100. Field, "Oral Histories: The Art ...", 253; Posel, "The Apartheid Project ...", Ross et al., *The Cambridge History of ...*, 365.

101. Field, *Oral History, Community, and ...*, 8.

102. NMOHC, interview, T. Leeuw (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 29 January 2016.



Source: *The Batho Liberation Heritage Route (brochure)*. Bloemfontein: National Museum, 2020.

**FIGURE 6:** A map of Batho showing the main thoroughfares and streets where some of the buildings and sites referred to in this article are located.

and sometimes when you had the money you would be able to pay for the release of your loved one by paying that charge and rent.

Tsametse's recollection of her visits to the pass office is emblematic of similar visits paid by countless Batho residents during apartheid. The mere sight of the building transported Tsametse back to the times she went there as a passbook holder.

### **Platkeps and platpiet**

Apartheid bureaucrats – the so-called 'authorised officer[s]<sup>103</sup> – who had to enforce the apartheid laws and regulations in the locations were mostly members of the South African

103. *Extraordinary Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa, CLXIX(4888), Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act (no. 67 of 1952), 57.* See also Republic of South Africa Government Gazette, Government Notice no. R. 1036, *Regulations Governing the Control and Supervision of an Urban Bantu Residential Area and Relevant Matters*, 14 June 1968, 1.

Police (SAP), specifically municipal policemen such as constables and sergeants.<sup>104</sup> These policemen epitomised apartheid; they were the medium through which the worst of the system was experienced. Location residents called them *platkeps*<sup>105</sup> because of the shape of their caps but also to ridicule those whose inflated sense of power made them commit human rights abuses. *Platkeps* were mandated to enforce the 'administrative regulations'<sup>106</sup> that policed the boundaries between races. For example, they could demand at any time and place to see a person's passbook and check whether it was valid, up to date, in the right person's possession, not imitated, altered or defaced and, importantly, whether or not the carrier was 'legal' or 'illegal'.<sup>107</sup> Those found guilty of administrative offences, specifically 'offences under the *Urban Areas Act*',<sup>108</sup> were arrested, fined, or sent to prison.<sup>109</sup> The words of Nomathamsanqa S. Thebe (b. 1961) succinctly capture the interviewees' experiences of the *platkeps*: 'They made our lives difficult!'<sup>110</sup> Other interviewees, for example, Madinti S. Sesing (b. 1936; Figure 7) would have found Nomathamsanqa's comment an understatement because of the inhumane manner in which some *platkeps* treated black people. Of all the apartheid law enforcers that Madinti encountered, she was convinced that '... the *platkeps* were cruel the most [sic]'.<sup>111</sup>

Nomvula Ntuli testified that the *platkeps* routinely patrolled Batho's streets looking for pass laws offenders. She recalled their patrolling with old-fashioned sidecars in the 1950s and 1960s<sup>112</sup>:

It was a motorbike with a passenger seat on its side. Yes, so, when you were arrested you sit on [sic] the sidecar.

In addition to the random stops and searches for passbooks, the *platkeps* were notorious for harassing people at home. Moitheri Machogo described this phenomenon as follows: 'There at home; that is where they [*platkeps*] liked to "play"'.<sup>113</sup> During daytime they entered people's plots looking either for 'illegal' persons without the necessary documentation or for illicit homemade traditional beer or

104. During the mid-1980s black Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEOs) and 'special constables' were employed to assist with policing in locations. J. D. Brewer, *Black and Blue: Policing in South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 273, 302–04.

105. This term will be used throughout the article to refer to municipal policemen.

106. Brewer, *Black and Blue: Policing ...*, 198, 289.

107. Du Bruyn, "'Oh, That Law, It ...,'" no p. no.

108. Brewer, *Black and Blue: Policing ...*, 289.

109. Brewer, *Black and Blue: Policing ...*, 198–99, 208–09, 212–13, 215–17, 289, 297; Posel, 'The Apartheid Project ...', Ross et al., *The Cambridge History of ...*, 364–65; *Extraordinary Government Gazette of the Union of South Africa, CLXIX(4888), Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act (no. 67 of 1952)*, 57; Wells, 'Why Women Rebel: A ...', 66–67; Davenport and Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern ...*, 401.

110. NMOHC, interview, N. S. Thebe (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 13 June 2014.

111. NMOHC, interview, M. S. Sesing (resident, Bochabela)/K. J. Pudumo (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 20 February 2019.

112. NMOHC, interview, N. R. Ntuli (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 09 December 2010.

113. NMOHC, interview, M. L. Machogo (resident, Batho)/K. J. Pudumo (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 26 April 2017.



Source: From the National Museum Oral History Collection

FIGURE 7: Mrs MS Sesing, 2019.

so-called '*jwala*' or 'kaffir beer', as it had been called since colonial and segregationist times.<sup>114</sup> The Location Regulations stipulated that no location resident may keep<sup>115</sup>:

[I]ntoxicating liquor other than kaffir beer (*Jwala*) and in case of kaffir beer no more than four (4) gallons for the requirements of himself and his family.

Section 29 of the *Natives (Urban Areas) Act* described this type of beer as '... the drink commonly brewed by natives from kaffir corn [*sorghum*] or millet or other grain'.<sup>116</sup> Traditional sorghum and maize beer was known in Batho also as '*jwala*'<sup>117</sup> or '*mbamba*',<sup>118</sup> to quote two interviewees.

Kesebelwang C. Melamu (b. 1935) recalled that in addition to *jwala*, some Batho women<sup>119</sup> also brewed a type of beer known

114. ATPL: *Corporation of Bloemfontein, Municipal Regulations 1912: Native Regulations*, 8; NMOHC, interview, D. W. Disane (resident, Batho)/T. W. Thamahane (oral history assistant, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 07 July 2008.

115. FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Location Regulations Framed by the Town Council, Bloemfontein Under Section 23(3) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act no. 21 of 1923*, 7.

