

**‘Primarily, I want to be an instrument of change’: Nana Mahomo’s
Contribution to the Anti-Apartheid Struggle**

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Abstract

As democratic South Africa continues to reflect on its apartheid past, the number of political biographies about individuals who shaped this historical period is growing, especially about those who fought against apartheid. Much of this work is focused on men and women whose contributions can be linked to a particular resistance movement and whose legacies are free from significant controversy. Yet, there are many anti-apartheid activists whose narratives fit awkwardly into democratic South Africa’s new-nationalist history or the official histories of specific liberation movements. One individual who falls into the latter category is Nana Mahomo. Up to now, Mahomo’s contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle in the historiography has been tangential and fragmented. This article constructs a comprehensive overview of Mahomo’s anti-apartheid work and explores how exile shaped the development of his political activism. His story illustrates how access to support networks defined the political trajectories of individuals in exile and how such trajectories interacted with peoples’ own political convictions. This was especially true for activists like Mahomo, much of whose anti-apartheid work was not tied to a South African liberation movement. Finally, the controversial nature of some of Mahomo’s anti-apartheid work strengthens our historiographical understanding of the struggle against apartheid by moving beyond a two-dimensional narrative of heroes versus sellouts.

Keywords: Nana Mahomo; political biography; biography; liberation history; anti-apartheid; Pan Africanist Congress; American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations.

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Opsomming

Met demokratiese Suid-Afrika wat steeds sy apartheidsverlede in oënskou neem, het die aantal biografieë oor figure wat hierdie tydperk help vorm het ook toegeneem, veral dié wat handel oor individue wat 'n stryd teen apartheid gevoer het. Baie van hierdie werke fokus op mans en vroue wie se bydraes aan 'n bepaalde bevrydingsbeweging gekoppel kan word, en wie se nalatenskap nie enige beduidende omstredenheid bevat nie. Tog is daar vele anti-apartheidsaktiviste wie se verhale moeilik inpas by 'n demokratiese Suid-Afrika se nuwe nasionalistiese geskiedenis, óf by die bepaalde bevrydingsbewegings se amptelike geskiedenis. Een so 'n individu is Nana Mahomo. Tot dusver is die historiografie oor Mahomo se bydrae tot die anti-apartheidstryd oppervlakkig en gefragmenteer. Hierdie artikel bied 'n volledige oorsig van Mahomo se anti-apartheidswerk en verken die wyse waarop ballingskap sy politieke aktivisme gevorm het. Sy verhaal wys hoe toegang tot ondersteuningsnetwerke die politieke loopbane van individue in ballingskap gevorm het, en hoe die bane waarin hulle hul bevind het tot hul eie politieke oortuigings gespreek het. Dit was veral waar wat betref aktiviste soos Mahomo, wie se anti-apartheidswerk nie altyd aan 'n bepaalde bevrydingsbeweging gekoppel kon word nie. Laastens versterk die omstredenheid van sekere komponente van Mahomo se anti-apartheidswerk ons historiografiese begrip van die stryd teen apartheid deur verder te kyk as bloot 'n twee-dimensionele narratief van helde teenoor verraaiers.

Sleutelwoorde: Nana Mahomo; politieke biografie; biografie; bevrydingsgeskiedenis; anti-apartheid; Pan Africanist Congress; American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations.

Introduction

In January 1976, the American film magazine *Cinéaste* interviewed the exiled South African anti-apartheid activist Nana Mahomo about his award-winning documentary film, *Last Grave at Dimbaza*. Mahomo's film exposed the daily struggles of black life in apartheid South Africa. When answering the question 'How do you see your role in the context of the liberation struggle in South Africa', Mahomo explained:

Primarily I want to be an instrument for change. I would like to see myself contributing in as many fields as possible for one man to contribute. I want to feel that I have acquired or I am acquiring skills which will be used for the betterment of people in Africa, or, in South Africa in particular. I sometimes feel a kind of frustration that one is not doing enough and time is passing. The lost years can never be recalled. I suppose one has to have patience. I do hope that I will play a role.¹

1. N. Mahomo and D.H. Anthony III, 'Clandestine Filming in South Africa: An Interview with Nana Mahomo', *Cinéaste*, 7, 3 (Fall 1976), 19.

Even though it is difficult to assess the impact of individual actions on South Africa’s liberation struggle, Mahomo’s anti-apartheid work was undeniably longstanding and diverse. From organising the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) March 1960 anti-pass campaign in Cape Town and representing the South African United Front (SAUF) in London, to producing the 1974 documentary film *Last Grave at Dimbaza* and working for the African American Labor Centre (AALC), Nana Mahomo committed much of his life to fighting apartheid. This article provides a detailed overview of Mahomo’s anti-apartheid work and explains the trajectory of his contributions to South Africa’s liberation struggle.

This political biography is not a chronological account of heroic exploits. Its narrative, instead, illustrates how young South Africans like Mahomo were thrust into exile and had to navigate the complexities of an unfamiliar and ever-changing world. The story of Mahomo’s political activities exemplifies how the precarious nature of life in exile shaped the political trajectories of political activists. While individuals’ ideological convictions were influential, access to existing support structures greatly shaped the nature of their political activism. Mahomo’s contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle also raises pertinent questions about whom to remember when writing histories about anti-apartheid resistance and how to engage with legacies that do not fit neatly or conveniently into democratic South Africa’s new-nationalist history or the official histories of liberation movements like the PAC. Much of Mahomo’s political activities were not directly tied to formal liberation movements and were tainted by accusations of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) connections. It explores whether such an awkward political biography invalidates his contribution to fighting against the apartheid system or if it aids attempts to move beyond a two-dimensional narrative of heroes versus sellouts.

Biographies of South Africa’s Liberation Struggles

South Africa has a notable history of political biography writing, including those on members of the liberation struggle. Since South Africa’s democratic transition in 1994, academics and non-academics alike have made considerable efforts to document the individual contributions of men and (to a lesser extent) women who fought against colonialism and apartheid.² Such biographical research has come in

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2. For a good historiographical overview and discussion of contemporary political biographical writing in South Africa see C. Rassool, ‘Rethinking Documentary History and South African Political Biography’, *South African Review of Sociology*, 41, 1 (2010), 28-55; J. Hyslop, ‘On Biography: A Response to Ciraj Rassool’, *South African Review of Sociology*, 41, 2 (2010), 104-115; C. Rassool, ‘The Challenges of Rethinking South African Political Biography: A Reply to Jonathan Hyslop’, *South African Review of Sociology*, 41, 2 (2010), 116-120; T. Lodge, ‘Secrets and Lives: South African Political Biography’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41, 3 (2015), 687-697; N. Jacobs and

many shapes and forms, ranging from short vignettes and published oral history interviews to book-length autobiographies and biographies.³ Part of this effort to document South Africa’s struggle history is intertwined with developing a new nationalist history of South Africa, intimately aligned with the evolution of the African National Congress (ANC) from a liberation movement to a ruling party. The contributions of those not directly aligned to the ANC or Congress Alliance movement, or whose stories do not fit the new nationalist history narrative have consequently received less public and academic attention. This does not mean that such individual contributions have not been documented or discussed. The work of Thami ka Plaatjie and Ali Hlongwane on the life history of PAC leaders,⁴ Xolela Mangcu and Zikhona Valela on members of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM),⁵ or Ciraj Rassool’s research on the Non-European Unity Movement’s I.B. Tabata are important biographical contributions that provide a better and more nuanced understanding of the struggle to liberate South Africa of racial oppression.⁶

It must be noted that most of these political biographies commonly use the lens of an individual’s life story to better understand the history of established

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- A. Bank, ‘Biography in Post-apartheid South Africa: A Call for Awkwardness’, *African Studies*, 78, 2 (2019), 165-182; L. Koorts, ‘Human Symbols: The Biographical Pursuit and the Language of Symbolism in Contemporary South Africa’, in K. van Walraven (ed.), *The Individual in African History: The Importance of Biography in African Historical Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 53-69.
3. G. Gerhart, T. Barnes, A. Bugg-Levine, et. al., *From Protest to Challenge Volume 4: Political Profiles, 1882-1989* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2017); SADET, *The Road to Democracy: South Africans Telling their Stories* (Houghton: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust, 2018). G.F. Houston, S. Mati, H. Magidimisha, et. al., *The Other Side of Freedom: Stories of Hope and Loss in the South African Liberation Struggle, 1950-1994* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2017); S. Kemp, *My Life: The Making of an Afrikaner Revolutionary in the South African Liberation Struggle* (Cape Town: South African History Online, 2018); S. Msimang, *The Resurrection of Winnie Mandela: A Biography of Survival* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2018).
 4. T. ka Plaatje, *Sobukwe: The Making of a Pan Africanist Leader, Volume 1* (Sandton: KMM Review Publishing, 2019); A. Hlongwane, *The Lion of Azania: a Biography* (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishing, 2021); A. Hlongwane, *We Must Return Home Armed or Unarmed: The Biography of John Nyati Pokela (1921-1985) With Selected Speeches and Writing* (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishing, 2021).
 5. X. Mangcu, *Biko: A Biography* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2017); Z. Valela, *Now You Know How Mapetla Died: The Story of a Black Consciousness Martyr* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2022).
 6. C. Rassool, ‘From Collective Leadership to Presidentialism: I.B. Tabata, Authorship and the Biographic Threshold’, *Afrika Zamani: revue annuelle d’histoire africaine = Annual Journal of African History*, 13-14 (2005-2006), 23-67; C. Rassool, ‘Writing, Authorship and I.B. Tabata’s Biography: From Collective Leadership to Presidentialism’, *Kronos*, 34 (2008), 181-214.

organisations like the ANC, PAC, or BCM. While the story of Mahomo is partly the story of the PAC, much of his contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle took place outside of the PAC. As such, Mahomo’s story should instead be positioned in wider historiography about personal work and political activism that is de-linked from the history of a particular movement like the PAC.

