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Reforming Youthful Offenders: The Case of Diepkloof Reformatory School, 1935-1948

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Abstract

This article explores Alan Paton's efforts towards turning a prison into a school, the task which he was given by the Union Education Department following numerous debates in parliament in 1934. The aim was to transfer all reformatory institutions for juveniles run by the Department of Prisons, to the Union Education Department. Equally important, this article focuses on Paton's journey and experiences as the principal of Diepkloof Reformatory School from 1935 to 1948. The focus is on African juvenile offenders since Diepkloof Reformatory was the only reformatory for African boys in the Union and the continent of Africa until the 1960s. The account delves into the day-to-day lives of pupils who were sent to the Reformatory School by the Children's Courts. Paton, driven by a vision of rehabilitation over punishment, introduced reforms emphasising education, skills training, and self-discipline. The article explores the day-to-day lives of the youth incarcerated at Diepkloof Reformatory, an angle that has received limited attention from historians and reformists. It also extends beyond the reformatory, addressing the release conditions, home suitability, and the struggles some boys experienced in reintegrating into society. Paton's vision to make Diepkloof a place of justice and opportunity faced setbacks, yet his influence left a lasting impact on others who found success after rehabilitation. The article studies primary sources and correspondence to provide an understanding of the rehabilitation efforts Paton made to turn this prison into a school and the recommendations made by the Board of Management towards smooth administration to ensure an effective rehabilitation process for the boys.

Keywords: Diepkloof Reformatory School; juvenile delinquency; youth; pupils; Africans; urban areas.

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Opsomming

Hierdie artikel verken Alan Paton se pogings om 'n tronk in 'n skool te omvorm; 'n taak wat deur die Unie Onderwysdepartement aan hom opgedra is na aanleiding van 'n aantal parlementêre debatte in 1934. Die doel was om alle verbeteringskole vir jeugoortreders, wat voorheen onder korrektiewe dienste geval het, oor te dra aan die departement van onderwys. Die artikel fokus op Paton se ontwikkeling en ervaring as die hoof van die Diepkloof Reformatory School van 1935 tot 1948. Die klem val op swart jeugoortreders, aangesien Diepkloof Reformatory die enigste verbeteringskool vir swart seuns in die Unie – en op die vasteland – tot die 1960's was. Die beskrywing ontgin die dag-tot-dag belewenisse van die leerlinge wat deur die kinderhowe na die verbeteringskool gestuur is. Paton is aangevuur deur 'n visie wat rehabilitasie bo straf gestel het, en hy het veranderinge bewerkstelling wat die klem verskuif het na onderrig, praktiese vaardighede en selfdissipline. Die seuns se daaglikse ervarings is 'n invalshoek wat tot dusver minder aandag geniet het van historici en navorsers wat met jeugoortreders gemoeid is. Dit strek ook wyer as die verbeteringskool deur aandag te skenk aan die voorwaardes waaronder seuns ontslaan is, die geskiktheid van die huise waarheen hulle moes terugkeer en die uitdagings wat sommige seuns in die gesig gestaar het met hul herintegrasie in die samelewing. Paton se visie, om van Diepkloof 'n plek van geregtigheid en van geleenthede te maak, het terugslae beleef, maar sy invloed het 'n blywende impak gehad op dié wat ná hul integrasie sukses kon behaal. Die artikel ontleed primêre bronne en korrespondensie om sodoende 'n begrip te bied van Paton se pogings tot rehabilitasie tydens sy strewe om van hierdie tronk 'n skool te maak; en van die bestuursraad se aanbevelings wat betref doeltreffende administrasie, om sodoende vir die seuns van 'n effektiewe rehabilitasieproses te verseker.

Sleutelwoorde: Diepkloof Reformatory School; jeugoortreders; jeugmisdadigers; jeug; Afrikane; stedelike gebiede; Alan Paton; verbeteringskole.

Introduction

'I here – God help me – am going to do all that I can to make of this Diepkloof a place that can gladden the hearts of all who long for justice and a place in the sun for the children of God.'[1] This extract is from Alan Paton's letter to his close friend and later superior, Jan Hofmeyr, after being appointed as the principal of the Diepkloof Reformatory.[2] Diepkloof was the biggest reformatory for African boys in Africa.[3] In the 1930s Johannesburg was 'swamped and overwhelmed' with migrant workers who

1. P.F. Alexander, *Alan Paton: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 18.
2. Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archives (hereafter APCSA), PC1/1/7/16 Alan Paton, 'Correspondence between Alan Paton and JH Hofmeyr', 3 April 1935.
3. Wits Historical Papers (hereafter WHP), AB846, Alan Paton, Correspondence, 'The Secretary for Education', 29 July 1935.

regarded themselves as townsmen and their children were born and bred in the city's townships.[4] The growing number of African children in Johannesburg caused the rise of a 'native problem' as it was referred to by the authorities, which was conveyed by the increase in urbanisation and the breakdown of tribal life and family ties.[5] The breakdown of the 'traditional' African family and the consequences of urbanisation were the leading causes of increased juvenile destitution and offences.[6] However, Seekings debunks this argument by stating that juvenile destitution was rather the product of divided colonial rule and widespread poverty for an increasing section of the African population at the very moment when the welfare system was implemented for white families, including their children, in the 1920s and the 1930s, a matter that will be discussed later in this article.[7] Authorities perceived a need to establish reformatories and places of safety for children who were in trouble with the law. Not only were reformatories a means to curb youthful criminality in urban areas, but they were also the solution to rehabilitating young and adult juveniles on the wrong side of the law.[8] In the Union, 'juvenile delinquency'[9] cases were heard by the

4. P. Mayer and I. Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesman: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanization in a South African City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 5.
5. It is important to note that this is a problematic colonial argument produced by officials and some liberal reformers who were writing from a place of priviledge and white supremacy. I include this argument to highlight the attitude of the authorities against African people in the cities in the first half of the twentieth century in South Africa.
6. R.E Phillips, *The Bantu in the City: A Study of Cultural Adjustment on the Witwatersrand* (Alice: The Lovedale Press, 1938), 58.
7. See J. Seekings, '"Not a Single White Person Should be Allowed to Go Under": Swartgevaar and the Origins of South Africa's Welfare State, 1924-1929', *The Journal of African History*, 48,3 (2007), 381.
8. L. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools in South Africa: A Study in Class, Colour and Gender, 1882-1939' (PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1989), 57.
9. Reformists commonly used the term' juvenile delinquency' during the nineteenth century to describe young people who required reform or institutionalisation. According to most sociological definitions of 'juvenile delinquency', it is committing a crime or offence by a young person, often someone below eighteen. As much as the term 'juvenile delinquency' is no longer used today due to its negative connotations of moralising people, I use it carefully when contextualising and referring to lawlessness caused by the youth. In the period under study, authorities often referred to children in trouble with the law as 'juvenile delinquents' and the act as 'juvenile delinquency'. In this article, I refer to 'juvenile delinquency' and 'juvenile delinquents' with no intention of moralising the subject matter. See D.J. Shoemaker, *Theories of Delinquency: An Examination of Explanations of Delinquent Behaviour* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 3. Similar definitions of juvenile delinquency are also found in D.C. Gottfredson, *Schools and Delinquency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4; G. Cronjé, P.L. van der Walt, GM. Retief and C.M.B. Naudé, *The Juvenile Delinquent in Society* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1982), 10. R.M. Regoli and J.D. Hewitt, *Delinquency in Society* (New York: Jones and Bartlett Learning, 1997), 10; and P.C. Kratcoski and L.D. Kratcoski, *Juvenile Delinquency* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 1990), 2.

magistrates at the Children's Court, which then sentenced offenders to either a reformatory, a 'school of industries', or a place of safety.[10] The magistrates from the Children's Court, who frequently dealt with cases of children who were in trouble with the law, social workers who assessed the conditions of the children's wellbeing, as well as well-wishers and philanthropists, were eager to fund any initiatives that could help the youth and curb youthful crime in urban areas.[11]

This article discusses the task given to Alan Paton to convert a prison into a school. It explores the changes he made to the institution to achieve this goal. The unique angle the article takes delves into the lives of the pupils who were committed to the reformatory (previously referred to as inmates) and discusses how they responded to the reform process at Diepkloof. Little is known about the personal lives of the youth at the Diepkloof Reformatory. However, by using archival sources such as admission books, reports from probation officers, visitors, and correspondence between the authorities and wardens, as well as Paton's own account, it narrates the pupils' stories, although their voices were limited.