116. *Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1923 with Tables of Contents (Alphabetical and Chronological) and Tables of Laws, etc., Repealed and Amended by These Statutes: Natives (Urban Areas) Act (no. 21 of 1923)*, 188.

117. NMOHC, interview, S. A. Dibe (resident, Batho)/M. Dens (student intern, Belgium), 14 April 2009.

118. NMOHC, interview, K. R. Masilo-Majoro (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 15 November 2012. See also Molamu, *Tsotsi-Taal: A Dictionary of ...*, 7.

119. Batho women were customarily responsible for brewing traditional beer and other alcoholic drinks. NMOHC, interview, K. S. Papane (resident, Phahameng)/D. Du Bruyn (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 18 August 2009.

as *'platpiet'*.<sup>120</sup> *Platpiet* was usually made with water, sugar, bread, yeast and pineapple; but recipes and names for these brews varied among Batho residents.<sup>121</sup> Lea S. Kopane (b. 1934) remembered that many residents were arrested for '...drinking and having alcohol in your [*their*] possession',<sup>122</sup> notably *platpiet* because it was cheap and easy to make. According to Dibini W. Disane (b. 1933), homemade beer and *platpiet* were clandestinely '... sold to the people around the location'<sup>123</sup> to supplement incomes. Nomvula Ntuli explained that the strict laws prohibiting the brewing and selling of homemade beer and liquor notwithstanding, '... people who made beer were still making it but they had to hide [*it from the police*]'. According to Nomvula, Batho's housewives asked young children to warn them of any *platkeps* patrolling the streets<sup>124</sup>:

So, if a lady from that house had beer and we [*children*] were playing in the street, we would be given sweets called *mashangane*.<sup>125</sup>

Sweets were handed to the children as a reward for alerting the women<sup>126</sup>:

[W]e were told to look for them [*police*] when they come. They had bicycles and we would pretend playing *bokkie* and *marandas*.<sup>127</sup> When we saw them we would sing: '*Khawuleza, mama, khawuleza, na amapolisa, matha, matha!*'<sup>128</sup> So, when we sing like that, we know that they [*women*] would run away and hide [*the beer*]. Yes, our mothers would hide beer; we were giving them a sign.

Some white Afrikaans-speaking *platkeps* became notorious for their maltreatment of Batho's residents. Racial and rank differentiation among policemen – also rooted in colonial and segregationist times – was legally entrenched.<sup>129</sup> Section 29 of the *Natives (Urban Areas) Act* stated that '... a European member of the police' was more senior than his black counterparts because such a member was considered an 'authorized officer'<sup>130</sup> on par with magistrates. Makaze G. Malau (b. unknown) testified that the black policemen were called '*Mahlelehle*'<sup>131</sup> and the white ones were called either

by their first names or they were given nicknames. The most notorious white policeman was a sergeant called 'Piet'. Makaze remembered that they '... used to watch him [*Piet*] and those men [*black policemen*] beating up people'.<sup>132</sup> Also remembering Piet, Sisimang M. Modise (b. unknown) said that most Batho residents, especially women, feared Piet because '... he was very fierce'.<sup>133</sup> Tsoeu Khoarela explained that the main reason why Piet was feared in Batho was because '... he would chase [*the*] majority of us most of the time',<sup>134</sup> including children that did not attend school.<sup>135</sup>

Other infamous white policemen remembered by Batho residents include '*Langgevaar*'<sup>136</sup> and '*Mr Sonop*'.<sup>137</sup> The latter was nicknamed after *Sonop*, the white-owned Bloemfontein general dealer known for its racism towards black clients. Because no official records of these policemen could be traced, one has to rely solely on the Batho residents' testimonies. Have the interviewees personally encountered Piet or have they only heard the stories about him? Could it be argued that because Piet has become such an integral part of the Batho interviewees' popular memory that some of them have made up their encounters with him? Has the name 'Piet' become a metaphor for white police brutality? The possibility that some testimonies may be 'anecdotal', yet ingrained in local popular memory, does not diminish the intrinsic value of the testimonies; instead, these 'anecdotes' should be valued because they possess a different kind of meaning. Such testimonies convey 'the interviewees' facts' or 'fragments of fact',<sup>138</sup> to quote Gobodo-Madikizela once more. If 'memory itself is a fact',<sup>139</sup> as oral historian Alessandro Portelli argues, then these memories and testimonies are indeed 'fact'.

## Blocks and blockmen

In addition to the *platkeps*, another type of bureaucrat, namely the 'Blockmen',<sup>140</sup> played willingly or unwillingly, an important role in enforcing apartheid legislation in the locations. Section 10(1) of the *Natives (Urban Areas) Act* stipulated that<sup>141</sup>:

For every location or native village under the control of an urban local authority there shall be established a native advisory board.

120.NMOHC, interview, K. C. Melamu (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 02 August 2011.

121.NMOHC, interview, D. W. Disane (resident, Batho)/T. W. Thamahane (oral history assistant, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 07 July 2008.

122.NMOHC, interview, L. S. Kopane (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 16 August 2012.

123.NMOHC, interview, D. W. Disane (resident, Batho)/T. W. Thamahane (oral history assistant, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 07 July 2008.

124.NMOHC, interview, N. R. Ntuli (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 09 December 2010.

125.Multi-coloured sweet popcorn. Personal communication, A. Goitsemotimo (anthropologist, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 03 February 2023.

126.NMOHC, interview, N. R. Ntuli (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 09 December 2010.

127.Popular children's games played in Batho during apartheid.

128."Hurry, mama, hurry, here are the police, run, run!" (Free translation).

129.Brewer, *Black and Blue: Policing ...*, 208–09, 212, 240.

130.Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1923 with Tables of Contents (Alphabetical and Chronological) and Tables of Laws, etc., Repealed and Amended by These Statutes: *Natives (Urban Areas) Act (no. 21 of 1923)*, 188.

131."Those who do things in a quick, clever, and cunning manner" (Free translation). Personal communication, N. Ntheri (preparator, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 08 June 2023.

