Tracing Histories of Black 'Servants' at Zwartkoppies Farm through Narratives

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to trace the histories of black individuals who were employed at Zwartkoppies Farm by the Marks family through oral histories. I refer to them as 'servants' as they spent their lives serving the Markses. Some of these 'servants' today continue to work for the Sammy Marks Museum, a site under Ditsong Museums of South Africa. Although it is apparent that Sammy Marks had both white and black servants, little is known about the black servants. Here, I also deal with the issue of child labour and forced removals and discuss how the colonial and apartheid laws were enablers in violating black people's human rights. I do so within the context of oral histories provided through interviews with descendants of 'servants' conducted between August 2018 and March 2020. This paper also puts forth the idea that oral history can be employed as a method in the decolonisation of African knowledge production and dissemination. This study is part of my masters research project entitled 'Un-silencing Histories of Black 'Servants' at Zwartkoppies Farm: A Transition from the Sammy Marks House to the Sammy Marks Museum'.

Keywords: Sammy Marks, Zwartkoppies Farm, Servants, Oral History, Decolonisation

Introduction

It was about a week after I starting work as acting deputy director of the Ditsong Sammy Marks Museum that a white former employee came to visit the museum. One of the current employees served this former employee tea at around 11am, 1pm and 3pm. I was not so much disturbed by the serving of tea by this employee as by how it was presented and the dress code. The current employee's attire included an apron and a head wrap usually worn by domestic workers. This event was uncomfortable to observe and I subsequently had a conversation with the employee to highlight to them that tea-making was not part of their job, and a discussion followed pertaining to their attire, which was not in uniformity with other employees of the same designation. A similar scenario is aptly described by Professor Njabulo Ndebele (1999) in his *Game Lodges and Leisure Colonialists, caught in the Process of Becoming* where he notes that 'the black workers behaved rather meekly, cleaning the rooms, washing the dishes … and making sure that in the morning the leisure refugees find their cars clean'. The black employee came across as a domestic servant rather than an employee of a national museum in a democratic South Africa. At one time, museums, like game lodges, were an extension of colonial and apartheid power. Currently, they are places where those who have lost power go to regain a sense of possession. The Sammy Marks Museum remains as it was during the colonial and apartheid eras, thus it is ripe for oppressive inclinations to perpetuate.

The same week, I made time to meet with all staff members one on one and walked through the site. During these meetings, staff members consistently complained about their safety when coming to work and leaving the site to go home. I asked one member of staff to show me the footpath that they used, and they suggested that I use a van due to safety and distance. I declined to do so as I wanted to experience what they were talking about. I was accompanied by another member of staff, and as we walked, we came across a house which looked like it had no occupants; it was as though it had been vacant for a while. I asked who the house belonged to and was told that it belonged to the Manyaka family. Upon inquiring about this family, I was informed that one member of the family comes by the house from time to time. Eventually, I was able to trace that family member.

Around the main house of the Marks family, currently the central point of the museum, there are two houses that look almost misplaced as they differ from all the buildings on the site in design, material and colour of paint. These houses belong

to the Kwenda family. On my initial probe, I was told that their parents used to work for the Marks family, and they have been living on the farm ever since. Two to three generations later, some family members work at various sites under Ditsong Museums of South Africa. These discoveries prompted me to begin tracing the 'servants' of the Marks family and their descendants.

Sammy Marks and the Zwartkoppies Farm

In 1868, Samuel Marks, commonly known as Sammy Marks,[1] arrived in South Africa's Cape Colony at the peak of colonisation and migration. He was later joined in Cape Town by Isaac Lewis, a distant cousin who would later become his business partner. When diamonds were discovered in 1871, they bought carts and horses and headed for Kimberly (Mendelsohn 1991). Sammy Marks arrived in Pretoria in 1881 to meet with President Kruger and discuss the Vaal River Coal Mine; for this colliery, Marks relied on black labour from Mozambique (Prothero 1974). Despite its remoteness, Marks seemed to find Pretoria very attractive and an ideal Victorian town. Shortly after he arrived in Pretoria, Sammy Marks established a distillery at Hatherley Farm called Eerste Fabrieken. He then decided to buy a farm for his personal use as he was about to get married. The farm was called Christian Hall, located adjacent to Hatherly Farm in the east of Pretoria (Mendelsohn 1991). The transfer of the farm took place in 1884 and its name was changed to Zwartkoppies Farm (Naude 2003).