The article also acknowledges the important work by Linda Chisholm on Diepkloof Reformatory and Paton's principalship.[12] Chisholm argues that Paton's system was a modification of standard penal systems, particularly the system of juvenile justice developed for white children in the 1920s under the Pact government. Its unique feature was the attempt to introduce 'educational' rather than 'penal' discipline, aiming to shift control from external to internal sources. This shift aimed to resolve the issue of social order through ideology rather than repression. To build on this important argument, this article differs from Chisholm's angle by focusing on the day-to-day lived experiences of the youth and the administrative duties handled by Paton and his staff in efforts to reform the youthful offenders who were admitted to their care by the Union Education Department through the Children's Act of 1913. For instance, Chisholm explores the contradictions of penal reform at Diepkloof and barely touches on the lives of the boys. While addressing the matter of punishment she does not go into detail regarding their experiences at the reformatory, or how

10. In 1917, the Children's Act of 1913 administration was transferred to the Union Education Department, which distinguished between trade schools and industrial schools for poverty-stricken and needy children by referring to the latter as government industrial schools. Children were no longer sent to prisons. However, there was only one reformatory for African children in South Africa, the Diepkloof Reformatory School, which Alan Paton headed from 1935-1948. Before that, Diepkloof was more of a juvenile prison than a school. See Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools in South Africa', 57-61.
11. Department of Native Affairs (hereafter NTS) 8/331 Native Juvenile Delinquency 'Native Juvenile Vagrants in Johannesburg', 25 September 1931.
12. See L. Chisholm, 'Education, Punishment and the Contradictions of Penal Reform: Alan Paton and Diepkloof Reformatory, 1934–1948', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 17, 1 (1991), 23-42.

they responded to reform efforts, which is an aspect that is addressed here. Chisholm's PhD, completed in the 1980s, is of course important in shaping the argument about juvenile rehabilitation in this article because she provides a critical survey on the state and social structures of juvenile rehabilitation systems in South Africa. In her opinion, the juvenile reformatory system assisted youth in gaining industrial skills and an education that would be beneficial in their adult lives, although the system had its problems.[13]

From the 1930s through the 1950s, social anthropologists were troubled by the rise in youthful criminality and juvenile delinquency in the Union. Ray Phillips, who was a missionary and administrator interacted with Africans in the Reef townships; Ellen Hellmann conducted a study in Rooiyard and East London about Africans' living conditions, and Laura Longmore studied the economics of African urban life and Africans in the city, arguing that the high level of youthful crime was because of the maladjustment of urban life by Africans caused by 'broken families'.[14] While their arguments may be accurate, these scholars tended to 'demonise' the presence of African youth in urban areas. For instance, most of Phillips's views about the African youth in urban areas echoed those of the authorities; he often regarded the African youth as troublesome and lawless compared to their peers in the countryside.[15] Moreover, Hellmann and Longmore's views, similar to those expressed by Phillips, were Eurocentric. They were writing from a point of privilege and their scholarship does not truly represent all urban Africans.[16] Although these sources do not write about Diepkloof, they tend to show the negativity the authorities felt about African youth in the urban areas, almost criminalising their presence in the city.

Although secondary literature on the Diepkloof Reformatory is limited, scholarship about African youth on the Witwatersrand is useful in contextualising the history of Diepkloof and understanding its pupils. For instance, Clive Glaser has provided and highlighted the critical issue of the rise of youthful criminality in the Witwatersrand townships and surrounding areas. In his work, Glaser examines the origins of *tsotsi* gangs within the socioeconomic and political conditions that were caused by widespread poverty and limited economic opportunities in the townships.[17] He discusses the rise of juvenile delinquency on the Rand during Paton's principalship at Diepkloof (1935-1948) by explaining how youthful criminality in Soweto emerged

13. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools in South Africa', 81.
14. See Phillips, *The Bantu in the City*; E. Hellmann, *Problems of Urban Bantu Youth* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1940); L. Longmore, *The Dispossessed: A Study of the Sex-life of Bantu Women in Urban Areas in and Around Johannesburg* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1959).
15. Phillips, *The Bantu in the City,* 24.
16. Hellmann, *Problems of Urban Bantu Youth*; Longmore, *The Dispossessed*.
17. C. Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2000) 20- 46.

as a response to harsh living conditions which marginalised the African youth and restricted their access to education, employment and social mobility.[18] Although Glaser's scholarship does not focus on rehabilitation, through his work, one can understand the backgrounds of several boys sent to Diepkloof and why reformation and rehabilitation were necessary to curb the spread of youthful criminality.[19]

Other secondary sources, although not related to Diepkloof, address factors that led to the rise of youthful criminality, focusing on youth unemployment and lack of education which are among the leading factors of juvenile delinquency – and thereby contributed to the rise in the number of boys committed at Diepkloof.[20] Bonner and Segal highlight that some employers tended to perceive African township youth as irresponsible or criminal and rarely employed African men before they reached their twenties. Moreover, some of these young African men did not have birth certificates, and could not obtain a 'pass', which was a prerequisite for any worthwhile job.[21] For this reason, Bonner and Segal note that there was a massive rise in 'idleness' amongst African youths.[22] Additionally, Glaser asserts that throughout the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, roughly two-thirds of African children of school-going age in the Reef townships did not attend school. In 1937, the Johannesburg Joint Council estimated that 8 000 African children in the city between the ages of 7 and 16 were not attending school.[23] Thus, the inadequate schooling facilities for African children as well as the growing population of idle and loitering youths, was a potential menace to society.

This article also brings the Diepkloof Reformatory School pupil's story to life by focusing on the boys and their journey of rehabilitation by examining the admission books, reports from probation officers, visitors, and correspondence between the authorities and wardens,[24] as well as Paton's account in his biography, *Toward the Mountains*. What is unique about this article is that by exploring the admission books and official reports, the researcher gained insight into the personal lives of the boys and looked at where they came from and their experiences at the

18. C. Glaser, 'Anti-Social Bandits: Juvenile Delinquency and the Tsotsi Youth Gang Subculture on the Witwatersrand 1935-1960' (MA dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1991), 34.
19. Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi*, 37.
20. See T. Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort* (London: Collins, 1956); D. Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance: A History of Sophiatown* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2004); J. Iliffe, *The African Poor: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); B. Modisane, Blame Me on History (London: Parklands, 1986).
21. P. Bonner and L. Segal, *Soweto: A History* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1998), 65.
22. Bonner and Segal, *Soweto: A History,* 67.
23. Glaser, 'Anti-Social Bandits', 34.
24. Bantoe Onderwys (hereafter BO) NE34706 Diepkloof Reformatory, 'Meetings of Board of Management, 1935-1948 contains these records.

reformatory. He discusses the role and legacy of Paton and how he managed to reform some of the pupils despite the broader political and economic context of South Africa which constrained the possibility of reform. The primary sources used in this article have not been previously used by scholars like Chisholm and Alexander, who wrote about the Diepkloof Reformatory in their research. For instance, Chisholm made wide use of primary sources from the Union Education Department for the statistics.[25] In his biography on Paton and his experience as principal of Diepkloof, Alexander wrote in cooperation with Paton's wife and his two sons, and Alexander knew Paton personally for fifteen years.[26] It is therefore through primary sources that the narrative of ordinary boys sent to Diepkloof comes to light; the efforts and professional work by Paton became known through his reports, correspondence, letters and admission books.

Paton and his staff were challenged to reform boys who were not regarded as citizens of the Union because of their race, 'they belonged in the kraals and Reserves and not in urban areas'.[27] In as much as many of the boys committed at the reformatory were indeed petty and even hardened criminals, others were victims of blatant racial segregation by a government that criminalised their presence in the urban areas by arresting them for non-criminal petty acts like vagrancy and begging.

In the seventeenth century, British colonists in what became the USA and eventually in many parts of the world introduced the tradition of holding offenders or persons in trouble with the law in local workhouses or houses of correction. In 1682, William Penn and the Quakers of Philadelphia 'took quite a step forward and began to plan houses of correction as an instrument of justice'.[28] The Houses of Correction introduced the 'principle of confinement' and became entrenched as an alternative to capital punishment. Thus, the concept of having imprisonment serve as a corrective punishment began to develop, and it spread throughout the world. In New York City in the 1820s, concerned citizens who sought to address the anti-social behaviours of children younger than eighteen established the first juvenile reformatories which were termed 'houses of refuge' or 'almshouses'.[29] Those were

25. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools in South Africa', 79-81.
26. See Alexander, *Alan Paton*, xv.
27. A. Suzman, 'Race Classification and Definition in the Legislation of the Union of South Africa, 1910-1960', *Acta Juridica* 1, (1960), 346. However, it is important to note that there were black people who were born in the urban areas and regarded themselves as townsmen, while others had documents that permitted them to live in the urban areas. See Mayer and Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*.
28. T. Angle, 'The Development of Educational Programs in American Adult Prisons and Juvenile Reformatories during the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Correctional Education,* 33, 3 (1982), 4.
29. C.M. Span, 'Educational and Social Reforms for African American Juvenile Delinquents in 19th Century New York City and Philadelphia', *Journal of Negro Education,* 71, 3 (2002), 109.

founded primarily to avoid placing children in adult jails and provided a sanctuary for youth offenders to acquire the necessary skills for reform and self-sufficiency.[30]

In much of the Western World, societies with what they considered a delinquency issue regarded prisons, places of safety, correctional schools and reformatories as the most viable options to deal with unruly youths. Private philanthropy increasingly turned its attention to the needy, ragged and sometimes desperate young delinquents in the early to mid-nineteenth-century industrial towns and cities. For instance, the names of Mary Carpenter, Matthew Davenport Hill and the 'good' Lord Shaftesbury were linked with the beginnings of these private residential schools to reform the delinquent and provide care for the neglected in England.[31] As 'juvenile delinquency' proliferated rapidly in expanding cities, it was perceived as a specific problem of modern industrial society since young people in cities were no longer under the care of traditional education and supervisory systems.