132.NMOHC, interview, M. G. Malau (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 17 May 2013.

133.NMOHC, interview, S. M. Modise (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 27 January 2016.

134.NMOHC, interview, T. J. Khoarela (resident, Batho)/T. W. Thamahane (oral history assistant, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 23 October 2008.

135.NMOHC, interview, P. P. Disane (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 03 June 2014.

136."Tall Danger" (Free translation); NMOHC, interview, N. R. Ntuli (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 09 December 2010.

137.NMOHC, interview, M. L. Machogo (resident, Batho)/K. J. Pudumo (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 26 April 2017.

138.Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died ...*, 86.

139.A. Portelli, "Going Against the Grain," *Words & Silences* 4, nos. 1–2 (November 2007–November 2008), 27.

140.FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Constitution: Native Advisory Board*, 4.

141.Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1923 with Tables of Contents (Alphabetical and Chronological) and Tables of Laws, etc., Repealed and Amended by These Statutes: *Natives (Urban Areas) Act (no. 21 of 1923)*, 156.

In the case of Mangaung, the Native Advisory Board<sup>142</sup> (hereafter the NAB) consisted of 12 elected and three nominated blockmen.<sup>143</sup> In terms of the block system, Batho was divided into 'blocks'<sup>144</sup> (wards) and each block was represented by a blockman. The constitution of Mangaung's NAB aptly described the blockmen as 'assistants to the Superintendent',<sup>145</sup> and their duties included the reporting of grievances, disorderly elements and infectious diseases, among others, to the Superintendent.<sup>146</sup> For Shuping Dibe, the blockmen's duties were essentially the following: 'They listen to the people, [then] they go to Superintendent to report the problems'.<sup>147</sup>

The problem for Batho's residents was that the 'problems' Shuping Dibe referred to also included reporting on the arrival and departure of strangers, vagrants and suspicious persons in the location.<sup>148</sup> Often, the strangers or 'strange natives'<sup>149</sup> as they were called in segregationist times, were in actual fact visiting family members. Therefore, many residents viewed the blockmen and not the strangers with suspicion because the blockmen were seen as opportunists who worked hand in glove with apartheid agents.<sup>150</sup> Author and playwright, Benjamin L. Leshoai (1920–1996), who grew up in Batho, described the location's blockmen as the Superintendent's 'black boot-lickers'.<sup>151</sup> During the 1930s, Leshoai's father, Samuel A. Leshoai (1881–1960), became the most vocal opponent of the block system in Batho. Leshoai senior, who was chairperson of the local branch of the ANC, and other members in the organisation were convinced that because the blockmen were part-time staff members of the Department of Native Administration, the block system was flawed. It was believed that the blockmen served their masters and not the location residents; in effect, they helped maintain the apartheid system.<sup>152</sup> The block system caused division not only among Batho residents<sup>153</sup> but, according to Leshoai junior, also among office bearers of the local ANC<sup>154</sup>:

142.FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Natives (Urban Areas) Act, no. 21 of 1923: Proclaimed Area of Bloemfontein: Establishment of Native Advisory Board in Terms of Section 10 of Act 21 of 1923*, 1.

143.C. J. P. Le Roux, "Rol van die Naturelle-Adviesraad op Plaaslike Bestuursvlak in Bloemfontein, 1923–1948", *Contree* 25 (1989), 6.

144.FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Constitution: Native Advisory Board*, 1.

145.The Superintendent of Locations who acted as *ex officio* chairperson of the NAB. FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Constitution: Native Advisory Board*, 4.

146.Le Roux, "J. R. Cooper as Township ...," 16; FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Constitution: Native Advisory Board*, 1; C. Le Roux, "The Role of the Native Advisory Board and the Succeeding Urban Bantu Council of Mangaung, Bloemfontein, 1945–1973," *Acta Academica* 33, no. 2 (2001), 54.

147.NMOHC, interview, S. C. Dibe (resident, Batho)/D. Du Bruyn (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 26 May 2008.

148.Le Roux, "J. R. Cooper as Township ...," 16.

149.ATPL: *Corporation of Bloemfontein, Municipal Regulations 1912: Native Regulations*, 5.

150.Le Roux, "The Role of the ...," 54.

151.E. Pereira, ed., *Contemporary South African Plays* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1977), 259.

152.J. Mancoe, *First Edition of the Bloemfontein Bantu and Coloured People's Directory* (Bloemfontein: A.C. White, 1934), 32; Le Roux, "Rol van die Naturelle-Adviesraad ...," 6; Le Roux, "The Role of the ...," 43, 54.

153.*The Friend*, 12 May 1934, 9; Schoeman, *Bloemfontein: Die Ontstaan van ...*, 290; Le Roux, "The Role of the ...," 44–45.

154.FSPA: A 507(6), Letter from B. L. Leshoai to K. Schoeman, 14 January 1980, 1.

My father hated the block system with all his heart and he therefore fought the Mapikelas and Sesings who supported the system.

The NAB of Mangaung and, by implication, the block system existed until 1968 when it was replaced by the Urban Bantu Council system in terms of the *Urban Bantu Councils Act (no. 79 of 1961)*.<sup>155</sup>

## Lodger's permits, spying neighbours and nightly house raids

One of the reasons why Batho's blockmen reported the arrival and departure of strangers was to identify those described as '... idle, dissolute or disorderly natives'.<sup>156</sup> However, it was also done to check whether location residents and their visitors were in possession of lodger's permits. Although such permits were not required in colonial times, the reasoning behind them dates back to that time. For example, the Regulations for the Town of Bloemfontein of 1882 stated<sup>157</sup>:

No Native, who is not in service, nor living in any location, is allowed to stay within the Municipality longer than 24 hours ...

Subsequently, the Location Regulations of 1923 made having a lodger's permit a requirement<sup>158</sup>:

No person other than the holder of a site permit who has erected a dwelling in the location and the holder of a residential permit together with their wives and families, being children under eighteen (18) years of age or unmarried daughters, shall reside in the location unless he shall first have obtained a 'Lodger's Permit'...