To date, no extensively published political biography of Mahomo exists, but notable efforts have been made to document parts of his life. Gail Gerhart and her colleagues provide a short biographical overview of Mahomo’s anti-apartheid work in their impressive tome on individual contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle.⁷ While presenting a chronological overview of the most important moments in his career, it lacks a historical narrative. It does not go into greater detail or add nuance or analysis to understand the reasons for the twists and turns that defined Mahomo’s contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle. As a member of the African National Congress Youth League’s (ANCYL) Africanist faction in the 1950s and later the PAC’s first National Executive Committee, Mahomo’s contributions also feature in research on the history of the PAC. However, in these accounts, his role is overshadowed by leaders like Robert Sobukwe and Potlako Leballo, who generally take centre stage in shaping the PAC’s history.⁸ Mentions of Mahomo’s time in the PAC are cursory, usually confined to Mahomo and Peter Molotsi moving into exile just before the anti-pass campaign in March 1960 or Mahomo’s fallout with Leballo during the first half of the 1960s. Mahomo’s work after his break from the PAC is likewise reduced to brief remarks in publications on film history about his production of *Phela Ndaba* and *Last Grave at Dimbaza*,⁹ or labour history concerning Mahomo’s work for the AALC.¹⁰ In the case of Mahomo’s time at the AALC, such academic attention usually intertwines with the history of controversial American labour union

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7. Gerhart, Barnes, Bugg-Levine, et. al., *From Protest to Challenge Volume 4*, 226.
 8. See for instance T. Lodge, ‘The Cape Town Troubles, March-April 1960’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 4, 2 (1978), 216-239; M. Mgxashe, *Are You With Us?: The Story of a PAC Activist* (Mafube; Tafelberg, Houghton, Cape Town, 2006); K. Kondlo, *In the Twilight of the Revolution: the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (South Africa), 1959-1994* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2010); M. Graham, ‘Campaigning Against Apartheid: The Rise, Fall and Legacies of the South Africa United Front 1960–1962’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 46, 6 (2018), 1148–1170.
 9. G. Minkley and H. Pohlandt-McCormick, ‘The Graves of Dimbaza: Temporal Remains’, in *Remains of the Social: Desiring the Post-Apartheid*, eds M. van Bever Donker, R. Truscott, G. Minkley, P. Lalu (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2017), 195-224.
 10. N. Godfried, ‘Spreading American Corporatism: Trade Union Education for Third World Labour’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 39, Workers, Unions and Popular Protest (September 1987), 51-63; E. Steinhart, ‘South African Labor and International Support’, *African Studies Review*, 31, 2 (1988), 17-33; P. Trewhel, ‘The AFL-CIO and the Trade Unions in South Africa’, *Searchlight South Africa*, 2, 2 (1991), 69-90.

leader Irvin Brown, whose links to the CIA left a lasting stain on Mahomo’s reputation. This article uses these fragmented and cursory accounts of Mahomo’s life and combines them with various primary sources to provide a detailed narrative account of Mahomo’s contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle.

Archival Slivers of Mahomo’s Life

Writing a political biography of those whose lives in exile were precarious and transient is difficult. The challenges about reconstructing the trajectories of individuals in exile are well exemplified and discussed by Benjamin Lawrance and Vusumuzi Kumalo in their work on Dugmore Boetie.¹¹ In the case of Mahomo, traces of his life and activities are scattered across at least three continents. I could not interview Mahomo, who passed away on 1 June 2014, and my subsequent efforts to interview family members were unsuccessful. While I contacted one of his children, our correspondence stopped after I explained the focus of my research. My interviews with PAC contemporaries of Mahomo also resulted in a limited amount of insight, as most seemed to have distanced themselves from Mahomo and were reserved when talking about his time in the PAC. Such apprehensions about discussing Mahomo’s contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle are likely influenced by the chequered nature of Mahomo’s anti-apartheid work.

Consequently, I had to rely on other sources to construct a narrative about Mahomo’s life and develop an understanding of his thinking, beliefs, and motives. An important source in this regard was existing oral history interviews with Mahomo. Academics like Gail Gerhart (in 1967), Robert Edgar (in 1982) and Tshepo Moloi (in 2008) interviewed Mahomo about his life and anti-apartheid activities.¹² Various journalists have also interviewed Mahomo about his work for the PAC and AALC and his production of *Phela Ndaba* and *Last Grave at Dimbaza*.¹³ A remarkable example of such an early media interview is the 1961 Canadian Broadcasting Company

11. B. Lawrance and V. Kumalo, “A Genius without Direction”: The Abortive Exile of Dugmore Boetie and the Fate of Southern African Refugees in a Decolonizing Africa’, *The American Historical Review*, 126, 2 (2021), 585–622.

12. Wits Historical Papers and Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (hereafter WHPR), Gail Gerhart Interviews and Documents 1945–1972 (hereafter A2422), Folder 92422/6/1, ‘Nana Mahomo’, Gail Gerhart Interview with Nana Mahomo, New York, 2 July 1976; Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo, 1982; Author’s Private Collection, Tshepo Moloi Interview with Nana Mahomo, Kempton Park, 10 April 2008.

13. See for instance: Canadian Broadcasting Company, ‘Preview of 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference’, Accessed 15 April 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1720717794>; T. Gabriel, “Let Their Eyes Testify”: An Interview with Nana Mahomo’, *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 7, 1 (1976): 97-113; Mahomo and Anthony III, ‘Clandestine Filming in South Africa’, 18-19, 50.

interview with Mahomo about the SAUF.¹⁴ I also used a rich trove of private correspondence between Mahomo and American Africanist and activist scholar John Marcum, preserved as part of the Marcum papers at Stanford University.¹⁵ In combination, these sources contain Mahomo’s voice from different stages of his life and not only provide information about the types of anti-apartheid work Mahomo was involved in but also include clues about his political convictions.

Several interviews with and memoirs by Mahomo’s contemporaries in the liberation struggle were also helpful. Gail Gerhart’s interviews with Molotsi, Sobukwe, and Joe Molefi (stored at the Historical Papers Research Archive of the University of the Witwatersrand) provide glimpses into Mahomo’s early life and activities.¹⁶ I also found clues in archival material from South African, Zambian, and American archives that contain fragments of Mahomo’s movements and activities in exile. These include information collected by the South African Defence Force’s military intelligence, documents by the Zambian foreign affairs department, and information on the AALC in the David Brombart papers at Hoover Institution Library and Archive at Stanford University.¹⁷

While the primary material is diverse and covers a broad period, gaps remain in my biographical account of Mahomo’s anti-apartheid activities regarding his movements and the thoughts and motives that shaped his actions. Such silences form part of any biographical research, but they do not detract from the narrative I construct around the trajectory and struggles of Mahomo’s life in exile.

Mahomo’s Political Awakening

Nana Mahomo was born in 1930 in Vereeniging, South of Johannesburg. His parents studied at Stofberg Theological School near Heilborn, and his father became a Dutch Reformed Church of Africa leader in Edenville and organised farm schooling in the surrounding rural areas.¹⁸ Mahomo’s youth was spent in the northern Free State, between the small rural community of Edenville and the nearby larger town of Kroonstad.¹⁹ In 1942, Mahomo’s parents sent him to Bantu High in Kroonstad to start

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14. Canadian Broadcasting Company, ‘Preview of 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference’.
 15. Stanford University (hereafter SU) Special Collections and Archives, John Marcum Papers (hereafter M1726).
 16. WHPRA, A2422, Boxes 1-2.
 17. SU, Stanford, David Brombart Papers (hereafter 2009C36).
 18. WHPRA, A2422, Folder 92422/6/1, Gail Gerhart Interview with Nana Mahomo; Author’s Private Collection: Tshepo Moloi Interview with Nana Mahomo; J. Shevis, ‘Black S. African, in US Exile, Works to Help Unions Back Home’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, at <https://www.csmonitor.com/1986/1010/ablack.html>.
 19. Author’s Private Collection, Tshepo Moloi Interview with Nana Mahomo.

his Form 1.²⁰ Bantu High — like St Peter’s in Rosettenville and a handful of other elite black schools dotted across South Africa — quickly developed into a place where future liberation movement leaders like Mahomo and Molotsi experienced their political awakening.²¹ Here, Mahomo was taught by the political activist couple Phyllis Ntantala-Jordan and Archibald Campbell Jordan.²² Mahomo recalls how, during his schooling in Kroonstad, the Orange Free State African Students Association (OFSASA) was active, and it was only a short time before a young Mahomo became involved in this student organisation. He managed the local library for OFSASA, chaired meetings, and became one of its office bearers.²³ Molotsi, who served as OFSASA chairman in 1948, recalled that while ‘not directly political’, the organisation had some ties with the ANCYL and engaged with the ideas of ANCYL founder Anton Lembede.²⁴

Due to financial constraints resulting from his father’s ailing health, Mahomo could not complete his matric and left Bantu High with a junior certificate in hand sometime in the late 1940s.²⁵ He subsequently worked in a factory and eventually as a junior clerk at the Ezenzeli School for the Blind in Roodepoort. While at Ezenzeli, Mahomo started private studies to obtain his matric.²⁶ His commitment to furthering his education was likely influenced by his parents being teachers and became a constant throughout his life.