Although the number of servants that Sammy had is not recorded, Sammy Marks' letters indicate that white servants were mostly imported from Europe (Mendelsohn 1991). The letters also state that there were 'native girls' and 'Zulu boys' who worked in his home, although the locations from which they were recruited are unknown.

Farm work in South Africa

Farms are mostly located in remote areas and therefore farmworkers occupy an invisible class in society. Because their work is regarded as unskilled or semi-skilled, farmworkers tend to feel powerless, especially concerning job security. The social and

1 Sammy, rather than Samuel, is used in various literature and names of places named after Samuel Marks. See Mendelsohn (1991), Naude (2003) and Davenport (2013). The square in Pretoria's city centre is also called Sammy Marks Square. Sammy Marks was a Lithuanian-born industrialist who accumulated his wealth in South Africa in the 1880s and 1890s.

economic problems farmworkers find themselves in can be traced to colonisation and apartheid, which were characterised by segregation (Atkinson 2007). The labour movement has seen a transformation in South Africa's factories since the mid-1970s and township-based mass mobilisation movements challenging the domination of the nationalist government. As this transformation occurred, farmworkers remained silent figures on the margins of South African politics. 'Farmer and farm worker are all too often not merely symbols but stereotypes, a static frieze that embodies the racist attitudes of the past, but which has no clear connection to the politics of the present' (Du Toit 1994: 375). The capitalist farmers were enabled by political powers to gain control of the land and acquire as much cheap labour as possible (Atkinson 2007).

Since its origins in 'master-slave' relations at the Cape of Good Hope in the 17th century (Waldman 1996; Williams 2016), the relationship between commercial farmers and farmworkers in South Africa has been complex and multi-layered, characterised by power relations that left workers vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Until relatively recently, this relationship was virtually unregulated. Because of the geographical dispersion and isolation of commercial farms, farmers and farmworkers lived and worked side by side, although with very different qualities of life. This situation created a context for violations of human rights that went unseen, unreported and unpunished (Devereux 2019).

From the 1860s, the supply of apprentices as a source of labour began to dry up, which resulted in the Boers relying on tenant labour, particularly after the Free State–Basotho Wars[2] (Atkinson 2007). In exchange for their work on the farm, black people were offered a small piece of land to build a house. The Molefi family, like many other black people, found themselves on white-owned lands unwillingly as a result of Sammy Marks and his family encroaching on their settlements, as stated in the following account by Sana Maselatole Mabogoane[3]:

2 The Free State–Basotho Wars consisted of three wars between Basotho people and white settlers from 1858–1868 in what is now the Free State and Lesotho area. They were fought over territorial rights in the area between the Caledon and Orange Rivers – from present-day Wepener to Zastron – and the area north of the Caledon River, which includes present-day Harrismith and the area to the west of it.

3 Sana Mabogoane is the granddaughter of Frans Molefi (recorded as Frans Molefe), the daughter of Elizabeth Moipone Mabogoane. The record pertaining to Frans Molefe is contained in a letter written by JNS Meisels to Van Kleef on 21 September 1976.

> *When Sammy Marks and his family arrived on what is now called Zwartkoppies Farm, they found my great-great-grandfather. The place was at that point called Gamorabane. I'm not sure if the name Gamorabane was my great-great-grandfather's name; however, what I'm sure of is that he was the father of my great grandfather, Kutumela Molefi, after whom Kutumela Molefi Primary School on Zwartkoppies Farm is named. Although it is not clear as to when Kutumela Molefi was born, his headstone indicates that he died on 23 April 1943. My grandfather Motshegoa Frans Molefi was born in 1912. He was Kutumela Molefi's son. When we were growing up, my grandfather was the only one still alive – all his siblings had died. There were other extended families here. Many members left – my aunts and uncles.*

Child labour on the Zwartkoppies Farm

Labour can be defined as a commodity that can be bought and sold on the capitalist market. This sale can be in the form of a contract of employment between the employer and employee. From this definition of labour, we can assume that there should be some form of equality between employer and employee. However, when labour is demanded from one party through force, extortion, underpayment or non-payment, this form of agreement dispossesses one part and benefits another (Vambe 2013), as was in the case for Moses Popotane Manyaka:

> *I went to school at Kutumela Primary School. I was forced to drop out of school to work on the farm. I had to work because we were afraid that they would evict my family from the farm* (Manyaka 2018).