The names of all members of a residential permit holder's family who lived with the person had to appear on the residential permit, and each of them needed their own lodger's permits. During apartheid, the lodger's permit regulations were tightened. Any visitor who wished to remain in a location longer than 72 h had to report to the Superintendent to obtain a lodger's permit.<sup>159</sup> Only if the Superintendent was satisfied that the applicant is '... a fit and proper person',<sup>160</sup> a lodger's permit, valid for a specified

155.*Extraordinary Government Gazette of the Republic of South Africa, I(37), Urban Bantu Councils Act (no. 79 of 1961)*, 122, 124; Le Roux, "The Role of the ...," 41.

156.Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1923 with Tables of Contents (Alphabetical and Chronological) and Tables of Laws, etc., Repealed and Amended by These Statutes: *Natives (Urban Areas) Act (no. 21 of 1923)*, 166.

157.FSPA: MBL 10/2, *Regulations for the Town of Bloemfontein 1882: Regulations for the Natives within the Bloemfontein Municipality*, 18.

158.FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Location Regulations Framed by the Town Council, Bloemfontein Under Section 23(3) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act no. 21 of 1923*, 2. See also Republic of South Africa Government Gazette, Government Notice no. R. 1036, *Regulations Governing the Control and Supervision of an Urban Bantu Residential Area and Relevant Matters*, 14 June 1968, 25.

159.In terms of Government Notice no. R. 1036 accommodation permits were first issued to short-term visitors, after which lodger's permits were issued to qualifying applicants. Republic of South Africa Government Gazette, Government Notice no. R. 1036, *Regulations Governing the Control and Supervision of an Urban Bantu Residential Area and Relevant Matters*, 14 June 1968, 25–26; Anon., "African Family Housing in Urban Areas," *Black Sash Pamphlet*, February 1974, 39–41.

160.FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Location Regulations Framed by the Town Council, Bloemfontein Under Section 23(3) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act no. 21 of*

period, was issued. From April 1945, lodger's permits had to be renewed monthly instead of annually.<sup>161</sup>

Nomvula Ntuli testified that the lodger's permit system was vigorously enforced and monitored in Batho. She explained the gist of the system<sup>162</sup>:

Even if you were my visitor, I was not supposed to let you stay overnight before I go to the office [*pass office*] to ask for 'days'. If you [*visitor*] arrived late at night, I had to take you to the blockman to get a permission letter.

According to interviewees' testimonies, a lodger's permit allowed the holder to stay in Batho for seven days, hence the request for 'days'. Khuku R. Masilo-Majoro (b. 1949) recalled that the *platkeps* were strict about the seven days rule<sup>163</sup>:

After seven days the police called *platkeps* would come and order the visitor out if the days are not extended.

The consequences of such an offence? 'When the seven days have expired, the visitor would be arrested', Khuku explained.

Rabokanana J. Ketela (b. 1938) recalled that the information provided in lodger's and residential permits had to be precisely correct. For example, in his permit was '... written the [house] number where you [permit holder] stay'. This number was all-important: 'You see, this number, if they catch you [sleeping] at the next door, next house ... its trouble!<sup>164</sup> According to Rabokanana, offenders had to pay a fine: '[If] they catch you, you are going to pay two rand, two times'. The payment of a double fine to the value of 'two rand, two times' – a fortune for the average Batho resident during apartheid – meant that both visitor and host could be arrested and fined at the same time. Moitheri Machogo explained the practicalities<sup>165</sup>:

[I]f that visitor does not have that letter [*lodger's permit*], the host will get arrested. The letter would become *lojas* [*slang term for lodger's permit used in Batho*] and if your visitor does not have it, that person [*visitor*] will get arrested.

Arrests of Batho residents not in possession of lodger's permits were common. Offenders were taken away and locked up in the Batho Police Station on Hamilton Road (Figure 6).<sup>166</sup> In many cases, lodger's permits, especially those for children, were not renewed because the holders of residential permits, that is, the children's parents or

1923, 2. See also Republic of South Africa Government Gazette, Government Notice no. R. 1036, *Regulations Governing the Control and Supervision of an Urban Bantu Residential Area and Relevant Matters*, 14 June 1968, 25.

161. Le Roux, "The Role of the ...", 52.

162. NMOHC, interview, N. R. Ntuli (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 09 December 2010.

163. NMOHC, interview, K. R. Masilo-Majoro (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 15 November 2012.

164. NMOHC, interview, R. J. Ketela (resident, Batho)/D. Du Bruyn (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 04 July 2008.

165. NMOHC, interview, M. L. Machogo (resident, Batho)/K. J. Pudumo (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 26 April 2017.

166. FSPA: MBL 3/1/46, *Mayor's Minute 1954*, 34.

guardians, could not afford to renew them. Tsametse Leeuw explained the financial implications of the annual renewal of multiple permits for parents<sup>167</sup>:

And then here with us [*parents*], if you were my son and you were working and living with me, we would have to pay [*house*] rent. You as my son must have your own lodger's permit and that lodger's permit was paid separately from the house rent. With your house there was the rent book you must pay your house with. All your children had to have their own lodger's permits and it must be written in his or her name. If payment for [*the*] lodger's permit was not made you would get arrested; if rent was not paid you would get arrested also. After the seventh [*day*] of each month, if you haven't paid rent at the 'town hall' [*pass office*] you would expect them [*platkeps*] to come for you.