Mahomo’s interest in politics grew while living and working in Johannesburg. According to fellow PAC member Charles Lakaje, Mahomo had moved to Johannesburg’s Alexandra Township by the early 1950s. At the time, Alexandra served as a central hub of black political activity, and Mahomo lost no time becoming a member of the ANCYL’s Transvaal Executive Council.²⁷ Mahomo developed relations with like-minded young Africans like Molefi, Molotsi, and Leballo, who had joined the ANCYL, and it was not long before an intricate network of social and

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20. Author’s Private Collection, Tshepo Moloï Interview with Nana Mahomo.
 21. For a good overview of the importance of Bantu High, see: SADET, ‘Peter Hlaole Molotsi’, in *The Road to Democracy: South Africans Telling Their Stories, Volume 1*, (Houghton: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust, 2008); T. Moloï, *Place of Thorns: Black Political Protest in Kroonstad since 1976* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2015).
 22. Author’s Private Collection, Tshepo Moloï Interview with Nana Mahomo.
 23. Author’s Private Collection, Tshepo Moloï Interview with Nana Mahomo.
 24. WHPRA, A2422, Folder a2422/15, ‘Peter Molotsi’, Gail Gerhart Interview with Peter Molotsi, Nairobi, May 23, 1972.
 25. Moloï, *Place of Thorns*, 63; Author’s Private Collection, Tshepo Moloï Interview with Nana Mahomo.
 26. WHPRA, A2422, a2422/15, Gail Gerhart Interview with Peter Molotsi; Author’s Private Collection, Tshepo Moloï Interview with Nana Mahomo.
 27. N. Mahomo, ‘The Rise of the Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa’ (MA dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1968), 5.

professional relations emerged between these young men.²⁸ Molotsi recalled how he, Mahomo, Molefi, and Leballo worked for the African businessman Paul Mosaka. As part of Mosaka’s business empire, Mahomo and Molefi ran Mafri Enterprises from Mylur House, which briefly produced pamphlets and a newspaper focused on African culture and politics.²⁹ This type of work – centred around showcasing African lives, interests, and thoughts – defined much of Mahomo’s future contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle.

While living in Johannesburg, Mahomo became increasingly involved in ANC politics, which at the time was shaped by growing ideological divisions about the identity and direction of the movement. In 1953, he and other members resigned from the ANCYL’s Transvaal Executive Committee in protest against Leballo’s expulsion. The group soon became known as the Africanist faction within the ANC. The Africanists had initially organised themselves into a central committee, which was chaired by Leballo and was meant to gain influence among ANCYL members and steer the ANC along an Africanist path.³⁰ Mahomo stated that he was part of the committee, and Lekaje recalls that Mahomo became its secretary.³¹ According to Molotsi, Mahomo also briefly served as editor of the journal *The Africanist* – a mouthpiece of the Africanist faction.³² While a member of the Africanist faction, Mahomo remained committed to the ANC’s anti-apartheid campaigns, and he was one of the leaders who organised the January 1957 bus boycott in the Western Native Township.³³ Unfortunately, I did not come across any other record of Mahomo’s early role in the ANC.

After participating in the Western Native Township bus boycott, Mahomo moved to Cape Town to commence a law degree at the University of Cape Town (UCT), which he could not complete because of his increased anti-apartheid activities.³⁴ Mahomo later argued that he registered at UCT so that he could legally move to Cape Town and clandestinely ‘initiate political organisation in the Western

28. WHPRA, A2422, Folder a2422/2, ‘Charles Lakaje’, Unpublished autobiographical notes by Charles Lakaje (A member of the ANC Youth League, the Africanist Movement, and the PAC), Nairobi, February 1970, 106.

29. WHPRA, A2422, Folder a2422/13, ‘Joe Molefi’, Gail Gerhart Interview with Joe Molefi, Maseru, December 1969; WHPRA, A2422, a2422/15, Gail Gerhart Interview with Peter Molotsi. I was unable to locate any material produced by Mafri Enterprises.

30. G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 140-141.

31. Mahomo, ‘The Rise of the Pan Africanist Congress’, 5; WHPRA, A2422, Folder a2422/2, Unpublished Autobiographical notes by Charles Lakaje.

32. WHPRA, A2422, a2422/15, Gail Gerhart Interview with Peter Molotsi.

33. T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London: Longman, 1983), 214.

34. WHPRA, A2422, Folder 92422/6/1, Gail Gerhart Interview with Nana Mahomo.

Cape’ of the Africanists.³⁵ While it is unclear how successful Mahomo was in this preparatory task, it was in South Africa’s mother city that Mahomo’s anti-apartheid work as a member of the newly formed PAC moved him to the forefront of the anti-apartheid struggle.

Mahomo’s Work for the PAC

On 6 April 1959, disgruntled members of the Africanist faction in the ANC who had broken away from the mother body at a Conference in Orlando, Soweto, formed the PAC. Mahomo was one of the founding members, and at the PAC’s opening congress, he was elected to the National Executive Council as secretary for culture.³⁶ While there is no official description of what this position entailed, much of Mahomo’s endeavours for the PAC fell under the broad category of propaganda, which was a responsibility that aligned with some of the activities that Mahomo had already conducted as part of *Mafri News Services* and his brief stint as editor of *The Africanist*.

While not particularly aligned with the position of secretary for culture, Mahomo’s earliest work for the PAC was to organise the movement’s machinery in Cape Town in preparation for the PAC’s March 1960 positive action campaign. Mahomo was aided in this task by Philip Kgosana and Manelisi Ndibongo, two young men who had joined the PAC in Cape Town. Together with the southern parts of the Transvaal, the western Cape quickly became a strong support centre for the PAC, especially among the Xhosa migrant labourers who resided in Langa and Nyanga,³⁷ and Mahomo was responsible for utilising support in a successful and well-publicised campaign.

Mahomo’s preparations for the PAC’s positive action campaign in the Cape partially intertwined with the local branch of the Liberal Party of South Africa (LPSA). Albeit for different reasons, both the PAC and LPSA were critical of the growing influence of communism on the anti-apartheid struggle. Among a small group of white liberals in the Cape, this shared distrust developed into a brief working relationship between these two organisations.³⁸ LPSA leaders Randolph Vigne and Neville Rubin recalled frequent contact between the PAC and the LPSA leaders in preparation for the March 1960 campaign in the Cape. They noted that the LPSA

35. Mahomo, ‘The Rise of the Pan-Africanist Congress of South Africa’, 46.

36. Kondlo, *In the Twilight of the Revolution*, 59-60.

37. For an overview of the PAC’s operations in the Cape, see: Lodge, ‘The Cape Town Troubles’; Mgxashe, *Are you with us?*; B. Maaba, ‘The PAC’s War against the State, 1960-1963’, in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1 (1960-1970)*, (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004).

38. For an overview of these relations, see Chapter Four of T. Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

leader, Patrick Duncan, had supported Mahomo and Kgosana in the days preceding the march.³⁹ Molefi recalled how the LPSA provided money and assistance to the PAC for advertising and campaigning their activities and took care of those PAC members who were arrested in the wake of the protests.⁴⁰ Mahomo, Kgosana, and Ndibongo also maintained relations with LPSA members. Mahomo boarded with Joe Nkatlo, Kgosana had received a scholarship from the Institute of Race Relations and was making money by selling issues of Patrick Duncan’s *Contact* magazine, and Vigne claims that Ndibongo had been a member of the LPSA for a short period.⁴¹ Despite these relations, Mahomo later distanced himself from Duncan by noting that he ‘never got on well with Patrick Duncan’, revealing that ‘before I left South Africa, I had differences with Patrick Duncan’.⁴² At the time of the PAC’s Sharpeville and Langa protests, the link between the PAC’s machinery in the Cape and Duncan’s group of LPSA members cannot be ignored.⁴³ Apart from the LPSA, Mahomo also contacted the white liberal women’s organisation, the Black Sash, in preparation for the anti-pass campaign.⁴⁴ Mahomo’s initial openness to work with white liberal activists indicates the future development of his anti-apartheid work. It also illustrates an early, more liberal-minded group within the PAC that deserves further investigation.

Representing the PAC in Exile

It was not long before Mahomo’s role in the PAC accelerated. On the eve of the March 1960 anti-pass campaign, Mahomo and Molotsi left South Africa and went into exile. Molotsi recalls how he and Mahomo worked well together and how Sobukwe instructed them to go and represent the PAC abroad and establish an external network that could raise funds and garner support for the newly formed organisation.⁴⁵ Molotsi recalls that they used stolen documents from the Nyasaland Labour Bureau in Johannesburg to cross the border into Botswana and then travelled to Tanzania and eventually Ghana.⁴⁶ After a brief sojourn in Ghana, Mahomo

39. WHPRA, A2422, a2422/28, Gail Gerhart Interview with Randolph Vigne and Neville Ruban, London, 9 September 1969.

40. WHPRA, A2422, Folder a2422/13, ‘Joe Molefi’.

41. Lodge, ‘The Cape Town Troubles’, 218-220, 224; R. Vigne, *Liberals Against Apartheid: A History of the Liberal Party of South Africa, 1953-68* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 115-116; 125; WHPRA, A2422, a2422/28; Gail Gerhart Interview with Randolph Vigne and Neville Ruban, London, 9 September 1969.

42. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

43. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

⁴⁴ Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 131.

45. Kondlo, *In the Twilight of the Revolution*, 68, 100-101; WHPRA, A2422, a2422/15, Gail Gerhart Interview with Peter Molotsi.

46. T. ka Plaatzje, ‘The PAC in Exile’, in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2 (1970-1980)* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2006), 704; ‘Peter Hlaole Molotsi’, in

eventually became the PAC’s representative in London. At the time, Mahomo’s base in London was essential to the PAC, as British organisations, members of the public, and some politicians were leading voices in the growing international anti-apartheid struggle.⁴⁷

As the PAC’s spokesperson in London, Mahomo became an integral part of the short-lived SAUF. The SAUF was formed around June 1960 and had a brief presence in Accra, Cairo, Dar es Salaam, New York, and London. It was an early attempt by South African and Namibian liberation movements to join forces, expose to the world the apartheid regime’s oppression, and gain international support in their fight for democratic change.⁴⁸ As a SAUF representative, Mahomo travelled across Europe, where he lobbied for aid, conducted interviews about the conditions in South Africa, and participated in the 1961 commemoration in London of the Sharpeville and Langa massacre.⁴⁹ After the SAUF was disbanded in March 1962 because of the failure to maintain unity between the different liberation movements, Mahomo remained in London, operating from his office at the Grand Building in Trafalgar Square to represent the interests of the PAC.⁵⁰

While based in London, Mahomo did not sit still. Together with Molotsi, he started publishing the periodical *Black Star*, the first issue of which appeared in May 1963.⁵¹ *Black Star* was not an official party organ, even though it often spotlighted Sobukwe and the PAC.⁵² It was similar in this regard to the LPSA-aligned periodical *Contact*. The focus of *Black Star* was on pan-African politics. According to Molotsi, it was distributed across the African continent, including Lesotho and Tanzania,⁵³ but it is unclear how widely circulated or read the magazine was. Mahomo’s work for *Black Star* built on his earlier efforts to expose the evils of apartheid and colonialism to the world and promote the efforts of African nationalists who were fighting for their freedom. It also showed Mahomo’s penchant for using media to garner support against apartheid and making use of broader pan-Africanist iconography and language in doing so.