Child labour as defined by Fyfe (1989) as work that has a negative bearing on a child's wellbeing. Some of the worst forms of child labour practices, as entrenched in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 No. 182, include child trafficking and prostitution. Furthermore, Article 2(1) of the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 No. 29 defines forced or compulsory labour as 'all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily' (Vambe 2013: 16). The Education and Training Act of 1979 in South Africa prohibited anyone from withdrawing a child from school; however, this provision did not apply

to children working on farms. As such, this Act perpetuated child labour, which was a vital part of the farm economy. It was permissible for children over the age of 14 to enter into an employment contract with their farm employers provided their parents or guardians had endorsed the process. It was almost impossible for the children not to be employed as refusal to enter into these contracts may have resulted in the entire family being evicted from the farm (Atkinson 2007; De Kiewet 1937), as highlighted in the following accounts by Kemape Frans Bafedi[4] and Simon Minaar Bafedi[5] respectively:

> *In Zwartkoppies my grandfather worked for Joe Marks as a gardener for many years. He aged and was no longer able to work. Four years went by without him working and Joe Marks told my grandfather that he cannot continue to live on the farm while he is not working on the farm. Since his children had left the farm and were working elsewhere, my grandfather could continue living on the farm on condition that one of his family members worked on the farm. Following Marks's conditions of stay, my grandfather and his second wife Mmathokwana Caroline came to Dannilton to ask my parents that I come to Zwartkoppies to be his replacement so he can continue living on the farm. Ek was jonk, baie jonk[6]. That is how I came to work at Zwartkoppies.*
>
> *I was born in 1958 in Dennilton Limpopo Province … I arrived at Zwartkoppies Farm in 1972. I did not attend the normal day school, but the night one. Mr Mahloko was teaching us maths and other subjects. I worked as a gardener under Van der Byl for seven years or so.*

Due to their vulnerability, children become victims of forced labour because their bargaining powers are weak and children do not know how to access legal assistance to protect their rights. It is for these reasons that international organisations such as the ILO have produced a set of rules and regulations that outlaw the use of child labour (Vambe 2013). Despite the existence of Article 2(1) of the ILO Forced Labour

4 Kemape Frans Bafedi is the grandson of Makitimele 'Kleinboy' Manyaka, the son of Makitimele's first child, Sara Bafedi, from his first wife Tetedi Mphake Manyaka. I interviewed Frans on 13 March 2020.

5 Grandson to Makitimele Kleinboy Manyaka, younger brother to Kemape Frans Bafedi.

6 Translated in English as 'I was young, very young.'

Convention, 1930 No. 29, in the early 1970s, Kwenda 1[7] and their siblings had to work. This was because apartheid was at its peak and black people's human rights in South Africa were being violated. Kwenda 1 reveals this violation as follows:

> *I was around 12 or 13 years old and I worked as a cleaner. Some would pay me with money, but others would only give me food. I just had to be content with taking food home to share with my family. After they had eaten supper and I washed the dishes, they would give me food. My sisters and I had to do this job because my father was struggling … we didn't have much choice … I wanted to be a nurse.*