The testimonies given by Rabokanana, Moitheri and Tsametse validate the claim that the permit system was not only used as a means of control, but also as a tool for raising revenue for apartheid local authorities.<sup>168</sup>

In an atmosphere of fear and mistrust, it was not uncommon for neighbours to spy on each other and to report suspected strangers to the blockmen.<sup>169</sup> When asked how the *platkeps* became aware of strangers, Mateboho D. Modiroa (b. 1941) confessed: 'We, ourselves, were spies!<sup>170</sup> The blockmen were tipped off and they informed the Superintendent who, in turn, alerted the *platkeps*. Hambakazi Nonqo (b. 1933) remembered the feelings of trepidation and unease she experienced when an unexpected visitor arrived at her house at night without a lodger's permit<sup>171</sup>:

If you wanted to come and visit here at my place overnight, I would go to bed very worried because even the neighbours could report you [*to the blockman*]. They would tell [*the blockman*] that there is someone staying here and we [*neighbours*] don't know him or her.

The presence of unauthorised persons in a house precipitated the dreaded house raids that typically happened in the early hours of the morning. Even the house raid had its antecedent. In 1897, a location resident asked '... why policemen go in houses and turn everything up-side-down?<sup>172</sup> The Location Regulations specified that the Superintendent and any person authorised by him such as a *platkeps*<sup>173</sup>:

[S]hall at all times have the right of entry to any building in the location in the execution of his duties.

167. NMOHC, interview, T. Leeuw (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 29 January 2016.

168. Funds were deposited in the "Native Revenue Account", later renamed the "Bantu Revenue Account". FSPA: MBL 3/1/39, *Mayor's Minute 1947*, 23; MBL 3/1/59, *Mayor's Minute 1967*, p. 25; Davenport, *The Beginnings of Urban ...*, 10.

169. Du Bruyn, "Oh, That Law, It ...", no p. no.

170. NMOHC, interview, M. D. Modiroa (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 09 March 2015.

171. NMOHC, interview, H. S. Nonqo (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 11 January 2012.

172. *De Express*, 06 July 1897, 2.

173. FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Location Regulations Framed by the Town Council, Bloemfontein Under Section 23(3) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act no. 21 of 1923*, 7.

Selotlogeng E. Maphatsoane (b. unknown) suspected her neighbours tipped off the *platkeps* one night when she housed an unexpected visitor<sup>174</sup>:

When you were asleep, I don't even know who told them [*platkeps*], you will hear 'open, open!' They had with them torches [sic]. They would say they were told there is someone sleeping here.

This incident has haunted Selotlogeng since then: 'You sleep in fear and whenever you hear the sound of a car you just think it is them [*platkeps*]'.

Another victim of a nightly house raid was Nomathamsanqa Thebe who described her ordeal as follows<sup>175</sup>:

I remember one Saturday morning we heard a knock and they [*platkeps*] just opened. I tried to hide under [the] bed but they had seen me. They dragged me out by the leg and put me in the bakkie [*police van*]. They took me to the office of Piet [*white policeman*] and I had to pay [*a fine*].

The sight of a police van driving around Batho late at night became a symbol of dread for many Batho residents, especially for those who were 'abused'<sup>176</sup> by the police, to quote Selotlogeng Maphatsoane. One such victim was Mateboho Modiroa, who testified that one of her worst childhood memories of life in apartheid-era Batho was<sup>177</sup>:

[S]eeing municipal police drive around the location arresting others while you [offender] are sitting at the back of the van.

Nightly house raids were not only aimed at arresting those without lodger's permits but also apprehending suspected enemies of the apartheid state or to search for and confiscate material that could implicate people on wanted lists of the police.<sup>178</sup> Galetsenwe E. Molema (b. 1924; Figure 8) experienced such a police raid because her son, who was a student activist at the University of the North at Turfloop (University of Limpopo) during the 1970s, was on the wanted list of the Batho police. Galetsenwe remembered how she and her other children who were in the house at the time of the raid, were paralysed with fear: 'I did nothing ... what could I do? They [*police*] told me that it was none of my business!'<sup>179</sup>

## Loitering, idleness and *loaferskap*

Another 'administrative offense' that could lead to immediate arrest was loitering and idleness; a human condition described by apartheid bureaucrats and Batho

174.NMOHC, interview, S. E. Maphatsoane (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 09 May 2013.

175.NMOHC, interview, N. S. Thebe (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 13 June 2014.

176.NMOHC, interview, S. E. Maphatsoane (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 09 May 2013.

177.NMOHC, interview, M. D. Modiroa (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 09 March 2015.

178.For more information, see Dlamini, *The Terrorist Album: Apartheid's ...*, 39–44; Brewer, *Black and Blue: Policing ...*, 291–92, 299–301.

179.NMOHC, interview, G. E. Molema (resident, Batho)/D. Du Bruyn (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 13 May 2010.



Source: From the National Museum Oral History Collection

FIGURE 8: Mrs GE Molema, 2010.

residents alike as '*loaferskap*'.<sup>180</sup> *Loaferskap* is a good example of a *tsotsitaal* colloquial term that turned a bizarre aspect of apartheid policy into an Afrikaans-English pun. In the context of apartheid labour legislation, the term not only referred to a '... position of being unemployed',<sup>181</sup> but also in a negative sense to 'idle natives',<sup>182</sup> that is, work-shy people. The idea of *loaferskap* as an offence dates back to the early 1880s when the municipality used the 'Ticket Law'<sup>183</sup> as a control mechanism for black people and to curb idleness among them. *The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette* hailed the 'ticket' system '... for it puts a stop to a good deal of loafing'.<sup>184</sup> The Municipal Regulations of 1912 required every black person residing in the location to provide proof of '... an honorable means of livelihood'.<sup>185</sup> Subsequently, the *Natives (Urban Areas) Act* provided strict regulations to deal with '... idle, dissolute or disorderly natives in urban areas', especially those who were 'habitually unemployed'.<sup>186</sup>

Bombo M. Kgoroge (b. unknown) described the absurdity of the *loaferskap* offence as follows<sup>187</sup>:

Now, the thing called *loaferskap*, it caused us to struggle hard. There are a lot of people who came from there [*prison*] because of *loaferskap*. They would get arrested [*for*] just sitting in their homes because of *loaferskap* and they would be taken to prison.