The history of industrial education and schools in South Africa began in the nineteenth century, not with 'delinquents' but with mission education, an African peasantry and impoverished whites.[32] In the 1890s, with colonial government support, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) established 'poor schools' to alleviate 'white poverty', particularly in rural areas.[33] These 'poor schools' also made special provision for the education of people experiencing poverty. Neglected white children were to receive manual instruction on cultural subjects.[34] Fourchard asserts that experts in South Africa adopted legislation based on the content of the nineteenth-century British penal reform movement, which included a judicial and administrative organisation comprising children and juvenile courts, probation officers, welfare officers, reformatories, approved schools and other child welfare institutions.[35] As noted by Badroodien, industrial schools that resembled reformatories – as was the case in the 1850s England – were developed in South Africa after the South African War (1899-1902).[36] Lord Milner initiated the establishment of these reform-like schools following the model used in England. He predicted that these new schools would serve 'white destitute children, [who were] neglected and likely to fall into

30. Span, 'Educational and Social Reforms', 109-110.
31. E.D. Meyers, 'England's Industrial and Reformatory Schools', *Social Forces,* 11, 3 (1933), 374.
32. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools in South Africa', 57.
33. L. Chisholm, 'The Pedagogy of Porter: The Origins of the Reformatory in the Cape Colony, 1882-1910', *Journal of African History,* 27, 3 (1986), 482.
34. N.A. Badroodien, 'A History of the Ottery School of Industries in Cape Town: Issues of Race, Welfare and Social Order in the Period, 1937 to 1968' (PhD thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2001), 138.
35. L. Fourchard, 'The Limits of Penal Reform: Punishing Children and Young Offenders in South Africa and Nigeria', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 37, 3 (2001), 517.
36. Badroodien, 'A History of the Ottery School of Industries in Cape Town', 140.

crime because of their association with criminals and prostitutes in the urban slums', thus serving both the benefits of the school and the reformatory.[37]

The early 1900s saw reform-like industrial schools becoming an effective form of rehabilitating children in need of care and those who found themselves in trouble with the law. These correctional institutions were established and headed by the Union Government of South Africa and Children's Courts were formed to select the children.[38] In 1917, the administration of the Children's Act of 1913 was transferred to the Union Education Department, which distinguished between trade schools and industrial schools for the poverty-stricken. Children in the latter group were sent to government industrial schools.[39] It is important to note that these facilities were established specifically for white juveniles as there were no trade and industrial schools for African children in the early twentieth century. Institutions like the Tokai Reformatory, the Porter Reformatory, Houtpoort and several industrial schools in the Cape were already established for white juveniles (one for coloured juveniles) by the 1920s.[40] This welfarism was initially introduced to curb destitution among white children although it was later introduced for African children in the first half of the twentieth century, with missionaries playing a huge role in the establishment of places of safety for African children and the youth. Examples are the St. Joseph's Home for Coloured Children in Sophiatown (1923) and St. Nicholas Home for Boys in Newclare (1930) which were administered by the Anglican Church.[41] Another welfare initiative which was administered by the missionaries of the Anglican and Methodist Churches, and the American Board Mission were the hostels for young African women, namely the Claremont Girls Club, the Girls' Friendly Society, Doorfontein Hostel and The Helping Hand Club, which were to shelter and limit the free movement of girls at night and to train and place African girls in domestic skills which enabled them to become domestic servants.[42] The Children's Act of 1913 empowered the courts to commit young people awaiting trial to hostels instead of consigning them to the common prison. It also authorised similar commitment of convicted boys and girls in imprisonment or as a condition of suspension of sentences.[43]

37. Badroodien, 'A History of the Ottery School of Industries in Cape Town', 141.
38. F. McLachlan, *Children, their Courts and Institutions in South Africa* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1986), 4. McLachlan states that the Children's Court is a specialised court that deals with issues affecting children. Such courts are found in every Magistrates Court in South Africa.
39. McLachlan, *Children, their Courts and Institutions in South Africa,* 4.
40. See Badroodien, 'A History of the Ottery School of Industries in Cape Town', 138.
41. See C. Hlongwane, 'The History of St Joseph's Home for Coloured Children in Sophiatown' (MA dissertation, University of Johannesburg, 2015).
42. D. Gaitskell, 'Christian Compounds for Girls': Church Hostels for African Women in Johannesburg, 1907-1970', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 6, 1, 1979, 44-50.
43. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools', 128.

Thus, institutions like industrial schools and hostels emerged from training and stabilising unskilled white working-class juveniles through education and training, while the reformatory became the central institution for the control of 'disobedient juveniles'.[44] Rigorous enforcement of the intimidating regulators over African labour and mobility required the development of appropriate institutions for the punishment of offenders of the law and their reintegration into the labour force as disciplined and obedient workers.[45] By 1917, industrial schools were announced as part of a wider corrective and educational system. The new system included schools, orphanages, refugee centres and children's homes, whilst hostels and industrial schools were subsequently separated from provincial trade schools, technical high schools, and agricultural and housecraft schools.[46] Before 1934, when the magisterial courts normalised the utilisation of reformatories, very high numbers of juveniles and youths were imprisoned even for petty offences like begging. For example, in 1929, the number was 17 928; the following year, the number rose to 18 608. By 1933, there were 21 526. In 1935, the number decreased somewhat to 17 367. By the early 1940s, more reformatories were being utilised as the primary form of juvenile rehabilitation, and the number of children decreased to 10 802 in 1945.[47] The decrease in the number of juveniles sent to prisons in the mid-1930s was a direct result of the establishment of the first African reformatory.

The Establishment of Diepkloof Reformatory School

In 1906, the Prisons Department bought 'a beautiful farm' of 900 acres, seven miles southwest of Johannesburg, which remained a prison for adults until the First World War.[48] Between the two wars, a decision was taken to transform the place into a reformatory for African boys below the age of 18 years.[49] In 1934, South Africa took a significant step forward in treating young offenders. That year, after numerous debates, the parliament transferred all reformatory institutions for juveniles from the Department of Prisons to the Union Education Department.[50] On 1 July 1935, Alan Stewart Paton – later famous for his renowned book, among others, *Cry, the Beloved Country* – was an anti-apartheid activist who began his new job as the principal of the Diepkloof Reformatory. But before that, when the Union Department of Education

44. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools', 89.
45. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools', 90.
46. Badroodien, 'A History of the Ottery School of Industries', 143.
47. Fourchard, 'The Limits of Penal Reform', 531.
48. The most striking historical fact about this prison was that Mahatma Gandhi had been briefly imprisoned there in 1913. He led a protest march across the Natal border to improve the lot of Indians in South Africa, see Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 22-29.
49. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 128.
50. A. Paton, *Towards the Mountain* (London: Penguin Books, 1980), 132. Paton's use of the term 'reformatory' refers to 'state institutions charged with accepting and keeping in safe custody and reforming all juveniles committed to them by a court of law'.

advertised four posts for men to become principals at reformatories in Tokai (for coloured boys and white boys) namely Houtpoort and Diepkloof – Paton wrote a private letter to a liberal politician, Jan Hofmeyr, who was his close friend and later his superior, and told him that he would like to get a post at a reformatory.[51] In his response, Hofmeyr advised Paton to apply for all four principalships. He told Paton that he would not get the Tokai post because it was intended for someone else, a man already a principal in the Union Education Department. At the age of 32, Paton was appointed Principal at Diepkloof, thus requiring him to forget his ambition to become the headmaster at Maritzburg College.

As related by Alexander in Paton's biography, Paton bought himself a new suit and an overcoat and went to Johannesburg to take over the biggest reformatory in the continent of Africa at a salary of £600 per annum, which was £20 less than what he was earning as a schoolmaster.[52] Unquestionably, Paton had a determination to work with young offenders. Diepkloof was an immense challenge, but Paton found that responding to the challenge would be enormously worthwhile.[53] Paton later claimed that 'those thirteen years at Diepkloof were among the happiest of our life … including disappointments and achievements, failure and success, of labours prodigious and now almost unbelievable'.[54] During those thirteen years, Paton spoke more Afrikaans than English since more than ninety per cent of the boys could speak Afrikaans, and the warders communicated in Afrikaans with the boys.[55]

Paton was told by his good friend Hofmeyr, that the Education Department aimed to change the place from prison to a school, but it was up to him to find ways of doing so.[56] Paton's main task at Diepkloof was to be the 'lord and master' of approximately 360 boys[57] with a staff of only 30, which consisted of a deputy warden, Mr J.H. Laas, three clerks, a farm manager, James Barry and 25 supervisory staff, of whom 12 were African and 13 were white.[58] Upon Paton's arrival, Diepkloof Reformatory looked like a rundown prison.

51. APCSA, PC1/1/7/16 Alan Paton, 'Correspondence between Alan Paton and J.H. Hofmeyr', 3 April 1935.
52. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 130.
53. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 132.
54. Paton, *Towards the Mountain,* 169.
55. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 151.
56. APCSA, PC1/1/7/16 Alan Paton, 'Correspondence between Alan Paton and J.H. Hofmeyr', 3 April 1935.
57. In his biography of Paton, Alexander refers to 360 boys as the constant number of pupils at Diepkloof, whereas Paton, in *Towards The Mountain*, refers to the number 400. For example, he writes: 'Under us … were four hundred African boys', 140 and 'the beautiful sounds of four hundred delinquent voices', 146
58. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 48.