SADET, *The Road to Democracy: South Africans Telling Their Stories, Volume 1*, (Houghton: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust, 2008).

47. For an overview of the history of the British anti-apartheid movement, see R. Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain* (London: Merlin, 2005).

48. For a detailed discussion, see: Graham, ‘Campaigning Against Apartheid’.

49. See, for instance, Canadian Broadcasting Company, ‘Preview of 1961 Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference’; ‘Trafalgar Square Arrests’, *Times*, 20 March 1961, 12.

50. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

51. WHPRA, A2422, a2422/15, Gail Gerhart Interview with Peter Molotsi.

52. See, for instance, *Black Star*, 1, vol. 1, May 1963.

53. WHPRA, A2422, a2422/15, Gail Gerhart Interview with Peter Molotsi.

During these first years in exile, Mahomo slowly established relations with British organisations like the Anti-Apartheid Movement and War on Want,⁵⁴ and exiled white South African radical liberals like John Lang and Neville Rubin of the National Committee of Liberation, who had been engaged in sabotage in South Africa and were now based in London.⁵⁵

Mahomo’s network also began to expand across the Atlantic. In November 1962, Mahomo and Leballo travelled to the United States of America (USA) to represent the PAC at the United Nations. During their trip, Mahomo and Leballo contacted George Houser’s American Committee on Africa (ACOA), an American organisation that supported Africa’s anti-colonial struggles.⁵⁶ Around this time, Mahomo also briefly worked with Duncan, despite Mahomo’s seeming dislike of the white Cape liberal. Duncan had joined the PAC in 1963. His stint as a PAC member resulted in him working together with Mahomo in London, a decision that, according to Mahomo, was made without Mahomo’s knowledge.⁵⁷ In June 1963, Mahomo and Duncan toured across the US, visiting, amongst others, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and attorney-general Robert Kennedy.⁵⁸ While it is unclear how the two got along during their journey across the USA, the tour was successful in further developing the first foundations of a PAC support network in the USA at a time when the PAC was searching for international support in an increasingly competitive exile environment. At the centre of this new network stood Mahomo.

Mahomo commenced a second, more extensive tour to the USA and Canada in February 1964, this time alone. Much of this visit was organised by Marcum – whom Mahomo became increasingly close to after Mahomo’s first visit to the USA –

54. ‘Trafalgar Square Arrests’, *Times*, 20 March 1961; South African Department of Defence, Pretoria (hereafter SADO), Department of Military Intelligence (hereafter AMI), Group 3, Box 261, 148/5/1/1, File ‘National Liberation Committee’, Secret; TNA, CO 1048/574, Inward Saving Telegram from: Leopoldville, to: Foreign Office, telegram No. 4 saving of 17 January, 20 January 1964.

55. For Mahomo’s relations with Lang and Rubin, see: SADO, AMI, Group 3, Box 261, 148/5/1/1, File ‘National Liberation Committee’, Secret; SADO, AMI, Group 3, Box 360, Folder 148/5/1/1 Vol. 70 G VI, ‘PAC Activities’, Secret.

56. ‘American Committee on Africa, A Report on Activities of the ACOA, September – November 1962’, Accessed 12 March 2023, <https://africanactivist.msu.edu/recordFiles/210-849-24624/PWACOA9-11-62opt.pdf>.

57. WHPRA, A2422, Folder 92422/6/1, Gail Gerhart Interview with Nana Mahomo.

58. L. Passemier, *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics: South Africa and the ‘Congo Crisis, 1960-1965’* (Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 158; C.J. Driver, *Patrick Duncan: South African and Pan-African* (London: Heinemann, 1980), 228-229.

and PAC member Morley Nkosi, who was studying in the USA at the time.⁵⁹ Marcum wrote to Mahomo, excitingly announcing that ‘we can make a real dent in the American collective mind. You must be prepared to let us publicize you, eulogize you [...] we are going to make you a respectable, academic rebel’.⁶⁰ In the months before Mahomo’s tour, Marcum had already promoted Mahomo to USA state officials such as under-secretary of state for political affairs William Harriman, Wayne Fredericks of the State Department’s Bureau of African Affairs, Robert Stephens of the State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and National Security Council staff member William Brubeck. Marcum also liaised with organisations such as the AFL-CIO, ACOA, the Negro Leadership Conference, and the American Society of African Culture about hosting and supporting Mahomo.⁶¹ Marcum and Mahomo were very active in promoting the PAC to a broad North American audience, signalling the start of a longstanding working relationship and friendship.

Mahomo’s tour of North America was relatively successful. During his visit to the USA, he spoke to various universities and different organisations, including the Council on Foreign Relations, the World Affairs Council, and the AFL-CIO, and once again met with Robert Kennedy, who guaranteed to assist Mahomo with securing financial support for the PAC. People like the AFL-CIO’s Maida Springer and Brown, Houser of the ACOA and the State Department’s Fredericks and Harriman were particularly positive about Mahomo.⁶² After completing the American leg of his tour, Mahomo went on a two-day visit to Canada to present his case to government representatives, the African Student’s Foundation, and the media.⁶³ In Canada, Mahomo expressed his desire to see South Africa transform into a non-racial state where universal franchise was implemented. He also explained that the PAC was an African-orientated party open to all races and highlighted the plight of South African political refugees stuck in the High Commission territories, pleading for assistance.⁶⁴ Despite the PAC’s radical Africanist position, Mahomo seems to have been quite effective in eulogising the PAC’s efforts to rid South Africa of apartheid to a liberal and conservative American audience.

59. Stanford University (hereafter SU), M1726, Box 43, Folder 3 ‘Morley Zebulon Nkosi corr 1963–5, 1968’; SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 4, ‘Nana Mahomo 1963–4’; SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 5, ‘Nana Nelson Mahomo/PAC U.S. Tour 1964’; SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 6, ‘Nana Mahomo 1965-1989’.

60. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 4, Letter from John Marcum to: Nana Mahomo, 18 January 1964.

61. For an overview of Mahomo’s contacts and tour in the US, see: SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 5, ‘Nana Mahomo - U.S. Tour 1964’.

62. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 5, ‘Nana Mahomo - U.S. Tour 1964’.

63. NASA, BAO, Box: 3552, File: 100/6/1675, ‘Paspoort/Passport, Nana Mahomo’.

64. NASA, BAO, Box: 3552, File: 100/6/1675, ‘Paspoort/Passport, Nana Mahomo’.

The support Mahomo tried to garner from his UK and US networks was intended to form and maintain various PAC initiatives in exile. These included establishing the Mochudi refugee (or community) centre in Botswana, which was meant to host political refugees;⁶⁵ organising flights to move PAC members who were stuck in exile in Botswana and Swaziland; maintaining PAC’s operations in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo; purchasing a boat that could be used to smuggle people and material to South Africa clandestinely; and setting up a radio project committed to the liberation of southern Africa.⁶⁶ Mahomo relied extensively on the assistance of Marcum, Ndibongo and (to a lesser extent) Nkosi to manage the implementation of these various projects.⁶⁷ He also seems to have received some assistance from Lang and Rubin, the two former LPSA members and National Committee of Liberation leaders who had gone into exile.⁶⁸ Much of these early support initiatives in exile by PAC leaders like Mahomo were partially independent decisions that the PAC’s presidential council in Maseru had not voted on.⁶⁹ While this does not mean that the PAC’s top leadership was unaware of these actions or automatically disagreed with them, it does indicate how, during these first years of exile, PAC representatives often relied on their own decisions to guide the party forward.

By 1964, much of Mahomo’s anti-apartheid work in exile thus consisted of liberal, centre-left, and (in some instances) anti-communist networks and individuals in the United Kingdom and the USA who were often suspicious of the ANC for its links with the South African Communist Party and showed an interest in supporting the PAC and pressuring the South African government to end apartheid. Many of these individuals and organisations were connected to each other.⁷⁰ The nature of this network pushed Mahomo’s anti-apartheid work away from more radical leftist politics and began shaping the trajectory of his anti-apartheid work in exile.

65. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 4, ‘Nana Mahomo 1963–4’, Letter from John Marcum to Nana Mahomo, 18 January 1964; SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 4, ‘Nana Mahomo 1963–4’, Letter from Nana Mahomo to George Houser, 9 January 1964.

66. L. Passemiers, ‘The Pan Africanist Congress and the Congo Alliance, 1963–1964’, *South African Historical Journal*, 70, 1 (2018), 82–107; Passemiers, *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics*, 90–91; M. Gunther, ‘The National Committee of Liberation (NCL)/African Resistance Movement (ARM)’, in SADET, *The Road to Democracy, Volume 1 (1960–1970)* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 220; Mgxashe, *Are You With Us?*, 147–150.

67. See, for instance, SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 3 ‘Morley Zebulon Nkosi corr 1963–5, 1968’; M1726, Box 43, Folder 6, ‘Nana Mahomo 1965–1989’.

68. Sadod, AMI, Group 3, Box 261, 148/5/1/1, File ‘National Liberation Committee’, Secret; Sadod, AMI, Group 3, Box 360, Folder 148/5/1/1 Vol. 70 G VI, ‘PAC Activities’, Secret. For a detailed overview of the NCL, see: Gunther, ‘The National Committee of Liberation (NCL)/African Resistance Movement (ARM)’.