180.NMOC, interview, K. J. Namane (resident, Bochabela)/D. Du Bruyn (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 12 March 2008; Du Bruyn, "Oh, That Law, It ..."; no p. no.

181.Hurst-Harosh, "Tsotsitaal and ...," 117.

182.Molamu, *Tsotsi-Taal: A Dictionary of ...*, 57.

183.*De Express*, 26 January 1882, 3.

184.*The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette*, 03 May 1883, 3.

185.ATPL: *Corporation of Bloemfontein, Municipal Regulations 1912: Native Regulations*, 5.

186.Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1923 with Tables of Contents (Alphabetical and Chronological) and Tables of Laws, etc., Repealed and Amended by These Statutes: *Natives (Urban Areas) Act (no. 21 of 1923)*, 166.

187.NMOHC, interview, B. M. Kgoroge (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 20 May 2015.

Florie M. Makhabe (b. 1958), a cleaner all her life, testified that in the apartheid-era Batho<sup>188</sup>:

[I]t was illegal to hang around without a job. You could hardly see individuals hanging around the location [Batho] doing nothing.

The local Labour Bureau argued that ample 'domestic servant' jobs were available for black women; hence, they had no excuse for loitering. A similar argument applied to black men.<sup>189</sup>

Unemployed people who flocked to locations to look for jobs had to obtain a special work-seeker permit from the pass office allowing them to be in a location for a maximum of 3 days (72 h) to actively seek work.<sup>190</sup> Kgosietsile J. Moeca (b. unknown) remembered that if you were a work-seeker in Batho, you<sup>191</sup>:

[H]ad to get your passbook stamped [indicating] that you are looking for work. That paper [work-seeker permit] helped because if you did not have it, they [police] would arrest you.

Hilda K. Motsamai (b. unknown) recalled that, despite having a permit, work-seekers were not allowed to publicly loaf or to loiter because they '... would be arrested for that'. Hilda explained that arrest did not mean the authorities were done with the offender: 'After they arrested you, they will [sic] find work for you somewhere'.<sup>192</sup>

According to Keitse M. Motsukunyane (b. 1946), unemployed people '... were arrested for not working' because, she was told, '... there were jobs at the post office, railway or mines'.<sup>193</sup> Hilda Motsamai confirmed the prospect of work for *loaferskap* offenders: 'If you couldn't get work, the law will [sic] find work for you'.<sup>194</sup> According to Florie Makhabe, whose brother was apprehended multiple times for *loaferskap*, the jobs that were available for work-seekers were usually manual labour. It is worth noting that the 'somewhere' to which Hilda referred, often meant work on a 'potato farm' – a term colloquially used as a metaphor for forced labour on a white-owned 'prison farm'<sup>195</sup> to which *loaferskap* offenders could be sent for up to two years.<sup>196</sup>

188.NMOHC, interview, F. M. Makhabe (resident, Batho)/T. W. Thamahane (oral history assistant, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 18 February 2008.

189.FSPA: MBL 3/1/42, *Mayor's Minute 1950*, 39.

190.A. Kelk Mager and M. Mulaudzi, "Popular Responses to Apartheid: 1948–c. 1975," In *The Cambridge History of South Africa (vol. 2), 1885–1994*, edited by R. Ross, A. Kelk Mager and B. Nasson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 374; Du Bruyn, "Oh, That Law, It ...," no p. no.

191.NMOHC, interview, K. J. Moeca (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 18 January 2016.

192.NMOHC, interview, H. K. Motsamai (resident, Batho)/K. J. Pudumo (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 07 February 2019.

193.NMOHC, interview, K. M. Motsukunyane (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 24 January 2013.

194.NMOHC, interview, H. K. Motsamai (resident, Batho)/K. J. Pudumo (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 07 February 2019.

195.Omond, *The Apartheid Handbook: A ...*, 128.

196.Brewer, *Black and Blue: Policing ...*, 213–14; NMOHC, interview, H. K. Motsamai (resident, Batho)/K. J. Pudumo (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 07 February 2019; H. Bradford, "Getting Away with Murder: 'Mealie Kings', the

## The night curfew and the 'steam train siren'

Finally, Batho's residents were subjected to a stringent night curfew regulation which prohibited them from being in certain areas at certain times. Bloemfontein's curfew dates back to the 1860s when the 'Curfew bell'<sup>197</sup> rang at 21:00; subsequently, this time was changed to 20:00.<sup>198</sup> The Municipal Regulations of 1912 referred to 'outdoor time restrictions'<sup>199</sup> that were placed on location residents so that whites could feel safe at night. In terms of these restrictions the curfew bell rang at 21:00 once again, as it had been the case for the entire apartheid period.<sup>200</sup> The Location Regulations of 1923 made provision for two separate regulations meant to control the free movement of black people in the city's municipal boundaries. Regulation 32(3) stipulated that no black person was allowed to '... be out of doors in the location between 12 midnight and 5 a.m'.<sup>201</sup> In addition, Regulation 32(4) ordered that no black person was allowed to walk in or be in the streets or public places '... within the town or on the townlands between 9 o'clock p.m. and 5 a.m'.<sup>202</sup> During the early 1950s, it was decided to enforce the curfew from '9 p.m. until 4 a.m'.<sup>203</sup> because of complaints from white employers.

In his mind's eye, Reverend Kgosimang Papane could still see black people scurrying down Harvey Road (Figure 6) towards Batho to get out of town before nine o'clock<sup>204</sup>:

As 'quarter to nine' slaan hy [sic], dan weet jy dan moet jy vlieg, ou broer, dan moet jy vlieg! Want as nege uur, nege uur klok, dan laai hulle [polisie] jou op.

According to Tsoeu Khoarela, a loud siren rang at '... fifteen minutes before nine in the evening'<sup>205</sup> and it rang again at precisely nine o'clock. Tsametse Leeuw vividly recalled the distinctive sound of the siren that was installed at the power station on Harvey Road<sup>206</sup> (Figure 6 and Figure 9) and it could be heard from afar<sup>207</sup>:

State and Foreigners in the Eastern Transvaal, c. 1918–1950," In *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935–1962*, edited by P. Bonner, P. Delius and D. Posel (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1993), 97.