> The huge main building of wood and corrugated iron with earthen floors were painted a hideous yellow-brown, had heavy iron bars on the high windows and was enclosed in a 12-foot barbed-wire fence supported by great iron stanchions set in concrete.[59]

The yellow-brown paint on the walls was peeling away, and 'the walls themselves were infested with bugs, yet the building was kept as clean as such a building could be'.[60] An official who inspected the reformatory before Paton's arrival remarked on the 'extreme primitiveness of the buildings'.[61]

Diepkloof Reformatory had an average of 400 boys drawn from every part of South Africa, but the majority came from Johannesburg and its satellite mining towns. Among the 400 boys, 380 were Africans but there were also some Indian boys whose number was constant at about twenty. The tally of African boys was consistently high at the reformatory and they were in the majority. Moreover, Paton said the Indian boys were 'quite happy', and no parents had complained to him.[62] The twenty Indian boys were later transferred to the Coloured Reformatory in Tokai after Board members were concerned about their well-being in the environment meant for Africans.[63] During this period, there was no reformatory for Indian boys. Although the inmates were called 'boys', some were in their 20s, ranging from children who had committed relatively trivial thefts to young men who were hardened criminals, rapists and murderers.[64] When Miss M. Janisch, an Inspector and Probation Officer visited Diepkloof Reformatory in 1936, she expressed concern about adult juveniles whom she felt 'looked too old to be in the reformatory'.[65] In this report, Janisch also indicated that 'some of these young men would not hesitate to kill if need and opportunity arose' as they were a threat to the younger boys.[66] Most of these inmates were sent to Diepkloof because their offences had been committed before they reached the age of eighteen; hence, they were tried as juveniles. Although inspectors previously called for the minor boys to be separated from the older ones, they called in vain until the arrival of Paton.[67]

Paton was inspired in his philosophy by Cyril Burt, Sheldon and Eleanor Gluek, and Homer Lane. These writers had established ideas of child-centred pedagogy and

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59. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 129.
60. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 143.
61. APCSA, PC1/1/7/33, Alan Paton, 'Things which should/might be somehow inserted'. Paton's handwritten notes, dated 7 July 1935.
62. BO NE34706, Diepkloof Reformatory, 'Meeting - Board of Management', 7 September 1941.
63. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 140.
64. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 140
65. E14/103/9, Diepkloof Reformatory, 'Visiting Member's Report', 20 November 1936.
66. E14/103/9, Diepkloof Reformatory, 'Visiting Member's Report', 20 November 1936.
67. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 129.

penology, which by the 1930s were becoming dominant among theorists of prison and borstal reform. Their ideas were summarised in the following terms:

> Many of these writers stressed a new relationship between pupil and teacher. They emphasised individual psychological study, house fathers and house mothers to take care of children in institutions and the creation of a community and family home in miniature with 'home-like cottages' to displace larger hostels. These theorists also argued for a perfect system of individual instruction and supervision of pupils by university-trained professionals. They argued that self-discipline and not external restraint should be a source of control.[68]

Paton's challenge was to find some way of putting these theories into practice in a crowded, rundown, and underfunded institution and carrying his staff with him.[69] Furthermore, Paton came to think of Diepkloof's reform as a pattern for change in South Africa. Some significant early changes which were experienced at Diepkloof following Paton's arrival were that the Warden's title changed to that of 'principal'; the inmates being referred to as 'pupils'; the African head warder, Ben Moloi, being called the 'head teacher'; and the other warders becoming 'supervisors'. Moreover, the official name of the institution became 'Reformatory School'.[70]

Life at the Reformatory and Changes Implemented by Paton

Before Paton's influence and leadership, Diepkloof was characterised as a prison, although it housed juvenile inmates.[71] Additionally, the living conditions were not appropriate for children. The dormitories, made of corrugated iron, were 15 feet by 24 feet, and in each unit, inmates were locked in each night from 6 pm to 6.30 am. Generally, the place was overcrowded; its population had risen by over 100 in 1934 alone, with recent overcrowding resulting from the Great Depression.[72] The inmates were given three worn-out blankets and a thin mat; they slept on floors made from cattle dung mixed with clay.[73] Also, each room had a single bucket of water and another bucket as a toilet. 'This latrine bucket was often overflowing in the morning, soaking into the earthen floor, and the smell when the rooms were opened after the night defied description', stated a report written by an official inspector.[74] The main outdoor toilet for inmates was 'nauseating', consisting of a crossbar on which the inmates squatted over open buckets practically in public. It also quickly overflowed

68. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 133-134.
69. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 135
70. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 171.
71. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 172.
72. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 48.
73. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 51.
74. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 130.

when used in the morning.[75] Moreover, another report mentioned that the conditions at the prison 'would shock even the natives living in the kraals and as a method of punishment they cannot be regarded as effective as the native will probably leave the reformatory with a grudge against us'.[76]

On Paton's arrival, most staff members were prison officers by training, and their attitude toward the inmates was confrontational. According to Paton, the African warders, whose heavy sticks were regularly used, were the most severe.[77] To change staff mentality, Paton 'weeded' out staff who could not be converted from the prison's mentality and employed several new junior supervisors drawn from the Special Service Battalion. This military unit was formed in the mid-1930s by a right-wing government minister, Oswald Pirow, to give discipline and training to unemployed school leavers who sought work.[78]

These new junior supervisors naturally imparted a soldierly effect to the reformatory; the inmates participated in regular military drills and were marched in groups called *spans* wherever they went.[79] To improve the lives of the inmates in the reformatory. Paton instituted a series of rapid but incremental changes, all designed to increase the freedom and responsibility of the pupils. Notably, Paton saw it as vital that freedom and responsibility should go hand in hand. With the support of his staff and sympathetic inspectors like Miss Chattey, the Inspector of Domestic Science:

> He began by relaxing what seemed like unnecessary prohibitions on the smoking of tobacco; he had bucket latrines built; he enlarged the reformatory hospital; he revolutionised the diet by introducing bread, fresh fruit, vegetables and more meat; he built a laundry; he introduced the wearing of jerseys and scandals in winter; he took on new staff (19 within his first year) who had not been trained for prison work and who therefore were open to new and liberal ideas; he enlarged the school, and he gave the headteacher helpers.[80]

Additionally, Miss Chattey, whom Paton called his 'dearest, and also part of my luck', revolutionised the reformatory diet. The initial diet given to inmates was maize meal porridge which was 'monotonous and inadequate'.[81] However, with Paton's arrival,

75. 'Report on the Diepkloof Reformatory' by Z. Martins, Chief Clerk, April 1935', in Alexander, *Alan Paton*,18.
76. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 19.
77. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 89.
78. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 133. In the first chapters of *Towards the Mountain*, Paton explains that his father was a stern believer in corporal punishment, which the young boy to fear his father and feel distanced from him. Paton believed strongly that corporal punishment was unsuitable for disciplining the youth. He did not encourage its use at Diepkloof.
79. Alexander, *Alan Paton,* 134
80. 'Annual Report on Diepkloof for 1936', in Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 25.
81. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 130.

the inmates were given 6 ounces of bread a day, fresh fruit, vegetables, and more meat. 'For some boys, it was the first time they ate bread'.[82] Miss Chattey also abolished prison caps, introduced jerseys and sandals, and devised special diets for the reformatory hospital and those suffering from diseases caused by dietary deficiencies. She also abolished the washing of clothes on stone slabs and introduced a laundry room and personal soap rations.[83] Before sandals and jerseys were introduced, inmates wore only a thin shirt and a pair of shorts, even in the coldest winter.[84] More children got sick from the cold weather during the winter months and were routinely admitted to the hospital. In the Board meeting of 1940, the District Surgeon saw an increase in the number of pneumonia cases, and he proposed that wooden floors be provided in the dormitories because the ordinary ground floors were a contributing factor.[85] After all, regular cement floors enhanced the cold temperatures.[86] However, Paton declined the provision of wooden floors and stated that the Main Building was already in a bad state and needed extensive renovation. He was in regular communication with the Public Works Department.[87]

Other changes suggested by Paton included a steam-operated disinfector to sanitise the inmates' clothes and bedding to prevent the rapid spread of skin infections. He argued that the method of immersing clothes and bedding in boiling water was not practical.[88] Subsequently, when Miss Chattey decided that the Diepkloof boys who had thus far gone barefoot should wear sandals, she also called for the opening of a workshop where sandals for the reformatory were manufactured. As a result, twenty boys were trained in sandal-making under an instructor, thus providing inmates with a skill they could use after being released from the reformatory.[89] In the 1940s, the workshop produced shoes that were supplied to the boys in the reformatory.[90] However, none of them did more than the proactive Miss Chattey to show the reformatory staff that the Union Education Department meant business and that there was no place for any person to disapprove of the new policies.[91] Miss Chattey also recommended to the Board that a European woman be appointed as Chief Matron to undertake the duty of inspection and advice, plan out menus and inspect the hostels. She strongly recommended Mrs Paton as she already ran classes to provide domestic service tuition for the wives of Native staff members

82. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 155.
83. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 164.
84. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 131.
85. Bantoe Onderwys (hereafter BO) NE34706 Diepkloof Reformatory, 'Meeting, Board of Management', 2 July 1940.
86. BO NE34706 Diepkloof Reformatory, 'Meeting, Board of Management', 2 July 1940.
87. BO NE34706 Diepkloof Reformatory, 'Meeting,Board of Management', 2 July 1940.
88. WHP, AB846 Alan Paton, Correspondence, Secretary for Education, 29 July 1935.
89. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 187.
90. BO NE34706 Diepkloof Reformatory, 'Meeting, Board of Management', 3 June 1946
91. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 187.

and had their confidence.[92] Mrs Paton was already working and supporting Paton in his role as principal at the Diepkloof Reformatory, and she adapted very well to her new role as the Chief Matron because she was already accustomed to life at the Reformatory.[93]

Another notable change that Paton implemented at the reformatory was the breaking down of vindictive discipline and replacing it with a contract-of-agreement system. For instance, if the pupils cooperated by keeping silent after the nine o'clock bell, he responded by giving them new privileges such as leaving their dormitories open from the 5pm roll call until 9pm. Paton gave the boys freedom of the yard inside the main building each evening, eventually leaving them open each night. After that, he gave even more freedom by marching the entire body of pupils outside the wire fence for parades.[94] Thus, he reinforced the military discipline under which the boys marched with great precision as they moved about the farm in their respective spans and he divided the entire reformatory into four houses that competed against each other in sports and discipline.[95]

Paton also submitted proposals to the Union Education Department for a 'village plan or *rondavel* system' to accommodate five boys each, which would allow the boys greater freedom outside the main block.[96] Paton argued that the village plan structure allowed boys freedom and approximated 'native community life', that boys would learn to preserve law and order in such a community, and 'respect for the property of others'.[97] When the *rondavel* system was implemented in 1947, it allowed the boys to have personal contact with the African housemaster, to eat food better than the food received by inmates of the main block, and enjoy other privileges like listening to music.[98] However, these privileges allowed for differentiation based on conduct. When rights were abused, or a boy absconded, he was sent back to the main building as punishment.[99]