Decolonising towards an indigenised knowledge: Oral history as a method

The call for the decolonisation of social and natural sciences is not new, it has been an ongoing part of southern discourses on knowledge and power for decades. Of late, this issue is increasingly being connected to broader struggles for the decolonisation of economy, space, memory and politics generally, as seen in the uprisings of university students and workers in South Africa and elsewhere. In navigating towards a decolonial turn, we must detox method and methodology because we have known for some time that they are contaminated with the ideological imports of epistemic imperialism. Methodological traditions are founded on the negation of alternative ways of understanding reality assumed to be inferior, unscientific, deviant and mythological. Therefore, decolonial meditations such as oral history as a methodological option risk being disqualified, discredited and liquidated on the basis that they do not follow the dictates of Cartesian rationality and imperial reason. This imperial reason, as a dominant epistemic lens of mainstream science, has been founded and sustained by methods and methodologies whose intellectual, institutional and ideological configurations are mediated and mapped by the unyielding demands of historical geography (Zondi 2018). In justifying the muting of the precolonial history of black people, the colonisers excluded all material in the archives that could supplement the fact that African societies had a history. The disregarded material included artefacts and myths which were subsequently categorised as culture incapable of having any form of history. Only the materials

7 Kwenda 1 is a member of the Kwenda family who chose to remain anonymous.

chosen by these colonial authorities were certified as factual and documentary (Hamilton, Mbenga & Ross 2010).

> *African subjectivity that emerged from these processes of racialisation and inferiorisation of blackness, is one that has a diminished ontological density. It became a subjectivity that was said to be characterised by a catalogue of deficits and a series of lacks … these deficits and lacks that were attributed to the African subject ranged from lack of souls, writing, history, civilisation, development, democracy, human rights, and ethics* (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014: 198).

In countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand, the phenomenon of difficult and hidden histories has been especially marked, and thus the troubling pasts are harder to resolve. The difficulty encountered by settler societies is mainly rooted in the lack of a dramatic moment of transitional change, such as the demise of a colonial regime in Africa or Asia, or the defeat of a totalitarian state in Latin America (Attwood 2013). Africans were forced into colonial subjectivity for over 300 years and then 'forced to reproduce a colonial future that was inimical to their aspirations'. In repelling the effects brought about by colonialism, 'Africans embarked on anti-colonial nationalist-inspired decolonial struggles as part of their drive to create African futures' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014: 184). In South Africa, we have fully entered what looks like a negative moment that most postcolonial African countries experienced in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. This moment is murky, as today many want to crumble whiteness in its entirety. Versions of whiteness that produced colonial spaces and men like Sammy Marks and Cecil John Rhodes must be recalled and de-commissioned if we are to put history to rest. In that way 'we can free ourselves from our own entrapment and open a future for all here and now' (Mbembe 2015).

Decoloniality's point of origination was the Third World, in its diversity of local histories and different times, and Western imperial countries that first interfered with those local histories (Mignolo 2011). The issue of decolonisation of literature is vast and longstanding and emerges through transdisciplinary engagements, which include critical race studies, Negritude literature, queer feminism, subaltern studies, postcolonial studies and Indigenous and Pan-African scholarship (Patel 2020). Because of its opposition to colonising practices, 'decolonisation helps to confront the imposing of Eurocentric ideologies on the ways of being and ways of knowing

that have shaped the educational, cultural, linguistic and economic realities of the colonised' (Oyedemi 2021: 217).

Mainstream methodology excludes, disconnects and silences, thus it should not be the only methodology chosen as suitable, but rather it should undergo rigorous questioning, be rebelled against, disrupted and challenged. Being in the mainstream does not automatically make these methods ethical routes to finding or processing pure knowledge. These methods were constructed through systems and situations that are marked by power relations, ideological agendas, class motivations, patriarchal considerations and imperial designs that perpetuated Eurocentrism while pushing down African methods of knowledge production to a low-grade status (Zondi 2018). Oral history as a method seeks to broaden 'participation in history by faithfully recording the life stories of those marginalised from consideration' (Alagoa 2006: 13). Oral testimonies were employed in this study to mitigate the application of both archives and written texts which in themselves too often reflect biased perspectives of the composer's' influence by circumstances of their time. While other families that lived and worked on the Zwartkoppies Farm feature in the archival records I accessed at the University of Cape Town, the Manyaka family's records are undetectable. Oral histories were used to uncover and fill in the gaps that exist in historical context through perspectives and experiences that have been largely ignored (Ferderer 2015).