197.*The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette*, 05 February 1864, 3.

198.*The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette*, 30 May 1878, 3.

199.ATPL: *Corporation of Bloemfontein, Municipal Regulations 1912: Native Regulations*, 8.

200.Du Bruyn, "Oh, That Law, It ...," no p. no.

201.FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Location Regulations Framed by the Town Council, Bloemfontein Under Section 23(3) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act no. 21 of 1923*, 6.

202.FSPA: MBL 1/2/4/1/6, *Location Regulations Framed by the Town Council, Bloemfontein Under Section 23(3) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act no. 21 of 1923*, 7.

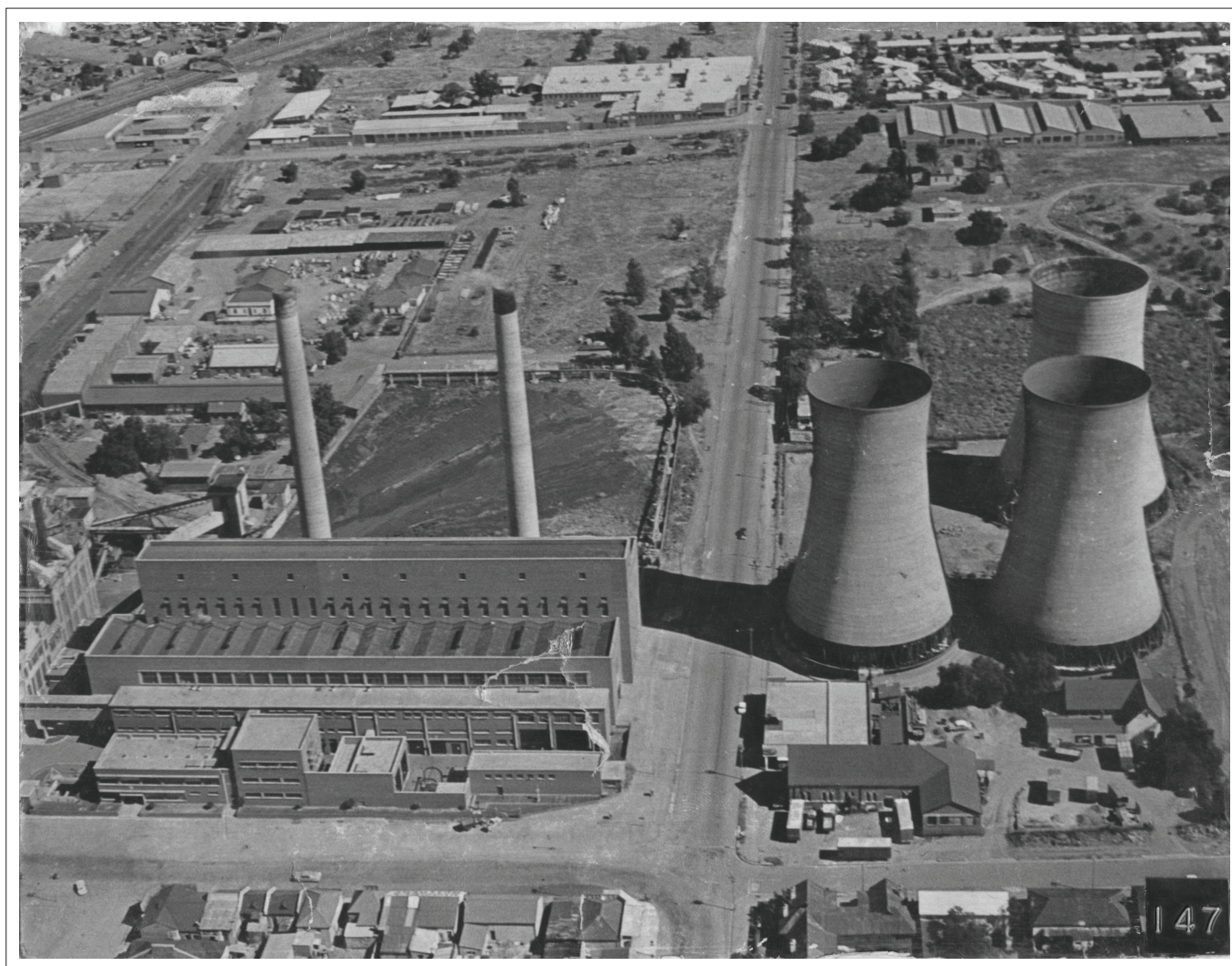
203.FSPA: MBL 3/1/44, *Mayor's Minute 1952*, 17.

204."When the clock strikes quarter to nine, then you know, you must dash, my brother, then you must dash! Because, when nine o'clock, nine o'clock strikes, they [police] will pick you up" (Free translation). NMOHC, interview, K. S. Papane (resident, Phahameng)/D. Du Bruyn (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 18 August 2009.

205.NMOHC, interview, T. J. Khoarela (resident, Bochabela)/T. W. Thamahane (oral history assistant, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 23 October 2008.

206.FSPA: MBL 3/1/44, *Mayor's Minute 1952*, 14, 17.

207.NMOHC, interview, T. Leeuw (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 29 January 2016.



Source: From the National Museum Oral History Collection

**FIGURE 9:** Bloemfontein's old power station on Harvey Road where the curfew siren rang, 1954.

In town there was this 'steam train whistle' that would go off at 8h45 pm and as a black person you had to clear yourself out of town. If 9h00 pm hit while you were in town, you would get arrested.