While still implementing changes, Paton banned the word 'kaffir' following the ruling by a judge that an African man addressed as such would be awarded damages because the term was offensive and insulting.[100] Additionally, Paton discouraged and banned the use of other insulting words like 'coolie' for an Indian and 'Tottie' or 'hotnot' for a Coloured or mixed-race person.[101] In the 1940s, the polite word for a

92. BO NE34706, Diepkloof Reformatory, 'Meeting, Board of Management', 15 July 1942.
93. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 206.
94. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 135.
95. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 137.
96. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 91.
97. Chisholm, 'Education, Punishment and the Contradictions of Penal Reform', 28.
98. Chisholm, 'Education, Punishment and the Contradictions of Penal Reform', 29.
99. Chisholm, 'Education, Punishment and the Contradictions of Penal Reform', 31.
100. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 154.
101. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 155.

black person was 'native', but a few years later, it was replaced by the official term 'Bantu'. Paton was a devout Christian who taught the importance of religion at the reformatory. He increased the number of religious services at Diepkloof, previously conducted by the headteacher, Mr Ben Moloi, and by the prison chaplain on occasional visits.[102] However, Paton decided to teach them himself, and he rejoiced in the beauty of the boys' singing. He mentioned in his biography that one of the things that brought him joy in the mornings was the 'beautiful voices of four hundred delinquents which held and captured me for thirteen years. I may add that those voices captured many others, too, and sometimes visitors to the reformatory could hardly hold back their tears'.[103] Additionally, Paton introduced half an hour of scripture lessons daily because he believed that 'morality inculcated through religion was a stronger and much more effective restraint than bars and guns.' In this way, he used religion as a central element of his method of control.[104]

Paton's Challenge with the Absconders

Although Paton introduced and implemented several notable practical changes, on occasion the reformatory suffered a rush of absconders. This became a challenge. In his first official report in August 1935, Paton admitted that no fewer than 87 of the 400 inmates (24%) had absconded in his first six months, and at least 33 were still at large.[105] In a letter that he wrote to his dear friend, Jan Hofmeyr, three months after arriving at Diepkloof, he spoke on the issue of absconders. In the letter, he mentioned that 'our escapes for October, which were two for the first twenty-six days, increased to nine before the month was ended. Our escapes for November stand at nine so far'.[106] In another letter, he expressed his disappointment about cancelling his trip to Cape Town to visit Hofmeyr because nineteen boys had absconded in twenty-six days. He noted in the letter that he could not 'just get away because I seem to exert a stabilising influence on this place.[107] A delighted Paton wrote another letter to Hofmeyr in September 1938 in which he reported the general status of the reformatory. He said:

> Diepkloof is very healthy now. Our figures for absconders during the last five months are almost incredible; for instance, we had none in August. However, the more we solve our internal difficulties, the more attention we devote to the difficult problem of the absconders, who again have to be restricted.[108]

102. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 138.
103. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 182.
104. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 138.
105. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 144.
106. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 147.
107. WHP, AB846 Alan Paton, Correspondence to Jan H Hofmeyr', 23 February 1938.
108. WHP, AB846 Alan Paton, Correspondence to Jan H Hofmeyr', 11 September 1938.

Such challenges would have made a weaker man abandon the programme and fall back on old methods; however, Paton showed the courage of his convictions.

When he first arrived at Diepkloof, Paton believed that 'freedom was the supreme reformatory instrument', yet most of South Africa thought that a reformatory was a place to which troublemakers were sent and were thus removed from the public for a while.[109] Although Paton was a promoter of freedom in reformatories, he knew escaping or absconding were harsh terms that could mean the end of his career. For example, if a boy absconded from Diepkloof and murdered a white woman in Comptonville, that would be bad enough. As Paton put it: '...if he absconded because he had been granted a measure of physical freedom under his new dispensation, that would be the end of me'.[110] Another disappointing case was that of a boy who was released from the reformatory and soon committed another crime, only to be sent to an adult prison. Paton's fictional character in his novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*, is a young man named Absalom Khumalo who was released from the reformatory, only to shoot an engineer called Jarvis, a white man, in a botched house robbery – and being handed a life sentence after pleading guilty with no intention to kill.[111] Nonetheless, Paton was thankful for the cases of absconding because, as he told Hofmeyr, 'they made us all careful and I have had extraordinary encouragement from these youngsters on staff'.[112] However, Paton removed the large gate and tore down the fence and barbed wire surrounding the reformatory. He then instructed that a fine bed of flowers be planted where the fence had once been.[113]

One man who was influenced by Paton's philosophy of giving youthful offenders freedom of the yard was William Barney Ngakane. In 1936, Johannesburg philanthropist John L. Hardy established the Lad's Hostel in Orlando, a hostel for twenty-five African boys, and made Ngakane the headteacher.[114] Ngakane worked closely with Paton, and he too believed that giving inmates freedom to the yard minimised the number of absconding boys. Indeed, his work in Orlando was successful, and the Committee posted him to East London to begin a similar hostel there after serving seven years in Orlando township.[115] In promoting physical freedom, Paton introduced an award called the *vakasha* badge[116] at the reformatory. The *vakasha* badge was a shirt with a piece of green cloth covering the pocket. The

109. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 14.
110. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 14.
111. See A. Paton, *Cry the Beloved Country* (London: Penguin Books, 1988).
112. WHP, AB846 Alan Paton, Correspondence to Jan H. Hofmeyr', 16 November 1935.
113. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 140.
114. A.G. Cobley, *Rules of the Game: Struggles in Black Recreation and Social Welfare Policy in South Africa* (Westport: Greenwood Press 1997), 123.
115. Cobley, *Rules of the Game*, 137.
116. An isiZulu word directly translated as 'to visit' or 'to go for a walk'.

boys to receive the *vakasha* badge were announced on Fridays during the evening parade.[117] In accepting the badge, the pupil would say,

> Today, I receive my *vakasha* badge
> I promise not to go beyond the boundaries of the farm
> I promise not to touch anything that is not mine
> I promise to obey the rules of the school. [118]

According to Chisholm, this semi-religious and quasi-military ritual was intended to shift control from the physical to the moral state, from external limitations to individual internal self-discipline.[119] Equally important, the badge was awarded at various intervals depending on conduct, and it signified privilege, maturity, responsibility, and reliability; it went to the law-abiding citizen who knew his limits, respected private property and the institution's law.[120] Additionally, the *vakasha* badge permitted supervisors to use the free boys as messengers, or to allow them to work on other piece jobs not too far from the reformatory.[121] For instance, the first *vakasha* afternoon was a success because fifty boys were signed out, and the same number was signed in. But in the end, the plan did not work out quite well as Paton hoped because some of the boys identified by supervisors as trustworthy had used the *vakasha* badge to abscond.[122]

In most cases, boys who had been admitted at Diepkloof for several months felt they deserved to be granted the *vakasha* badge, if not, they were the ones who tended to abscond. For instance, one boy who had absconded was heard saying, 'you gave Johannes the badge, and he had been here only a month; I have been here for a year and have behaved myself, and you gave me nothing. So I ran away'.[123] Consequently, Paton realised the importance of the time factor, especially for those deprived of freedom. With this in mind, he began to prioritise freedom of the yard for those who had been in the reformatory for more than nine months – this proved successful because very few cases of absconding were recorded in the reformatory after that. In rare cases afterwards, when an absconder was returned to the reformatory, 'he was greeted with howls of execration' and was assaulted, sometimes severely.[124] The boys at the reformatory believed that each time a boy absconded, the discipline became harsher. After the fellow boys had dealt with the absconder, the

117. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 121.
118. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 174.
119. L. Chisholm. 'Education, Punishment and the Contradictions of Penal Reform: Alan Paton and Diepkloof Reformatory, 1934–1948', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 17, 1 (1991), 29.
120. Chisholm. 'Education, punishment and the contradictions of penal reform', 31.
121. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 140.
122. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 175.
123. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 140.
124. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 176.

warden punished him officially and he would be made to wear a red shirt until further notice.[125] One such boy, a fifteen-year-old who was granted freedom of the yard was asked one day to accompany a supervisor known as Baba Scotch to Booysens, where they went to buy fish. As the two entered Diepkloof's main gate, Paton received a phone call from the shop owner, who alleged that the boy or Baba Scotch had stolen some of his fish. Paton then called for both of them and questioned them but soon dismissed the 'trusted supervisor' and interrogated the boy with the help of the vice-principal, Mr Laas, who 'beat the truth out of the boy'.[126] After numerous beatings, the boy still pleaded not guilty, and that afternoon, Paton, still troubled by what had happened, went out looking for the boy to apologise – only to find him eating a large piece of fish in the dormitory.[127]

In October 1937, under its new head, F.D. Hugo, the Union Education Department introduced home leave to deserving boys at hostels and reformatories throughout the Union.[128] This home leave initiative was gladly welcomed at Diepkloof and was given once a month to any boy who had held his *vakasha* badge for more than three months and who had money to go home; in most cases, it was boys from the townships of Johannesburg, Pretoria and the mining towns of the East and West Rand. However, some went as far as Bloemfontein and Durban.[129] On average, out of the one hundred boys who were granted home leave, 98 returned on the given time, while one would return drunk and another never returned at all.[130] Nevertheless, there was a turn of events in December 1937 when it was announced on the radio that hundreds of police were searching for a young African man who had killed a white woman in the pantry of her house while trying to steal food.[131] What Paton feared proved to be true; a boy from Diepkloof had not returned from his home leave. The boy was later charged and sentenced to death.[132]

In the Board of Management Meeting of January 1942, the members unanimously agreed that the Diepkloof Reformatory should receive visitors who would write an unbiased report on the state of the reformatory. One of the several satisfied visitors, W.L. Marsh, reported:

125. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 177.
126. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 139.
127. Paton, *Towards the Mountain,* 172.
128. WHP, AB846 Alan Paton, Correspondence, 'From the Secretary for Union Education Department', 7 October 1938.
129. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 191.
130. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 191.
131. This case is similar to that of Absalom Khumalo and two other boys in Paton's *Cry, The Beloved Country*, who committed a crime after being released from Diepkloof Reformatory.
132. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 191.