69. Kondlo, *In the Twilight of the Revolution*, 105–106.

70. Passemiers, *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics*, 157–159.

Breaking With the PAC

While Mahomo was making headway in gaining support for the PAC, leadership struggles within the party had been brewing in the background — particularly concerning the PAC’s acting president, Leballo. Since their time in the ANCYL, Mahomo and Leballo’s relationship was strained, and Mahomo later described Leballo as a ‘demagogue, not a good org[anisation] man, and too erratic’.⁷¹ Apart from the personal misalignment between the two men, Mahomo (and several other PAC leaders at the time) disagreed with the direction Leballo was taking the PAC. To Mahomo, the PAC’s acting president lacked credibility as a leader, and he thought Leballo’s carelessness and ego were partly responsible for the continued incarceration of Sobukwe.⁷² In turn, Leballo and others close to him became increasingly opposed to Mahomo and began discrediting him. Leballo and Duncan (who had aligned himself with Leballo) urged people and organisations to send money only to the PAC’s central bank account in Dar-es-Salaam and not to Mahomo, interfering with Mahomo’s efforts to utilise his support networks for the various projects he was involved with.⁷³ This conflict eventually reached a fever pitch, and in August 1964 Mahomo and Molotsi were suspended from their duties for the PAC.⁷⁴ Mahomo was ‘charged with misappropriation of funds’ and the vaguer ‘attempts to create personal loyalties and sources of personal operation’.⁷⁵ Consequently, he was cut off from party structures and the formal PAC networks that had defined and sustained his time in exile. In a statement to his colleagues, Mahomo explained that ‘to avoid creating further divisions and frustrations in the ranks of the resistance movement in South Africa, I have also resigned my commission as the PAC Representative in the United Kingdom. I still acknowledge my loyalty to the PAC policy as originally formulated under the leadership of Mr R.M. Sobukwe’.⁷⁶ After working four years as one of the PAC’s primary external representatives, Mahomo reached a crossroads during his life in exile.

Mahomo’s suspension as PAC leader must have created significant uncertainty about his personal and professional life, especially considering the precarious nature of life in exile for political activists and refugees. Like many who went into exile, Mahomo had no tertiary degree, lacked proper travel documents, and had previously lived a life that was greatly entangled with that of a specific liberation movement. Such factors must have certainly shaped his sense of self and purpose.

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71. WHPRA, A2422, Folder 92422/6/1, Gail Gerhart Interview with Nana Mahomo.
 72. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.
 73. Passemiers, *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics*, 160. Driver, *Patrick Duncan*, 237, 243.
 74. Ka Plaatje, ‘The PAC in Exile’, 711.
 75. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 309.
 76. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 4, ‘Nana Mahomo 1963–4’, Statement by Nana Mahomo, 7 October 1964.

Initially, Mahomo seemed to have remained optimistic about his suspension from the party leadership. With some humour, he signed off his correspondence with the words ‘Your elder brother, (IN EXILE)’⁷⁷ and described himself as a ‘long time back-room boy of the Pan-Africanist Congress [...] recently centre of PAC leadership crisis which resulted in his resignation as representative, controversial [...] Still glaring even more suspiciously at the world behind protective dark-coloured glasses’.⁷⁸ But his initial optimism was fleeting. Mahomo became increasingly estranged from the party’s active leadership, who continued to critique him, accusing Mahomo of being an American stooge and multi-racialist.⁷⁹ According to Nkosi, Mahomo was suffering badly at the time, describing him as depressed, lonely, and having no appetite.⁸⁰ When Mahomo reflected on this period in time, he explained that being in London was challenging, stating that he would see ‘old comrades ... and, of course, there are too many memories’.⁸¹

While suspended, Mahomo did not detach his political identity from the PAC and supported it publicly but generally referred to it as Sobukwe’s PAC. Sobukwe had been a great inspiration to Mahomo, referring to the founding father as ‘a very inspirational leader’ and describing himself as ‘a lieutenant to Sobukwe’ who worked under ‘the direct mandate [he] had received from Sobukwe’.⁸² For Mahomo, there was a clear distinction between Sobukwe’s PAC and Leballo’s PAC. Even though he was no longer operating as a PAC representative, Mahomo tried to align himself with the original ideas and values of the PAC, which defined the movement at the time of its first president. As we shall see, Mahomo’s affinity towards the idea of ‘Sobukwe’s PAC’ remained a steadfast feature of his political identity and activism.

An opportunity for Mahomo to be reintegrated into the PAC leadership presented itself in September 1967 when the PAC held its Moshi conference in Tanzania. With the support of the OAU liberation committee, the Tanzanian government temporarily closed the PAC office in Dar es Salaam. It pressured Leballo to hold a conference to resolve the internal discord that had made the movement

77. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 4, ‘Nana Mahomo 1963–4’, Letter from Nana Mahomo, 4 September 1964.

78. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 7, ‘Nana Mahomo (editor)see *Black Star, Crisis and Change* magazines 1963-1966’, *Crisis and Change*, The Magazine of the African Revolution, 18 November 1964.

79. N. Ndebele and N. Nieftagodien, ‘The Morogoro Conference: A Moment of Self-Reflection’, in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1 (1960-1970)*, (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004), 580.

80. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 3 ‘Morley Zebulon Nkosi correspondence, 1963–5, 1968’, Letter from Morley Nkosi to John Marcum 16 July 1965.

81. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 6, ‘Nana Mahomo 1965-1989’, Letter from Nana Mahomo to John Marcum, sent from 37 Boulevard St Michel Paris, n.d.

82. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

toxic and dysfunctional.⁸³ All acting, suspended, and expelled members of the PAC’s National Executive Committee (NEC) were invited to participate in the Moshi conference, and Mahomo, Molotsi, and Jacob Nyaose travelled to Tanzania to see if they could rejoin the organisation’s leadership.⁸⁴

At the end of the Moshi conference, the PAC’s National Executive Committee concluded that it was aware ‘that as a result of maladministration in the London Office of the Party, members of the [NEC] were compelled to operate a separate account’ and agreed that ‘all suspensions and expulsions be reviewed’, while ‘attempts be made to bring back into the fold all members who were affected by suspension and expulsion’.⁸⁵ Mahomo was, however, expected to submit proof of the financial statement of funds he had handled as head of the PAC London office as part of his full reintegration.⁸⁶ A follow-up meeting was held in Dar es Salaam in June 1968, during which members of the new NEC decided to expel Leballo (who was not present). While Mahomo did not seem to have been fully integrated into this new NEC, he agreed that he would be available to assist the PAC secretariat.⁸⁷

As soon as Leballo heard about the news of his suspension, Leballo announced that he, in turn, had suspended from the NEC the six redeemed members for ‘engaging in factionalist activities, indiscipline, counter-revolution and for being impediments to the Azanian revolution’.⁸⁸ The PAC’s representative in Dar es Salaam, Nimrod Sajeka, declared that ‘Mr Leballo has charged that these men are acting at the behest of the C.I.A., and openly associate with American and other imperialist institutions here and elsewhere’.⁸⁹ Additionally, the PAC’s organ, *Azania News*, noted that ‘the names of Peter Molotsi, Abednego Ngcobo, Zaccheus Molete, [Nana] Mahomo, Jacob Nyaose, Tsepo Letlaka and Peter Raboroko will be remembered for

83. Kondlo, *In the Twilight of the Revolution*, 130-132; Zambian National Archives (hereafter ZNA), Lusaka, FA/1/173, Location: 519, ‘Pan African Congress Of South Africa’, report by KAJ Kangwa, Second Secretary for OAU Affairs, Zambia Embassy, Addis Ababa, Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa, 15 June 1967

84. Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, *National Executive Committee* (Dar es Salaam: National Printing Company, No Date), available in, Stanford University (SU), Box XX789, ‘South African Subject Collection’, Box 23, File ‘Revolutionary Movements, PAC of Azania, National Executive Committee’.

85. Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, *National Executive Committee*.

86. ‘The Editor Speaks: The Titled Gentry are at it Again’, *Azania News*, 27 June 1968.

87. ZNA, FA/1/173, Location: 519, Report of the Pan Africanist Congress National Executive Committee Meeting Held in Dar es Salaam from the 4th to the 10th June, 1968’, 14 June 1968.

88. ZNA, FA/1/173, Location: 519, Letter from Leballo to Zambian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 25 June 1968.

89. ZNA, FA/1/173, Location: 519, Letter from Nimrod Sejake to Zambian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 24 June 1968

the most callous betrayal of our revolution at the most crucial period of its history’.⁹⁰ Mahomo continued to be accused of advancing American imperialism and being ‘groomed’ by the Americans to take over the PAC.⁹¹ I will return to the accusations that Mahomo worked for the CIA later.

While Mahomo stressed in a 1976 interview that he remained ‘a disciplined member of the Pan-Africanist Congress’ and met ‘the orders of [his] organization’, effectively, his role in the PAC had ended after his suspension in 1964.⁹² Mahomo’s failed attempt to rejoin the PAC’s leadership at Moshi, his continued relations with former PAC members, and his plentiful references to Sobukwe’s PAC nevertheless indicate a strong connection to the organisation that shaped his early political work. When reflecting on his departure from the PAC, Mahomo recalled that it was ‘very traumatic’ and described his time in exile away from the PAC as ‘the political wilderness’.⁹³

Launching *Crisis and Change*

Although Mahomo had been excommunicated from the PAC in 1964, he continued establishing various anti-apartheid projects. These different activities were significantly shaped by the networks and relations Mahomo had previously established as a PAC leader, both inside the party as well as outside of it. Because Mahomo no longer had formal support from the PAC, he was forced to rely on these networks to continue surviving in exile.

The first noteworthy project Mahomo launched after his suspension from the PAC was *Crisis and Change*, a periodical that was published irregularly from October 1965 to at least December 1966. Mahomo began developing the idea for the magazine some months before, in August 1964, and he was initially assisted in this project by Marcum and, to a lesser degree, Nkosi.⁹⁴ He informed Marcum and Nkosi: ‘I have completed preliminary work exploring the possibilities of expanding *The Black Star* into a 32-page monthly magazine’.⁹⁵ Mahomo then elaborated:

90. ‘Smash That Love Nest of Subversion’, *Azania News*, 27 June 1968.

91. ‘The Editor Speaks: The Titled Gentry are at it Again’, *Azania News*, 27 June 1968.