Voices of 'servants' and their descendants

Accounts depicted here are translated verbatim so as not to misrepresent the interviewees. It has been a laborious journey to locate most of these individuals, and even when I did, there was great reluctance among some. I gathered that some chose not to go back to the past, while others were just anxious about being interviewed despite my demonstrating the subject matter of my research. Although I was only able to interview 'servants' and descendants of three families, it is worth noting that there are other families that lived and still live on the farm. The Mathibelas, Rakomakos, Masilelas, Maswanganyis and Molefis have left the farm while the Kwendas, Lodis and Sibandes occupy different portions of it. The Manyakas left the farm during the course of my research:

Moses Popotane Manyaka

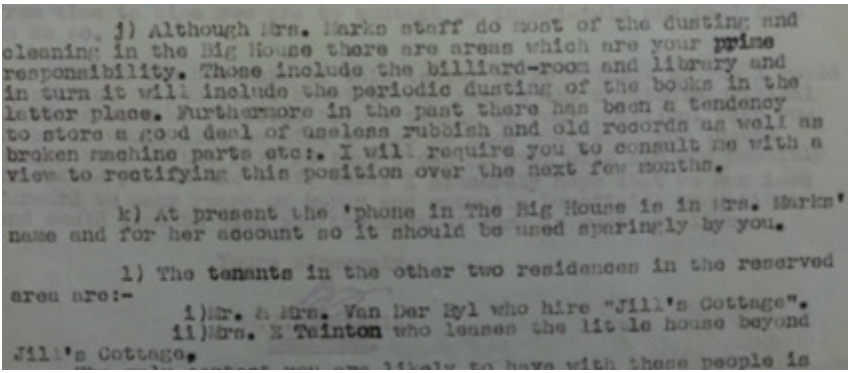
I was born on 4 April 1956. I was born on this farm. My brothers were born here too. Initially our home was the white house that is now occupied by the Boer man (farm manager's cottage), from what our parents told us. Where our family house is currently situated used to be an office. That was Joe Marks's office. My father was a foreman. My father was Kleinboy Manyaka. He's originally from Limpopo and came here while he was still very young. He worked at the dairy to milk cows. The reason why we were moved from the farm manager's cottage was due to my brothers' noise. After being moved from the farm manager's cottage, Joe Marks built a house for us where it is currently situated. Joe Marks died and Meyberg took over the farm. I was taken out of school so as to work on the farm. I went to school at Kutumela Primary School. I was forced to drop out of school to work on the farm. I had to work because we were afraid that they would evict my family from the farm. After some point, Meyberg sold his portion of the farm and left. Next, the portion on the Nellmapius side was also sold. This farm is very big; it covers a large area, right up to Eerste Fabrieken. Portions of this farm have been sold bit by bit. After a while, a meeting was called; it can be 13 years ago, we were told to move out of the farm. We asked how possible that was and were told that Mario had bought the portion we were occupying. He is said to be a developer, he builds houses. One of the Marks family members sold the farm to Mario. We told them that we will not move here, where will we go? We were born here; our brothers were also born here.

Simon Minaar Bafedi [8]

I was born in 1958 in Dennilton, Limpopo Province … I arrived at Zwartkoppies Farm in 1972. At Zwartkoppies I was staying with my maternal grandmother Karlina (Caroline) Mmathokwana Manyaka, who worked for Joe Marks as a cook. I did not attend the normal day school, but the night one.

8 Younger brother of Frans Bafedi, recorded only as Frans 2 in a letter written by S.J.N. Meisels to Van Kleef on 21 September 1976.

Mr Mahloko was teaching us maths and other subjects. I worked as a gardener under Van der Byl for seven years or so … When I turned about 25 years, my father called me back to Dennilton so I could go for initiation. Upon my return, I looked for work at the factories in Silverton and was hired by Nissan. I left without saying goodbye to Van der Byl. I also had to go look for a place to stay as I was not allowed to live on the farm while I was no longer working there. After a while, I came back to the farm to visit the Van der Byl[9]*. I wore a three-piece suit. They were happy to see me, or at least Mrs van der Byl, Mr van der Byl was an evil man … I later bought a Mercedes, a big one.*



j) Although Mrs. Marks staff do most of the dusting and cleaning in the Big House there are areas which are your prime responsibility. Those include the billiard-room and library and in turn it will include the periodic dusting of the books in the latter place. Furthermore in the past there has been a tendency to store a good deal of useless rubbish and old records as well as broken machine parts etc:. I will require you to consult me with a view to rectifying this position over the next few months.