The only exception was for black people who had to work late at their white employers' premises and who were in possession of a 'written permit'<sup>208</sup> signed by their employers. During apartheid, this permit or 'special pass'<sup>209</sup> was colloquially called a 'Special'<sup>210</sup> by Batho's residents. Failing to produce a special pass could lead to immediate arrest and a night spent in jail, as Shuping Dibe explained: '... they [police] ask you for a night pass; if you haven't got it, they arrest you'.<sup>211</sup>

For many years, Bombo Kgoroge was haunted by the brutality of *platkeps* armed with pistols and sjamboks. Even in old age,

208.FSPA: MBL 3/1/49, *Mayor's Minute* 1957, 20.

209.FSPA: MBL 3/1/44, *Mayor's Minute* 1952, 17.

210.NMOHC, interview, M. T. Mogaecho (resident, Batho)/K. J. Pudumo (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 17 May 2023.

211.NMOHC, interview, S. C. Dibe (resident, Batho)/D. Du Bruyn (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 26 May 2008.

he could still hear them shouting at people scrambling to get out of town: 'Kaffer op sy plek, kaffer op sy plek!'<sup>212</sup> Crude and insulting as these words are today, they are emblematic of the abuses that black people were subjected to in apartheid-era Batho. The ultimate objective of most, if not all discriminatory laws and regulations, was indeed to keep a black person *op sy plek* ('in his place'), that is, in the locations, the reserves, and subsequently in the black homelands where they could pose no threat to whites.<sup>213</sup> The insults hurled by the *platkeps* are symptomatic of the language many Batho interviewees still associate with apartheid-era Batho: being degradingly called *kaffers*; being stopped and searched for passbooks; being accused of committing *loaferskap*; being arrested for brewing and selling *platpiet*; and being fined for not having a lodger's permit for an unexpected overnight visitor.

Whereas some apartheid laws such as the *Natives (Urban Areas) Act* and the *Pass Laws Act*, were repealed during the

212.'Kaffir in his place, kaffir in his place!' (Free translation). NMOHC, interview, B. M. Kgoroge (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 20 May 2015.

213.Gillomee et al., *New History of South Africa ...*, 453, 462–64; Simpson, *History of South Africa ...*, 152, 256; Dlamini, *The Terrorist Album: Apartheid's ...*, 36; Brewer, *Black and Blue: Policing ...*, 212–13.

late 1980s,<sup>214</sup> the bulk was only removed from the law books after 1994. Personal experiences of apartheid laws as a lived reality were not only permanently ingrained in the Batho interviewees' memories of their apartheid past; such experiences had also left permanent emotional scars which, in many cases, still need to heal. Being degraded and dehumanised for such a long time, some victims have been harbouring a sense of injustice that has not been adequately addressed as yet.<sup>215</sup> The last word belongs to Bombo, who felt that he and other Batho residents who were arrested for *loaferskap* were '... arrested for nothing really, having done nothing [wrong]'. Therefore, he is resolute that '... we must get compensated, the ones that were arrested for *loaferskap*'.<sup>216</sup>

## Conclusion

Black people's memories and testimonies of their experiences of racist municipal laws and regulations are an important source of information of Batho's apartheid history. Rooted in Bloemfontein's pre-1948 colonial and segregationist periods, the laws and regulations in question were based on significant national laws, notably the *Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923*. Memories of apartheid-era hardships are being triggered and kept alive because those who have experienced it still 'revisit' the 'foreign country' that South Africa was before 1994. These 'visits' are either voluntarily or involuntarily because of recurring traumatic memories of that time. As a result, black people's lived experiences of apartheid have become relived experiences and, ultimately, a relived reality triggered by images, sounds and smells.

Batho residents voiced their expressions in direct quotes from oral history interviews conducted with them. The author considers this unique trove of interview recordings and transcriptions as a significant contribution to the existing body of oral history work on black people's apartheid experiences. Testimonies of the compulsory carrying of passbooks; visits to the local pass office; maltreatment received from the *platkeps* and other apartheid bureaucrats; and arrestation for not having a passbook or a lodger's permit; or for illegally brewing *platpiet* or breaching the night curfew, among others, evoke the suffering they had to endure under apartheid. The possibility that some information shared during interviews is not necessarily 'fact' according to conventional historical records but 'fragments of fact' or even 'anecdotes', does not diminish the value of these testimonies. For the interviewees, their testimonies represent reality (read as relived reality and relived experience) because they identify and empathise with what had happened to relatives and friends in such a way that the experiences of *others* have also become *their* experiences.

Traumatic experiences of apartheid laws and regulations is a multi-generational phenomenon in Batho because similar laws and regulations had also been part of the daily lives of the

214. For example, refer in this regard to the *Abolition of Influx Control Act (no. 68 of 1986)*. *Government Gazette of the Republic of South Africa*, 252(10317), *Abolition of Influx Control Act (no. 68 of 1986)*, 2–17.

215. Du Bruyn, "Oh, That Law, It ...," no p. no.

216. NMOHC, interview, B. M. Kgoroge (resident, Batho)/P. Letsatsi (oral historian, National Museum, Bloemfontein), 20 May 2015.

interviewees' parents and grandparents. Therefore, the interviewees' testimonies point to multi-generational trauma that runs like a defective thread across multiple generations of Batho residents, weaving its way back into the 19th century. The fact that Batho's residents lived in a 'model location' did not protect them from the harsh realities of life under apartheid. Interviewees' testimonies revealed that the treatment they were subjected to in Batho was as harsh or even harsher than in other locations. The recordings and transcriptions of the testimonies contribute to an understanding of a dark period in Batho's history, which is mostly unknown and hidden. Significantly, they also contribute to an understanding of the emotional dimension of a painful period that needs to be recorded, transcribed, researched, discussed and reckoned with.

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The author has declared that no competing interest exists.

## Author's contributions

D.d.B has declared sole authorship of this research article.

## Ethical considerations

An application for full ethical approval was made to the National Museum Bloemfontein and ethics consent was received on 23 February 2022. The ethics approval number is (No. NMB ECC 2022/03). Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study as well as permission to publish identifiable images.

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## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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