92. Gabriel, “‘Let Their Eyes Testify’”, 103; 105.

93. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

94. See correspondence in: SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 3 ‘Morley Zebulon Nkosi corr 1963–5, 1968’; SU, M1726, SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 4, ‘Nana Mahomo 1963–4’; Box 43, Folder 6, ‘Nana Mahomo 1965-1989’.

95. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 4, ‘Nana Mahomo 1963–4’, Letter from Nana Mahomo to John Marcum and Morley Nkosi, 11 August 1964.

... what I am producing is something which I hope will give expression to a new insight, an experiment in new ideas and perhaps I believe sufficiently in this that I am willing to stake what little political reputation I have to see that [*Crisis and Change*] sees the light of day.⁹⁶

Through *Crisis and Change*, Mahomo was again intent on exposing how ‘white domination and racism’ was ravaging Southern Africa.⁹⁷ While *Crisis and Change* was to feature various articles, mainly on Southern African politics, Mahomo also initially hoped to use the publication for more narrow personal ends. He wrote to Marcum that *Crisis and Change* ‘is intended [to] have South Africa as its starting point. [...] Writing on South Africa will give us ample scope to liquidate our political enemies’.⁹⁸ While the final product was less personal, *Crisis and Change* articles occasionally praised Sobukwe and critiqued Leballo throughout its existence.⁹⁹ The magazine regularly took on a radical political position to achieve its agenda, discussing Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, producing articles like ‘Portrait of a Freedom Fighter’, or declaring that ‘ON THE EDITORIAL SIDE WE HAVE AT OUR DISPOSAL EXPERTS IN ECONOMICS, POLITICS, AND PLASTIC BOMBS [original emphasis]’.¹⁰⁰

To manage the publication of *Crisis and Change*, Mahomo used his networks in exile. He co-opted friendly PAC members who had either been suspended from the PAC or held a grudge against Leballo. These included Bam Siboto, Nkosi, Ndibongo, and Molefi (who acted as the magazine’s associate editor).¹⁰¹ Non-PAC noteworthy people working on *Crisis and Change* were Marcum, Bernice Kaplan, and Peter Davidson.¹⁰² As before, Marcum made extensive use of individuals with whom he had a personal connection or with whom he had previously worked to assist in getting the magazine off the ground.

Mahomo and Marcum approached their US and European networks for financial support and advertising.¹⁰³ Apart from contacting John Mosler of the African Service Institute, Mahomo reached out to Irving Brown and the International

96. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 6, ‘Nana Mahomo 1965-1989’, letter from Nana Mahomo to John/Morley. n.d.

97. See: *Crisis and Change*, Special Issue, 15 October 1965.

98. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 4, ‘Nana Mahomo 1963-4’, Letter from Nana Mahomo to John Marcum and Morley Nkosi, 11 August 1964.

99. See for instance: ‘South Africa: An Analysis’, *Crisis and Change*, Special Issue, 15 October 1965; Editorial, *Crisis and Change*, Vol 1 No 3, February 1966.

100. *Crisis and Change*, Special Issue, 15 October 1965.

101. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 6, ‘Nana Mahomo 1965-1989’, Letter from Nana Mahomo to Joe Molefi, Bam Siboto, Peter Davidson, Morley Nkosi, Nga Machema, Joe Molefi, 4 April 1966.

102. ‘The Editor’s Notebook’, *Crisis and Change*, Vol 1, No 7, December 1966.

103. See correspondence in: SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 6, ‘Nana Mahomo 1965-1989’.

Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in Paris to provide funding to start up the publication, and Mahomo was initially optimistic about their commitment to back his magazine.¹⁰⁴ Nkosi also mentioned efforts by Mahomo to acquire German financing, but he never named the organisation or individual(s) in his correspondence.¹⁰⁵ Tom Lodge notes that the ‘tribune group within the Labour Party’ helped the launch of the magazine, but does not provide a source.¹⁰⁶ Ultimately, it is unclear who funded the publication of *Crisis and Change*. In the December 1966 *Crisis and Change* editorial, Mahomo explains to the readership that lack of funds had resulted in a reduced staff and stifled the regular publication of the magazine.¹⁰⁷ Mahomo later clarified that he never received financial assistance from outside sources and explained that the magazine was solely funded by the ‘long-credit’ he had received from the printers (N.V. Drukkerij DICO) in Amsterdam,¹⁰⁸ a view he consistently held.

While the scope and impact of *Crisis and Change* is difficult to assess, Mahomo intended to distribute it in the US, Europe, and Africa (including South Africa).¹⁰⁹ The initial run for the magazine was likely 5,000 copies.¹¹⁰ How far and wide *Crisis and Change* eventually travelled is difficult to tell, because the only clues are in a list of addresses Mahomo compiled to send the magazine to and the location of some reader’s letters published in the magazine. While the magazine was commercially unsuccessful, it remained an impressive publication, with diverse, well-edited critical articles and striking photographs, including some by South African photographer Ernest Cole.¹¹¹

The failure of *Crisis and Change* was a blow to Mahomo’s confidence. To fight his feelings of ‘despair and frustration’, he registered to study on a United Nations scholarship at Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s (MIT) in the Department of Political Science, submitting his thesis on the formation of the PAC in 1968.¹¹² When reflecting on his time at MIT, Mahomo recalled that ‘MIT wasn’t bad, except [for] the

104. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 3 ‘Morley Zebulon Nkosi corr 1963–5, 1968’, Letter from Morley Nkosi to John Marcum, 19 June 1965; SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 6, ‘Nana Mahomo 1965-1989’, Letter from Nana Mahomo to John/Morley, n.d.

105. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 3 ‘Morley Zebulon Nkosi corr 1963–5, 1968’, letter from Morley Nkosi to John Marcum 16 July 1965.

106. Lodge, *Sharpeville*, 252.

107. ‘The Editor’s Notebook’, *Crisis and Change*, 1, 7, December 1966.

108. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

109. See correspondence in box 43, M1726, Box 43, Folder 6, ‘Nana Mahomo 1965-1989’.

110. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 3 ‘Morley Zebulon Nkosi corr 1963–5, 1968’, letter from Morley Nkosi to John Marcum 16 July 1965.

111. *Crisis and Change*, Vol 1, 3, April 1966.

112. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo. Mahomo, ‘The Rise of the Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa’.

utter loneliness’.¹¹³ In the meantime, he continued participating in various speaking engagements about apartheid across the USA.¹¹⁴ As a child of two educators whose schooling had been interrupted and whose time at the University of Cape Town was cut short, educational growth remained essential to Mahomo’s personal development and often mixed with his political career.

Producing *Phela Ndaba* and *Last Grave at Dimbaza*

After his time at MIT, Mahomo produced two films that highlighted the strife and struggle of black life under apartheid as part of his ongoing commitment to exposing the problems of South Africa and the realities of apartheid to the world. The first film was titled *Phela Ndaba* (also known as *End of the Dialogue*), released in 1970; the second was titled *Last Grave at Dimbaza*, released in 1974. While *Last Grave at Dimbaza* could be considered a more refined version of *Phela Ndaba*, both films were a great commercial success. Apart from Lionel Ngakane’s 1962 film, *Vukani-Awake!*, Mahomo’s two documentaries were the first films created by a black director that critiqued apartheid.¹¹⁵

Following in the footsteps of Lionel Rogosin’s *Come Back, Africa*, and Ngakane’s *Vukani-Awake!*, the footage for *Phela Ndaba* was covertly obtained in South Africa, in this case when the Dryden Society (a Cambridge University performing arts group) toured across South Africa in 1969. Chris Curling, Antonia Caccia, and Simon Louvish were those in charge of shooting the footage. They produced the film with Mahomo and the South African exiles Rakhethla Tsehlana and Vusumzi Make (who narrated the film).¹¹⁶ Caccia was a London Film School student whom Amnesty International had previously deployed to Zimbabwe.¹¹⁷ She seems to have had a good relationship with Mahomo, as she had previously worked for *Crisis and Change*.¹¹⁸ In preparation for making *Phela Ndaba*, Mahomo organised Caccia’s Film School studies,¹¹⁹ and to obtain the necessary footage in South Africa, Mahomo

113. SU, Box 43, Folder 4, ‘Nana Mahomo 1963–4’, letter from Nana Mahomo to John Marcum, written from 345 East 46th Street (suit 200) New York.

114. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 6, ‘Nana Mahomo 1965-1989’, Letter from Mahomo to Marcum, n.d.

115. B. Peterson, ‘Culture, Resistance and Representation’, in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2 (1970-1980)* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2006), 182 f85.

116. D. Feather, ‘Creating a “deplorable impression”: The Dryden Society’s 1969 tour of South Africa and the Making of End of the Dialogue’, *Contemporary British History*, 36, 3 (2022), 434; 447; N.M.I Muendane, *The Leader South Africa Never Had: The Remarkable Pilgrimage of Vusumzi Make* (Bucchleuch: Soultalk, 2007), 102.