k) At present the 'phone in The Big House is in Mrs. Marks' name and for her account so it should be used sparingly by you.

l) The tenants in the other two residences in the reserved area are:-

i) Mr. & Mrs. Van Der Byl who hire "Jill's Cottage".
ii) Mrs. E Tainton who leases the little house beyond Jill's Cottage.

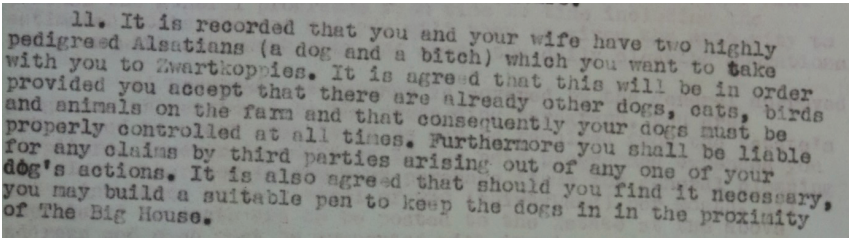
Figure 1. Excerpt from appointment letter dated 17 October 1977 from Maisels to Pettinger

Kwenda 1

I was born here on this farm. My father arrived in 1950 and worked as a gardener and later as a chef. My father was 15 years old when he started working on the farm. He worked here in Zwartkoppies and in Vereeniging. He used to travel with makgowa[10]*. I went to Kutumela Molefi Primary School, and after finishing my primary schooling I worked for different white families within Zwartkoppies … they lived in the cottages. I was around 12 or 13 years old and I worked as a cleaner. Some would pay me with money, but others*

9 The Van der Byls occupied one of the cottages on the farm.
10 A term used to refer to white people in Sotho-Tswana languages.

would only give me food. I just had to be content with taking food home to share with my family. After they had eaten supper and I cleaned the dishes, they would give me food. My sisters and I had to do this job because my father was struggling … we didn't have much choice. I did not like the fact that our movement was restricted as we could not play freely like children would. The caretaker hated my brother, so whenever we played beyond the restricted area, he would unleash the dogs. The one thing I hated the most while growing up was when a bell rang in the morning at 5am, waking my father up to make breakfast for Joe Marks and his family. There was a bell connected to our house, yet we did not have electricity.



11. It is recorded that you and your wife have two highly pedigreed Alsatians (a dog and a bitch) which you want to take with you to Zwartkoppies. It is agreed that this will be in order provided you accept that there are already other dogs, cats, birds and animals on the farm and that consequently your dogs must be properly controlled at all times. Furthermore you shall be liable for any claims by third parties arising out of any one of your dog's actions. It is also agreed that should you find it necessary, you may build a suitable pen to keep the dogs in in the proximity of The Big House.

Figure 2. Excerpt from appointment letter dated 17 October 1977 from Maisels to Pettinger

What I loved about growing up in the farm was when the Markses threw sweets at us to catch over their car windows. The other thing I loved was when my father brought us soft porridge from the Markses' house. Our family photographs burnt in a fire that caught my shack after I had left my parents' house. I left Zwartkoppies to work in the farms around Benoni. My daughter also worked there, picking up potatoes … When Zwartkoppies became a museum, I had hope that our lives would change, but nothing has changed, even in the new South Africa.