> What impressed me immediately was the atmosphere pervading the Institution. There was an air of healthy activity. I saw no one at a loose end. Matters are well organised. An absence of anything approaching harshness was especially noteworthy, but the discipline struck me as excellent. We witnessed physical training exercises which were in progress on our arrival. We visited the tailoring, tinsmith, carpentry and brick-making sections. Two workshops pointed out to us as homemade formed striking testimony of what Diepkloof can do. The hostel dormitories which we entered are well-aired, neat and clean.[133]

On 22 May 1943, J.M. Epina[134] visited the Reformatory and found the pupils assembled on the playing field and 'the boys looked happy', and matters were in order and called for no particular comment.[135] Epina then had an opportunity to speak to one of the pupils, Coni Mzolo, who hailed from Mzinga District and was admitted after being convicted of murder on 17 December 1941. According to Epina, the pupil 'has no knowledge or experience of town life and would very much like to return home. From the reports in his file, he appears to have given no trouble while at Diepkloof and has been a good worker'.[136] Engaging with the pupils at Diepkoof gave the visitors an impression of whether they were progressing in their rehabilitation. When Janisch visited the reformatory, she engaged with a group of 13 boys; 8 of them told her they were interested in returning to school, whilst the remaining five wished to go to work when they left Diepkloof. She thought the environment had already begun to make its mark. As much as G. Baines, the inspector from the Union Education Department was impressed with the manifestation of healthy activity at the institution, he stated in his report:

> I was disturbed when I went to the sickbay and saw two babies who had been sent to the Reformatory for killing a turkey. In my opinion, the two children are too small for Diepkloof and should be transferred to another institution.[137]

Mrs Dora Phillips, one of the figures who was invested in the lives of the urban youth (together with her husband Ray Phillips), was a visiting member at the Reformatory on 20 June 1946 and came up with some suggestions that would improve the quality of life for the pupils at Diepkloof. During her inspection tour, she 'found everything neat and orderly and [was] happy with the situation'.[138] However, Dora had three areas of concern; she stated that the kitchen was dark and dingy and was a most inconvenient and poorly arranged place. Therefore, she recommended to the Board

133. BO NE34706, Diepkloof Reformatory, 'Diepkloof Reformatory: Visitors Report: W.L. Marsh', 23 September 1942.
134. J.M. Epina was one of several inspectors from the Union Education Department who frequented Diepkloof.
135. BO NE34706, 'Diepkloof Reformatory, Visitors Report: J.M Epina', 22 May 1943.
136. BO NE34706, 'Diepkloof Reformatory: Visitors Report: J.M Epina', 22 May 1943.
137. BO NE34706, 'Diepkloof Reformatory: Visitors Report: G Baines', 20 October 1946.
138. BO NE34706, 'Diepkloof Reformatory: Visitors Report: Dora Phillips', 20 June 1946.

that a new steam cooking system and a boiler be installed, thus making the cooking process more manageable and convenient. Regarding the hot water system, she recommended that a large tank for hot water be added. The water in this tank would be heated by the same boiler, producing steam for cooking – she also suggested that 'the hot water from the tank could be piped to the showers so that once a week, at least, each boy could have a warm bath'. Furthermore, she suggested that towels be provided for the boys to keep them warm and dry after bathing and that each boy should receive two towels per annum.[139]

The Boys Committed at the Diepkloof Reformatory

African youth criminality was commonly a by-product of urban poverty and low wages, with young men usually employed in shops or as newspaper delivery boys who earned as little as £10 per annum.[140] Chisholm states that between 1911 and 1939,[141] many African and white juveniles appeared before the courts, although the majority were discharged with warnings or whipped, fined and given suspended sentences. Some, though, were sent to prisons and reformatories.[142] Additionally, Midgley determined that ninety per cent of all convictions were crimes other than those considered 'serious'.[143] Equally important, writes Chisholm, was that most boys sentenced to reformatories were convicted for thefts of various kinds, often incredibly petty. For instance, boys at Porter Reformatory were sentenced to three to four years for stealing peanuts or fruits from trees.[144]

Paton also mentions that the offences of some of Diepkloof's committed children were insignificant and that the children should never have been sent there at all.[145] Of the four hundred pupils at the Diepkloof Reformatory, one hundred were children; while the youngest was a mere nine years old. However, according to the courts, a boy could commit a crime at seven, and the reformatory fortunately had no seven or eight-year-olds.[146] An example given is that some children were committed because they stole from shops and fruit stalls at the markets. One of the boys 'had been so foolish as to steal a tin of jam from the pantry of the magistrate's wife'.[147] The majority of the boys at Diepkloof were sent there because they were found guilty of

139. BO NE34706, 'Diepkloof Reformatory: Visitors Report: Dora Phillips', 20 June 1946.
140. J. Grobler, 'Juvenile Delinquency in South Africa' (PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 1939), 64-65.
141. This is the period which Chisholm's PhD study focused on, and the study provides statistics and information about reformatories and industrial schools in South Africa.
142. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools in South Africa', 138.
143. J. Midgley, 'Children on Trial', in J. Midgley, J.H Steyn and R. Graser (eds.), *Crime and Punishment in South Africa* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 98.
144. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools in South Africa', 142.
145. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 161.
146. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 121.
147. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 163.

theft, but an approximate number cannot be reached because the committals register for the period 1935 to 1948 is incomplete.[148] However, details on the nature of the robberies committed include theft from stores, houses, and general theft. For instance, on 10 October 1937, John Skosana (16) from Somerset East, Stephen Mncube (17) from Cato Ridge, Zacharia Tuse (19) from Nkandla and Zwelinzima Mvovo (13) from Tsolo arrived at Diepkloof on the same day after being sentenced to four years for theft by the magistrate courts in their respective towns.[149] One can argue that the Union Government did not take petty crimes committed by juveniles lightly, but it can also be maintained that the magistrates regarded the boys as needing help; hence, they sent them to a place of safety. It was hardly the case that boys committed crimes in groups or pairs. Many of them committed crimes of theft individually. However, the brothers Nunu Manqele (20) and Xunge Manqele (19) from Hlabisa in Natal stole from a shop and were sentenced on 20 October 1939. Both were released on 1 January 1942, that is in their adult years. At Diepkloof, they were trained in carpentry because they were too old to attend school.[150]

In his biography, *Towards the Mountain,* Paton mentions that he kept asking himself the real motives behind the crimes committed by some of the children since most of them were 'so young and innocent in the eye, good but corrupted by their environment'.[151] Some young boys committed victimless crimes but found themselves in the reformatory simply because they were children needing care. An example is William Sehlobo (12) from Newcastle, who was sentenced to six years for begging.[152] Ndodayedwa Msomi (14) from Ndwendwe in Natal was committed to five years at Diepkloof for vagrancy on 15 April 1938, and Paulos Ngcobo (13) from Durban was sentenced to five years vagrancy in the same year.[153] Another attention-grabbing case was that of 12-year-old Joseph Ngcobo from Johannesburg, who was sentenced to 9 years for vagrancy on 12 February 1937.[154] Although an average of five years can be regarded as a harsh punishment for these victimless 'crimes', one could also argue that the magistrates had good intentions for the young boys in these situations since there were few places of safety for young black boys in the 1930s. For instance, the St. Nicholas Home for Boys was the only home for black boys in Johannesburg and was generally overfull. St. Philomena's Home in Durban only committed Indian boys and this home was unsuitable for African boys.[155]

148. See WHP, AD843B, South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), File 23 Juvenile Affairs, 'Pupils for Board'.
149. WHP, AD843B, SAIRR, File 23, Juvenile Affairs, 'Pupils for Board', October 1937.
150. WHP, AD843B, SAIRR, File 23, Juvenile Affairs 'Pupils for Board', October 1939.
151. Paton, *Towards the Mountains*, 172.
152. AD843B, Juvenile Affairs 'Pupils for Board', July 1939.
153. AD843B, Juvenile Affairs 'Pupils for Board', April 1938.
154. AD843B, Juvenile Affairs 'Pupils for Board', February 1937.
155. Hlongwane, 'A History of St. Joseph's Home for Coloured Children', 89.