117. Feather, “Creating a “deplorable impression”, 434; 438.

118. F. Ogterop, ‘How to Make an Undercover Documentary Film’, *Cape Librarian*, 62, 5 (2018), 41.

119. Feather, ‘Creating a “deplorable impression”, 438.

and Caccia approached members of the Dreyer Society to use their planned tour to South Africa as a cover to shoot footage in South Africa covertly.¹²⁰ While the Dreyer’s Society’s planned tour received significant criticism for breaking South Africa’s cultural boycott, Mahomo was able to convince Peter Weiss (who was the writer of one of the plays that the society was planning to perform) that the tour should continue as it was a cover for their documentary.¹²¹

The footage for *Phela Ndaba* was shot in ‘Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Pretoria, (Atteridgeville), Grahamstown, Port Elizabeth and the former homeland of Ciskei’.¹²² On the ground, the team for the Dreyer Society was assisted by radical philosopher and anti-apartheid activist Rick Turner and the BCM and South African Student Organisation members Strini Moodley and Steve Biko.¹²³ Mahomo obtained funds from the World Council of Churches to purchase the necessary equipment to shoot the documentary.¹²⁴ He further explained that the money to produce *Phela Ndaba* was borrowed from the bank and underwritten by a friend in London.¹²⁵ While Mahomo had surrounded himself with people who had experience in or studied film and documentary making, it seems this was an entirely new skill for Mahomo and Make, who had to learn on the job. Despite their lack of experience, the film was an undeniable success. *Phela Ndaba* was widely shown in the UK on the BBC, in the US on CNBC and CBS, and across other parts of the world. It won several awards – including a 1971 Emmy.¹²⁶

Mahomo explained that the money they generated from *Phela Ndaba* was used to produce his second movie, *Last Grave at Dimbaza*.¹²⁷ The film footage for *Last Grave at Dimbaza* was once again shot clandestinely by Curling, this time with other white film crew members like Pascoe MacFarlane.¹²⁸ As Gary Minkley and Helena Pohlandt-McCormick eloquently sum it up, *Last Grave at Dimbaza* ‘attempted to turn Dimbaza into an international symbol of apartheid difference and mobilised Dimbaza through its imagery, as a metaphor for the graveyard of the racially discarded’.¹²⁹ Like *Phela Ndaba*, the film was shown worldwide and received numerous international awards. Due to its

120. Feather, ‘Creating a “deplorable impression”’, 439.

121. Feather, ‘Creating a “deplorable impression”’, 439.

122. Ogterop, ‘How to Make an Undercover Documentary Film’.

123. Feather, ‘Creating a “deplorable impression”’, 442.

124. Feather, ‘Creating a “deplorable impression”’, 439.

125. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

126. Feather, ‘Creating a “deplorable impression”’, 447; Ogterop, ‘How to Make an Undercover Documentary Film’.

127. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

128. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo; Ogterop, ‘How to Make an Undercover Documentary Film’, 41; Feather, ‘Creating a “deplorable impression”’, 447.

129. Minkley and Pohlandt-McCormick, ‘The Graves of Dimbaza: Temporal Remains’, 103.

success, it became a powerful document in the international movement against apartheid, reminiscent of Cole’s 1967 influential photo collection in *House of Bondage* or Cosmas Desmond’s *The Discarded People*.¹³⁰

Creating such documentary films was consequential to Mahomo. He expressed his past frustration about being unable to convince people during his speaking engagements of the horrible conditions of apartheid and believed that a visual depiction of life under apartheid would more easily convey the oppressiveness of this system to the world.¹³¹ Mahomo elaborated that he made these films, so:

...that as many people as possible in the outside world know what the issues are so that when the time comes from the confrontation inside South Africa, they will really know the reasons for that confrontation – why the blacks have finally taken up arms against the oppressors, why it is necessary to go to the extreme of an armed conflict.¹³²

In another interview, he further reflected upon this period in his anti-apartheid work, declaring that:

this to me appeared to be the only way that I could put a convincing picture before my audience and letting the visual material speak for itself. [...] It was the need to present a political problem that we had that brought me into filmmaking. I don’t know whether I am going to make it my life’s job. Somehow, I have a hankering to go back to active politics.¹³³

Working for the African American Labor Center (AALC)

While not a return to active politics per se, Mahomo started working for the AALC in January 1981 as a programme officer for South Africa. The anti-communist AFL-CIO founded the AALC in 1964, to focus its efforts on gaining influence in Africa at a time when the continent was confronted by the binary politics of the global Cold War. The AALC appointed Mahomo as the ‘coordinator of the AFL-CIO’s Program of Action in Support of Black Trade Unions in South Africa’, which was established in 1981, and whose mission was ‘to establish a viable, free and democratic black labour movement’ in South Africa.¹³⁴

130. E. Cole and T. Flaherty, *House of Bondage: A South African Black Man Exposes in His Own Pictures and Words the Bitter Life of His Homeland Today* (New York: Ridge Press Book, 1967); C. Desmond, *The Discarded People: An Account of African Resettlement* (Braamfontein: Christian Institute of South Africa, 1969).

131. Mahomo and Anthony III, ‘Clandestine Filming in South Africa’, 19; Feather, ‘Creating a “deplorable impression”’, 438.

132. Mahomo and Anthony III, ‘Clandestine Filming in South Africa’, 50.

133. Mahomo and Anthony III, ‘Clandestine Filming in South Africa’, 19.

134. SU, 2009C36, Box 6, Folder 5, ‘AALC 1985-86’, African-American Labor Center Report of 1985 Activities Board of Directors Meeting, May 8, 1986, 36.

Reflecting on his decision to join the AALC, Mahomo explained his belief that:

America will play a very important role one way or the other in determining the fate of Africa and in particular South Africa [and ...] the labour movement [in the USA has] great potential as a friend of black people in South Africa. I thought one way of influencing this development was to approach and talk with the people in the labor movement.¹³⁵

Mahomo’s history with trade union activities is curious. Even though he claims that he worked with the PAC-aligned Federation of Free African Trade Unions of South Africa (FOFATUSA) and the General Workers Union in a less primary capacity in the late 1950s,¹³⁶ I could not find direct evidence of this. What is known is that Mahomo represented FOFATASU at various international trade union conferences during the early 1960s, first in 1961 in Casablanca and then in September 1963 in Leopoldville.¹³⁷ (Mahomo also claims that he represented FOFATUSA at a conference in Tunis).¹³⁸ According to Mahomo, such representation was at FOFATUSA’s request,¹³⁹ since the PAC was loosely aligned with the trade union through Nyaoose, who was a founding member of the PAC and general secretary of FOFATUSA.

By 1963, Mahomo had also established close relations with the controversial AFL-CIO representative, Irvin Brown, who was keen on steering Southern Africa’s liberation struggle away from the communist bloc. Mahomo recalled that he first met Irvin Brown at the All-African People’s Congress in Tunis, which took place in January 1960, but this was impossible because Mahomo was still in Cape Town.¹⁴⁰ Instead, he could perhaps have met Brown at the All-African People’s Congress’ third conference, which took place in Cairo in March 1961. The earliest correspondence I could find between Mahomo and Brown is dated April 1962.¹⁴¹ Mahomo’s personal and private relationship with Brown grew, even after the emergence of public allegations that Brown was working for the CIA. Despite these allegations, Mahomo declared that Brown was a friend and that their close personal relationship was based on friendship, not ideology. He described him as ‘a loyal friend’ and said that regardless of whatever accusations were levelled against Brown, he would remain friends with him.¹⁴²

135. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

136. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

137. SU, M1726, Box 43, Folder 4, ‘Nana Mahomo 1963–4’, Communiqué Conjoint, from the Confédération des Syndicats Libres du Congo, Fédération Syndicale Camérounaise, Gambia Workers Union, Federation of Free Trade Union of South Africa.

138. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

139. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

140. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

141. SADO, AMI, Group 3, Box 360, Folder 148/5/1/1 Vol. 70 E, Letter from Irving Brown, to Nana Mahomo, 3 April 1962.

142. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

Between January 1981 and January 1987, Mahomo headed the South Africa programme from Washington and was assisted by a field worker for South Africa based in Lesotho. The AALC’s efforts to link up with black trade unions in South Africa were prioritised as, together with South African-occupied Namibia, South Africa was the last Southern African state to be liberated. As programme officer, Mahomo oversaw establishing relations and supporting various smaller black trade unions. According to its 1985 report, the AALC assisted labour unions affiliated with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the Council of Unions of South Africa, and the Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions.¹⁴³ In 1986, the AALC noted that much of its work in South Africa was conducted through the ICTFU,¹⁴⁴ and eventually the more militant National Council of Trade Unions.¹⁴⁵ The AALC funded several seminar courses and educational programmes in South Africa, provided equipment and supplies to trade unions, and organised study tours to the US for union members.¹⁴⁶ When explaining his rationale behind the AALC work he was conducting, Mahomo explained in an interview that

... black people in South Africa have suffered a lot and I think most of them would know what they want to do with their lives. [...] They have their own program to follow. And I would have thought what is needed here is the means, the tools for them to carry out the program of helping their own people. And the tools can only be purchased when you have the money. You cannot carry out the operations that are needed in South Africa unless you have the means.¹⁴⁷

Despite making inroads into South Africa, the AALC’s South Africa programme faced notable difficulties.¹⁴⁸ Its conservative approach towards South Africa – which favoured selective economic pressure on South Africa and ‘responsible’ investing by American firms – dissuaded many South African unions from establishing relations with the AALC. The AALC’s funding by the Agency for International Development – an arm of the State Department under Ronald Reagan’s conservative government – was also perceived with suspicion.¹⁴⁹ The South African Allied Workers’ Union and the Motor Assembly and Components Workers Union of South Africa refused to

143. SU, 2009C36, Box 6, Folder 5, African-American Labor Center Report of 1985 Activities Board of Directors Meeting, May 8, 1986, 36.

144. SU, 2009C36, Box 7, Folder 1, ‘AALC 1987’, Highlights of the 1987 report to the board of directors of the African-American Labor Center, 4.

145. Trewhela, ‘The AFL-CIO and the Trade Unions in South Africa’, 78.

146. SU, 2009C36, Box 6, Folder 5, African-American Labor Center Report of 1985 Activities Board of Directors Meeting, May 8, 1986, 11; 37-38; 40.

147. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

148. Y. Richards, *Conversations with Maida Springer: A Personal History of Labor, Race, and International Relations* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 285-286.