Although most boys sent to the reformatory were juveniles, some cases of juvenile adults of twenty and even twenty-one years were sent to the reformatory, primarily for petty offences. They were first-time offenders or had committed crimes before the age of eighteen. In 1940, Marcus Kozana (20) from Louis Trichardt was sentenced to two years at Diepkloof for theft. He was released at twenty-two to his father after training as a vegetable gardener.[156] Another case was that of Abram Brayners (21) from Middleburg, who was sentenced to three years for stealing a bicycle. He worked at laundry services until he was released under the guardianship of his mother.[157] Richard Thompson (21) from Kimberley was sentenced to four years for theft. Like most juvenile adults, Thompson trained as a tailor instead of enrolling for classes with young children and he worked in the reformatory shop instead.[158] Another juvenile adult at Diepkloof, Elliot Dick (20) from Mafikeng, absconded toward the end of his sentence. He was caught and returned to the reformatory after stealing a bicycle. He was again sentenced to another three years.[159]

Paton mentioned some concerns about theft to the Secretary of Education since they were the majority at Diepkloof. He said:

> Most of our inmates are committed for theft. I am confident that unless we can teach them not to steal where opportunities are available, we shall not be actually reforming. Therefore, I propose later to suggest to the Department that the Prisons' ban on private property is removed, and the inmates be allowed to keep such in their rondavels, and thus to learn to respect the property of others.[160]

Some inmates had committed severe offences. In 1941, Mvundwa Simelane (15) from Louwsburg committed murder and was sentenced to five years.[161] Similarly, Tose Ncana (21) from Uitenhage was sentenced to five years for culpable homicide. As a juvenile adult, Ncana was not sent to school but was taught tailoring skills, and he worked at the reformatory's shop.[162] Although Ncana was considered an adult at twenty-one, he was still sent to a reformatory and not to prison for this severe offence because he was a first-time offender. Likewise, Job Raseroke (21) from Makapanstad raped and murdered a young woman and was sentenced to five years at Diepkloof, where he worked as an assistant builder.[163] Another example is the brothers Marks and Philip Makutzo (aged 20 and 18 respectively), from Johannesburg, who committed culpable homicide and were each sentenced to five

156. AD843B Juvenile Affairs 'Pupils for Board', July 1940.
157. AD843B Juvenile Affairs 'Pupils for Board', October 1938.
158. AD843B Juvenile Affairs 'Pupils for Board', August 1938.
159. AD843B Juvenile Affairs 'Pupils for Board', April 1939.
160. WHP, AB846, Alan Paton, Correspondence, to Secretary for Union Education, 19 August 1935.
161. AD843B Juvenile Affairs, 'Pupils for Board', October 1941.
162. AD843B Juvenile Affairs, 'Pupils for Board', October 1941.
163. AD843B Juvenile Affairs, 'Pupils for Board', July 1941.

years.[164] It was rare for young boys to be committed for severe offences at Diepkloof, but David Maseko, aged 12, was sentenced to four years, and Piet Motaung, aged fifteen, received a sentence of five years for rape, both crimes being committed in 1939.[165]

The reasons behind severe crimes appear to include passion after a quarrel, during gambling sessions or because of a girl.[166] Some were guilty of rape, 'but some of these rapes were committed under provocation';[167] some had raped white girls, a massively severe offence in South Africa'.[168] Others had stolen or killed cattle or sheep, and if they had been on the property of a white farmer, the violation was considered the most serious.[169] According to Paton, the most dangerous offenders would not hesitate to kill for material gain or to kill anyone who interrupted them during their robberies.[170] The Children's Act of 1934 and the placing of young offenders in the care of the Union Department of Education enabled magistrates to make greater use of reformatories. Thus, Diepkloof grew from four hundred to six hundred children in 1936, forcing the department to consider extensions.[171] According to Paton, word had gone out to the boys of the slums and markets of Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town that 'now crime paid' and the boys, it was believed, were now eagerly committing crimes to get into these new reformatories.[172] Even a few members of Paton's staff thought so.[173] Chisholm notes that Diepkloof's congestion began almost immediately after Paton's arrival. In practice, as Chisholm declared, 'this meant that all pupils had to be discharged on licence after a year's detention if all new committals were to be admitted, also reducing the average period of detention to sixteen months' and 'reducing reformatory training to a farce'.[174] While Diepkloof became overcrowded and reductions in retention periods became preferred to ease the congestion, whipping for African children remained a leading solution to avoid sending young offenders to prisons or reformatories.[175] Porter Reformatory at the Cape was also faced with the same problem. From the above, it is evident that reforming juvenile behaviour had its limits in a system that criminalised the presence of African youth in urban areas. It can be argued that the Diepkloof Reformatory was rather an exceptional school than

164. AD843B, Juvenile Affairs, 'Pupils for Board', October 1939.
165. AD843B Juvenile Affairs ,'Pupils for Board', November 1939.
166. Paton, *Towards the Mountain,* p172.
167. Paton does not elaborate on this statement. However, unlike understandings of rape in the 1950s, in modern-day South Africa, the issue is highly problematic and many violent crimes are being committed against women.
168. Paton, *Towards the Mountain,* 172.
169. Paton, *Towards the Mountain,* 173.
170. Paton, *Towards the Mountain,* 174.
171. Alexander, *Alan Paton,* 138. See also Paton, *Towards the Mountain,* 169.
172. Paton, *Towards the Mountain,* 170.
173. Paton, *Towards the Mountain,* 170.
174. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools', 33.
175. Fourchard, 'The Limits of Penal Reform', 524.

the rule to reform young African offenders. It was not guaranteed that the young offenders were entirely reformed after they left the Reformatory. For instance, some boys were released after serving their sentences only to return to Diepkloof Reformatory because they had committed other crimes. For example. Jabulile Makhubo (13) from Inanda was arrested and sentenced to four years for theft; after he was released he stole a bicycle and was sentenced to another four years at Diepkloof Reformatory.[176]

During his principalship at the Diepkloof Reformatory, Paton [believed that he] established good relations with the boys, showing them respect.[177] But one can perhaps criticise Paton as being 'too trusting' of the boys. An example is when a fifteen-year-old who was granted freedom of the yard was one day asked to accompany a supervisor known as Baba Scotch to Booysens to buy fish. As the two of them arrived back at Diepkloof's main gate, Paton received a phone call from the owner of the shop who alleged that the boy or Baba Scotch had stolen some of his fish. Paton called both of them to question them but soon dismissed the 'trusted supervisor' and interrogated the boy again with the help of the vice-principal, Mr Laas, who 'beat the truth out of the boy'.[178] After numerous beatings, the boy still pleaded not guilty, and that afternoon, Paton still troubled by what happened, went out looking for the boy to apologise – only to find him eating a large piece of fish in the dormitory.[179] Another example is when Paton was 'reasoning with an unruly eighteen-old boy who refused to take orders from the supervisor', they ended up arguing and the boy attacked Paton and broke his finger in the process. Unfortunately, Paton developed an infection and his finger had to be amputated.[180]

Paton was habitually concerned about the Diepkloof boys' lives and well-being, whether they would get opportunities to prevent them from committing crimes and how they would fend for themselves after leaving the reformatory. Education and training at the reformatory were also based on the assumption that suitable employment for ex-prison and black labour was gardening. The broadening of activities at Diepkloof began with the establishment of the gardens to prepare boys as gardeners in white suburban Johannesburg.[181] Additionally, boys were drafted into service with maize farmers in the districts of Middelburg, Ermelo and Bethal and the Northern Free State. And because the boys were young and strong, they provided a

176. AD843B Juvenile Affairs, 'Pupils for Board', October 1939.
177. The kind of relationship Paton had with his pupils is reflected in his autobiography, *Towards the Mountain*. He often mentioned that the boys addressed him in a respectful manner and always looked down when addressing him. Avoiding eye contact with an elder is considered a sign of respect in many black cultures in South Africa.
178. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 139.
179. Paton, *Towards the Mountain,* 172.
180. Paton, Towards the Mountain, 184.
181. Chisholm, 'Education, Punishment and the Contradictions of Penal Reform', 35.

source of captive labour.[182] However, A.S. Welsh, a probation officer, informed the Board that releasing pupils to farm labour was futile because 'urban boys did not do well in rural environments because the urban environment was the only environment for the [these city boys] …'.[183] In other cases, the boys learned a trade such as tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry and so forth; and could utilise these skills after their release.

Even so, some boys approached Paton when the time came for them to leave the reformatory and asked for employment at Diepkloof. Daniel Bob from Kimberley is one such case. Paton was fond of Daniel and referred to him as 'an outstanding success [who] remained so all his life … a great asset to the reformatory … and a former delinquent who cherished so fiercely such qualities as punctuality, reliability and honesty'.[184] The policy of the Union Education Department encouraged principals to employ outstanding girls and boys at their respective reformatories or industrial schools.[185] As a result, Daniel Bob became a highly efficient supervisor of a group called the Kleinspan, a group of small boys whom he oversaw in the afternoons as they played. They did little chores like weeding and carrying wood in the afternoons after school.[186] Not all youths given work as supervisors excelled, and two of the first were eventually dismissed.[187] Strangely, one survived many threats of dismissal for drunkenness, homosexuality (which was a crime at the time), and 'womanising'. According to Paton 'he was a genius for sneaking out absconders from the dens and hideouts of Johannesburg'.[188] Nobody knew how this supervisor survived being sacked, but most of Paton's staff believed that this particular supervisor exercised some 'malign and occult influence' over Paton.[189] In other words, Paton's staff thought this supervisor used witchcraft on him.

Paton found 'same-sex' acts very distressing. As mentioned by Alexander, a sizeable unisexual institution shut off from the world was bound to be home to same-sex practices.[190] It was also comparatively easy for a head boy to commit a sexual act because boys in his dormitory would be afraid of him, and he would take advantage of them sexually.[191] Such acts did not necessarily mean that the head boy was 'homosexual'; it was his way of exercising power over the younger boys. However, to combat these practices, simple rules were made: no sharing of blankets, the doors were to stay open at all times, and no boy was allowed to sleep in any other dormitory

182. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools', 244.
183. BO NE34706, Diepkloof Reformatory, Board of Management, 27 November 1940.
184. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 186.
185. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 178.
186. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 178.
187. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 186.
188. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 186.
189. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 186
190. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 139.
191. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 139.

except the one to which he had been assigned.[192] If a free boy was found committing a sexual act, he would lose his freedom of the yard; for a head boy, the disgrace was more significant because the rank he had held was taken from him publicly.[193]

Before the pupils were eligible for release from the reformatory, Paton, as the principal, and the probation officers, with the assistance of the 'Native Police', ensured that the home conditions of the child were suitable. It was important for the boys to be released to a favourable environment with proper guardians. Both Watson Galele and Killion Sikakane had suitable home conditions, although the latter would be 'released to his sister and brother-in-law who are more suitable than parents'.[194] In other instances, the probation officer also inspected the nature of the house; in Matthew Mashiloane's case, it was reported that 'the house is kept very clean and the pupil will be under the supervision of both his mother and his uncle'.[195]

While some pupils were sent back to their homes after being released, other parents and guardians refused to welcome their children back to their homes. For instance, the Probation Officer reported that Izak Malibo's mother declined to act as guardian. The South African Police had no suggestions to offer concerning his release, and the Board requested Paton to write to the pupil's mother, making the position clear to her that Izak would be returned to Diepkloof if he failed to abide by his intentions, i.e.' to remain a good child and to find work'.[196] Similarly, Ishmael Boyang's grandmother refused to act as guardian after the probation officer was unsatisfied with Ishmael's mother, whom he considered 'a loose and undesirable woman'. The probation officer then suggested that the boy be sent to work on a farm in Boshof District, a suggestion opposed by Paton, who noted that Ishamel was an 'urban boy and would not do well on the farm'.[197]

Some boys were forced to remain in the Reformatory because the probation officer could not trace their families. Phakamile Tshambu, George Zungu, Willikies Mbata and Aaron Msibi's families were untraceable.[198] Most of the boys whose families were absent remained and worked in the reformatories workshop or were sent out to find employment. However, all boys were to stay under the supervision of the probation officer, whether they were sent home to their families or out to work until their progress was satisfactory.

192. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 187.
193. Alexander, *Alan Paton*, 139
194. E14/103/9 Diepkloof Reformatory 'Pupils for Board: Home Conditions', 6 July 1943.
195. E14/103/9 Diepkloof Reformatory 'Pupils for Board: Home Conditions', 9 October 1943.
196. E14/103/9 Diepkloof Reformatory 'Pupils for Board: Home Conditions', 4 February 1944.
197. E14/103/9 Diepkloof Reformatory 'Pupils for Board: Home Conditions', 5 June 1944.
198. E14/103/9 Diepkloof Reformatory 'Pupils for Board: Home Conditions', 6 August 1946 and 5 November 1946.

In the final chapter of his autobiography, *Towards the Mountain*, Paton concludes his Diepkloof story by evaluating the effectiveness of the school in reforming juvenile delinquents, paying particular attention to the role and purpose of punishment in the institution and society itself. Paton's conclusions about punishment were that, firstly, the penalty was generally totally worthless; secondly, it was a deterrent – its purpose only deterred the offender and others who might be tempted to commit a similar offence. Thirdly, punishment should be reformatory; that is, use punishment not as a form of detention but as an educational tool and, lastly, Paton believed that there was no need for corporal punishment at all. However, members of his staff strongly resisted this approach and it was agreed that it should be retained for offences against the person, mainly when the person was a staff member.[199] Paton also believed that the reformatory played a huge role in stopping a boy from a criminal career, instead of sending him off in another direction. Paton admitted that Diepkloof's added success was because it catered mostly for boys of nine to fifteen years old compared to boys of sixteen to twenty-one, and most of these boys were first-time offenders and were, therefore, more comfortable to rehabilitate compared to older boys who were second or third-time offenders.[200]

Paton's vision of making Diepkloof a success is seen in his correspondence with Jan Hofmeyr during his first few months as the Principal of Diepkloof Reformatory School. He wrote:

> I here – God help me – am going to do all that I can to make of this Diepkloof a place that can gladden the hearts of all who long for justice and a place in the sun for the children of God. I am not sentimental about it – I want a place with lawns and trees, with a village and its playing fields with occupations and unskilled trades, with good buildings, with water and light, with a proper placement system, with a happy and understanding staff and happy and understood children.[201]

Paton's wider vision of Diepkloof was to expand the reformatory to accommodate more African juvenile delinquents who required rehabilitation. Eventually, part of that vision materialised in 1948 when the government built a hostel for twenty boys in Orlando.[202] When Paton resigned in 1948 in protest against the National Party being in government, and realising that the administration of the Education Department would change,[203] his disappointment at not realising his vision was expressed in a set of reasons that included:

199. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 199-200.
200. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 201.
201. APCSA, PC1/1/7/16, Alan Paton, Correspondence with J.H. Hofmeyr', 16 November 1935.
202. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools', 350.
203. Paton, *Towards the Mountain,* 203. With the National Party winning the election in May 1948, the reformatory leadership changed. Paton resigned his post and

> The failure of the authorities to break up Diepkloof into three separate institutions on three noncontagious pieces of land under three separate principals. Approximately one-quarter of our seven hundred pupils would have gone to a half-open, half-security institution; in general, they would have been of age seventeen to twenty-one, and most of them would probably lead lives of conflict with the law. Approximately one-quarter of the pupils, those of the ages eleven to fifteen or sixteen, those most likely to lead a law-abiding life, would have gone to an institution which would be predominantly open; the middle fifty per cent would go to an institution very like Diepkloof Reformatory itself. The second part of my grievances was the failure of the authorities to provide the first working boys' hostel, where boys ready to return to ordinary life would live, working by day in the city and returning by night to the hostel.[204]

Paton wanted the Union Government to take care of the issues of African children in trouble with the law and broaden the range of social services available to urban Africans. However this idea remained stillborn because most African juvenile delinquents were not citizens of the country.[205] In other words, the Union government partly failed Paton and his vision to reform the African boys by not implementing what he regarded as important changes that would enable rehabilitation of the boys. With the new government in power and differing political views from his, Paton's vision was unlikely to be realised because the new apartheid government criminalised the presence of Africans in the urban areas and passed laws that further oppressed them.[206]

Conclusion

This article provides a background on the juvenile justice system and the evolution of reformatories in South Africa, leading to the establishment of the Diepkloof Reformatory School, the first and biggest reformatory for African boys in Africa in the first half of the twentieth century. This occurred in the mid-1930s, following the Union Government's transferance of reformatories from the Prisons to the Union Education Department, and the establishment of Diepkloof Reformatory in 1935.

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conditions at the reformatory under National Party governance and apartheid constitute a separate study.

204. Paton, *Towards the Mountain*, 302.

205. Chisholm, 'Reformatories and Industrial Schools', 351. It is important to note that some of the youths admitted to Diepkloof Reformatory were born in Johannesburg townships and surrounding areas. See E14/103/9 Diepkloof Reformatory, 'Pupils for Board: Home Conditions' for a list of children who were admitted to the reformatory and information on when and where they were born.

206. APCSA, PC1/1/7/33, Alan Paton, 'Things which should/might be somehow inserted', Handwritten notes dated 20 June 1949.

Alan Paton, the first principal of the reformatory from 1935-1948, worked tirelessly in his efforts to transform the reformatory into a school. He aimed to achieve this by instilling the idea that rehabilitation rather than punishment was a more effective strategy for dealing with juvenile delinquents and children in need of care. Despite the broader social and racial challenges of his time, Paton reimagined Diepkloof as a school where young offenders could build self-discipline, learn practical skills, and access opportunities previously denied to them. Through structural changes, the introduction of privileges (like the *vakasha* badge) and a strong emphasis on moral education, he sought to humanise the institution and instill trust and mutual respect among staff and pupils. It is true to say that Paton's time at the Diepkloof Reformatory marked a significant attempt to shift from punitive to rehabilitative approaches within South Africa's juvenile justice system, particularly for African youth. However, in as much as Paton believed in instilling the idea of rehabilitation, he used a Foucauldian type of discipline in an attempt to militarise the boys; the boys performed a drill every morning and they marched in so-called 'spans'.

Under Paton's principalship, Diepkloof Reformatory underwent many changes, but the reformatory's role in instilling sound work habits and preparing the boys for manual labour hardly changed. All these moves tended to replace the external, enforced discipline of fences, guards and brutality with internal discipline, the self-discipline of trust and mutual respect, encouraged by a firm but enlightened principal. These changes introduced by Paton offered a model of social change that could be applied nationally today in the twenty-first century. Increasingly, Paton was keen on making that application himself but he was not afforded a chance because every proposal suggesting a change in the reformatory had to be approved by the Union Education Department. Here his efforts were often constrained by colonial-era policies and an unsupportive Union Education Department, limiting the reach of his vision. Ultimately, Diepkloof remained the only reformatory for African boys in the Union, underscoring the persistent inequities within the juvenile justice system This article is insightful in that it addresses how Diepkloof functioned within a segregated society, showing the racial implications of juvenile justice policies and the limitations placed on African juveniles compared to white youths.

Paton envisioned expanding the Diepkloof Reformatory to rehabilitate more African juvenile delinquents. In 1948, the government built a hostel for twenty boys in Orlando. On 18 June 1958, Ellen Hellmann wrote a report for the South African Institute of Race Relations on Diepkloof. This was ten years after Paton's leadership. In the thirteen years Paton was principal at Diepkloof, the numbers multiplied because Diepkloof was still the only reformatory for African boys in the Union. However, the two placements built in Orlando and Jabavu in the early 1950s made for an average of 845 pupils at Diepkloof and this average was maintained without overcrowding. There is limited information available on whether the boys who left Diepkloof were truly reformed or continued with their criminal ways years after their

release.[207] Based on the relationship Paton had with the pupils, many respected him. The youth learned skills of carpentry, tailoring and shoemaking and could use these skills after their release. After 1948, Paton said little of his time at Diepkloof except in his 1986 book, *Diepkloof: Reflections of Diepkloof Reformatory* which is a collection of reflections, short stories and poetry drawn from his thirteen years as principal.

Paton's work at Diepkloof holds broad significance in South African historiography. It sheds light on the relationship between race and juvenile justice in colonial societies. It shows how reformatory institutions reflect segregationist beliefs while also serving as spaces for reform. Paton's philosophy provides insight into the reformist principles applied in a divided, apartheid society and this narrative highlights the possibilities and limitations of promoting change in early 20th-century South Africa's welfare system.

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207. My goal was to explore conditions in the reformatory during Paton's leadership. Developments after 1948 await examination in a separate article.

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