149. E. Flanagan, ‘Suspect Solidarity: Changes in AFL-CIO’s South Africa Programs’, *South African Labour Bulletin* 15, 1 (July/August 1990), 46-47.

meet when a delegation was sent to South Africa in 1982.¹⁵⁰ Such trepidation intensified after the AALC met with officials of the United Workers’ Union of South Africa, an Inkatha-supported labour federation created in opposition to COSATU and the ANC, which was suspected of having the backing of the South African government. Furthermore, the AFLO-CIO had shown open support for Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Inkatha, whose reputation was worsening inside South Africa. In September 1982, they awarded Buthelezi the George Meany International Human Rights Award and praised the Inkatha leader for opposing apartheid.¹⁵¹ Besides the AALC’s chequered reputation, Mahomo’s image further affected his work as an AALC representative.¹⁵²

Inside and outside of South Africa, Mahomo could not quell the allegations that he was a CIA spy because of his longstanding relationship with Brown and the accusations of AFL-CIO’s links to the CIA. Gordon Winter’s 1981 book, *Inside Boss: South Africa’s Secret Police*, tied Mahomo to the CIA, while publications like *Work in Progress* and *Searchlight* highlighted these connections when they reported on the work of the AALC.¹⁵³ In his interview with Edgar, Mahomo refuted these allegations. He pronounced: ‘I have never worked nor am I working for the CIA’, and when responding to the suggested links between Brown and the CIA, he said, ‘I think Irving Brown speaks very clearly for himself. He has denied this, and I have no reason to believe he’s not telling the truth’.¹⁵⁴

Regardless of the validity of these accusations, and despite Mahomo’s successful court case against Penguin Books regarding the allegations against him in Winter’s book,¹⁵⁵ over time, Mahomo’s name in some exile and support circles became tainted, affecting how his anti-apartheid work was perceived.

It must be noted that while Mahomo’s increased entanglement with American anti-colonial and anti-apartheid support structures is indisputable, the phrase ‘CIA spy’, similar to terms like ‘sell out’ or ‘askari’, was regularly thrown around in exile, usually without any proof. It became part of a popular discourse influenced by the polarising Cold War politics of the day. While Susan Williams’s work alleges that

150. Flanagan, ‘Suspect Solidarity’, 47.

151. Flanagan, ‘Suspect Solidarity’, 47-48; “‘War on Democratic Unions’: Is the US paying for this great divide?”, *New Nation*, 1, 14 (1986), 7.

152. Richards, *Conversations with Maida Springer*, 299-300.

153. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo; ‘The Director: Nana Mahomo’, *Work in Progress*, 24 (October 1982); Flanagan, ‘Suspect Solidarity’; ‘PAC founder wins damages for CIA story in Gordon Winter Book’, *Sunday Times Extra*, 20 May 1984.

154. Author’s Private Collection, Robert Edgar Interview with Nana Mahomo.

155. ‘PAC Founder Wins Damages for CIA Story in Gordon Winter Book’.

many in Mahomo’s network were (directly or indirectly) linked to the CIA,¹⁵⁶ it is difficult to ascertain if people like Mahomo initially knew about these links and, after learning about these allegations, if these links affected their commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle. While some in Mahomo’s American network were open about their desire to forge friendly or favourable ties with African leaders and limit communist influences, their pro-American stance was not an automatic indictment of their commitment to helping Africans attain their independence, nor was it proof of working for the CIA. Houser and the ACOA are good examples of this. As illustrated by Sheila Collins, Houser was often not aware of the CIA machinations that were occurring in the background and was open to working with people from a wide political spectrum, including known anti-communists, as long as they could aid in advancing the liberation of Africa.¹⁵⁷

Neither were all Africans automatically attracted to communism. While Mahomo established this network in the US and had close personal relations with Brown, Mahomo’s relationship with communism seems more complicated and mirrored that of the PAC’s initial non-alignment stance. While in Canada, Mahomo expressed his pessimism that apartheid could be defeated peacefully and explained that the PAC was open to receiving support from communist countries.¹⁵⁸ In his interview with Gail Gerhart, Mahomo argued that he and other PAC members were aware of the pan-Africanist leader George Padmore’s argument that ‘communism was in internal doctrine when [Africans] needed a specifically [African] doctrine ... which logically came before any [international] affiliation’.¹⁵⁹ Mahomo’s ideological position concerning communism might have partially been shaped by, and in turn, shaped, his networks and relations in exile.

Mahomo’s time working for the AALC came to an end in 1987. Springer argues that Mahomo’s relationship with the AALC’s leadership was far from ‘smooth’, especially with Patrick J. O’Farrell, who was the AALC director.¹⁶⁰ Drawing from AALC labour dispute proceedings, it is revealed that Mahomo was accused by the AALC of failing to keep a transparent financial record, owing about \$29,000 in outstanding balance on his credit card. This allegation is reminiscent of Mahomo’s time in the PAC. Further disagreement between Mahomo and the AALC existed

156. S. Williams, *White Malice: And the Covert Recolonization of Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2021). In her book, Williams names people like Marcum, Houser, Springer, and Brown as having direct or indirect links to the CIA.

157. S. Collins, *Ubuntu: George M. Houser and the Struggle for Peace and Freedom on Two Continents*, e-book (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2020), 196-197; 238

158. See the various reports on Mahomo’s statements in Canada in: NASA, BAO, Box: 3552, File: 100/6/1675, ‘Paspoort/Passport, Nana Mahomo’.

159. WHPR, A2422, Folder 92422/6/1, Gail Gerhart Interview with Nana Mahomo.

160. Richards, *Conversations with Maida Springer*, 286.

about a promotion increase and more favourable working conditions.¹⁶¹ Mahomo eventually resigned from his position in January 1987.

While it is unclear if he was engaged in any formal anti-apartheid activities after he resigned from the AALC, Mahomo (together with Ngcobo, and Nyaose) released a press statement from London on 26 March 1990, following president F.W. de Klerk’s unbanning of political organisations. The three former PAC founders — who referred to themselves as the ‘member[s] of the National Working Committee of the N.E.C.’ even though they were no longer acting as such — declared that ‘after 30 years, the time has come for eyeball to eyeball talks to resolve the stalemate situation in South Africa’.¹⁶² Their statement went against the PAC’s official position of rejecting any negotiations between liberation movements and the apartheid government at the time. Mahomo seems to have aligned himself with the so-called Sobukwe forum: a loose formation of former and current PAC members who called on the movement’s realignment according to the Pan-Africanist principles of Sobukwe and the reinstatement of former PAC leaders.¹⁶³ As the National Peace Accord was signed and South Africa prepared for the Convention for Democratic South Africa, Mahomo and Ngcobo again appeared as signatories to a ‘PAC’ letter sent to CODESA on 5 December 1991. The two mandated Velekaya Shange and Sibongiseni ‘Cecil’ Gumede as PAC representatives at the CODESA talks.¹⁶⁴ Mahomo and Ngcobo were not speaking for the PAC, and their rogue request was ignored by CODESA. It is, nevertheless, a testament to Mahomo’s continued insistence that he was loyal to Sobukwe’s original PAC.

In the early 1990s, Mahomo lived between Johannesburg and Boyonne in France. He never seems to have fallen back into the political fold and instead pursued various business ventures. These included a bakery in Tembisa and the development of a land-mine clearing machine.¹⁶⁵ He passed away on 1 June 2014.

161. For a detailed overview of this dispute see the correspondence in SU, 2009C36, Box 7, File 1: ‘AALC 1987’.

162. A.B. Ngcobo, N.N. Mahomo and J.D. Nyhaose, ‘Press Release – Immediate The PAC Position on Negotiations in South Africa’, 26 April 1990. Accessed 17 January 2024, https://www.nationalarchives.gov.za/sites/default/files/ITEM_COD-0013-0001- -156_0.pdf.

163. K. Kondlo, “‘In the twilight of the Azanian Revolution’: the exile history of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (South Africa): (1960-1990)’ (PhD Thesis, Rand Afrikaans Universiteit, 2003), 230; 237.

164. A.B. Ngcobo and N.N. Mahomo, ‘Ye all men know to whom these presents may come’, 5 December 1991, accessed on 17 January 2024, https://www.nationalarchives.gov.za/sites/default/files/ITEM_COD-0013-0001- -119_0.pdf.

165. C. Barron, ‘Nana Mahomo: PAC leader who helped to put up apartheid’s full horror before the world’, *Sunday Times*, 8 June 2014.

Conclusion

Nana Mahomo showed a steady commitment to the anti-apartheid struggle. At an early age, he was forced into exile as a PAC representative and made to navigate a complex and ever-changing international political landscape, all whilst representing a relatively new political movement undergoing significant internal instability. To better understand the struggle against apartheid, historians should, therefore, continue extending their attention to other political movements, regardless of their size or success. After his split from the PAC, Mahomo persisted in his commitment to fighting apartheid, albeit in his own way and no longer as a representative of the PAC. The twists and turns of Mahomo’s subsequent anti-apartheid work further highlight that the struggle against apartheid often also occurred outside the confines of established political movements like the PAC. Mahomo’s trajectory, therefore, cannot – and should not – be confined to one political movement or organisation. When reflecting on his overall anti-apartheid work, Mahomo’s activism was dominated by developing international awareness and support for South Africa’s anti-apartheid struggle, with his documentary *Last Grave at Dimbaza* having a particularly important impact on informing the world about this oppressive system.

Mahomo’s political trajectory was greatly shaped by the precarious nature of exile. Throughout his political activism, he displayed an unwavering dedication to Sobukwe’s PAC, frequently invoking Sobukwe’s name and ideals. However, Mahomo’s political convictions were not the sole driver in determining his trajectory, as the support networks that were available to him influenced how Mahomo expressed his commitment to fighting apartheid. Mahomo developed networks in Europe and the USA when working for the PAC. After being cut off from the PAC’s support structures, he relied on these past networks to sustain his precarious existence in exile. While these networks aided Mahomo in developing different anti-apartheid projects, they also affected his reputation inside and outside South Africa, leaving a lasting stain on his legacy. If we consider the problematic nature of American funding of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid initiatives, how should we judge Mahomo’s legacy? Are many of his actions tainted beyond redemption because of their association with organisations like the AFL-CIO, which have been connected to CIA funding, or do they remain a valuable contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle worth remembering? I believe that these examples illustrate the difficulties and messiness of the lives of some anti-apartheid activists in exile but do not detract from a genuine commitment to ending apartheid.

For much of his adult life, Mahomo showed an apparent resilience and ability to survive in the complex world of exile while remaining committed to fighting apartheid. His contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle illustrates how unsettled life in exile could be and how these conditions shaped people’s political activism.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Ruhan Fourie, Chris Saunders, and Bob Edgar for their support and feedback on previous drafts of this paper and would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions. All your input has greatly improved the quality and insight of my work.

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