Kemape Frans Bafedi

I was born in 1937 in Dennilton. My maternal grandfather was Makitimela Manyaka. He worked in Zwartkoppies for many years. He had three wives. He worked the white farmers' fields, from ploughing to harvesting. In

Zwartkoppies, my grandfather worked for Joe Marks as a gardener too. He was old, no longer able to work. Four years went by without work and Joe Marks told my grandfather that he cannot continue to live on the farm while he is not working on the farm. Since his children had left the farm and working elsewhere, my grandfather could continue living on the farm on condition that one of his family members was working on the farm. Following Marks's conditions of stay, my grandfather and his second wife came to Dennilton to ask my parents that I come to Zwartkoppies to be his replacement so he can continue living on the farm. Ek was jonk, baie jonk[11]*. That is how I came to work at Zwartkoppies.*

Sana Maselatole Mabogoane

… It was nice growing up on the farm, but the challenge came when we had to go to high school. There was only one primary school, Kutumela Molefi. This school was built by my great-grandfather. Kutumela was both a teacher and a traditional healer. The Marks family helped him in however way they could. The school was built with mud bricks. My grandfather Frans Motshegoa was born in 1912. We had agricultural fields. My grandfather also had cows, which we milked. He also worked for the Marks family. Remember, in the past, you could not live on a farm for free, so my grandfather had to work. He was not remunerated with money, but the Markses gave him mealie meal for porridge, salt and fruits, so that's what we ate. My grandfather worked the Marks gardens; he also cleaned the yard. My grandfather Frans Molefi was the last one to work on the farm. After he was released from his duties, none of my family members was required to work on the farm. In the past, we used to receive letters stating that we are the original residents of Zwartkoppies and that we should never move. We did not know, but we kept the letters safe. We did not have to work as children; it was only my grandfather who was working on the farm. The Markses found my great-great-grandfather, great grandfather Kutumela and grandfather, then they made my family worked for them. The Markses found them here. You know, during times of oppression, white people could just choose a place they wanted to occupy, and if they found

11 Translated into English as 'I was young, very young.'

> *people, those people would be under them and work as their labourers, as was the case with my family. Most of my relatives left the farm and moved. There were families of Lodi, Manyaka, Kwenda, Sibandes, Matjilas, Mathibelas, Sibandes and Rakomakos. Currently, the families that live on the farm are of Lodis, Sibandes, Kwendas, Manyakas, Matjilas, Maswanganyis, Masilelas and Molefis. The Rakomakos were promised a house in Mamelodi. We were told about the house and part of the farm being declared a museum. There were meetings at the Sammy Marks house from time to time that we accompanied my grandfather to, but we would remain outside and not be part of those meetings.*

During apartheid, the worker was not free. Many of these workers – mainly men working in the factories and farms – struggled with their employers over wages during the day, and after work, they faced the struggle of the cost of living. This was the case for Mr Kwenda, and as a result, his daughters had to work as child labourers to assist him (Izwi lase Township 1983). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2014) posits that the main purpose of racial classification was to relegate Africans to a continuous sense of becoming and never reaching a state of completeness, as that was reserved for the whites. It was a deliberate act to consign Africans to a level of inferiority by continuously questioning their very being and subjecting them to enslavement, dispossession of land and forcing them to work the land.

Forced removals at Zwartkoppies

The resettlement of Africans to concentrated settlements in Ciskei goes as far back as the 1830s. Attempts to control and manage the conditions of labour tenancy in favour of white landowners were elevated with the passing of the 1913 Natives Land Act (NLA), which aimed at stamping out all forms of independent black tenancy. The NLA 'prohibited sharecropping on white-owned farms, limited the number of labouring families on a single farm to five, and laid down that all black tenants were to be defined as servants and not just as individually contracted employees'. In most cases, the tenant families have lived in these areas, which were called 'Black spot' communities, for generations. In some cases, they have legal title deeds to the land, and in nearly all, they were forced to leave homes, schools and churches to occupy cultivated land (De Wet 1994). Similarly, post-democracy, as highlighted below,

Moses Popotane Manyaka and his family were forcibly removed to make way for developers:

> *… Portions of this farm have been sold bit by bit. After a while, a meeting was called, it can be 13 years ago, we were told to move out of the farm. We asked how possible that was and were told that Mario had bought the portion we were occupying. He is said to be a developer; he builds houses. One of the Marks family members sold the farm to Mario … We told them that we will not move here. Where will we go? We were born here; our brothers were also born here. We told them we will not move, over our dead bodies. I arranged a meeting with Mario. I told Mario I am not my sister Stephina whom he harassed. I will talk to Malema[12] so that more people can occupy this land, since we are not safe here. Twenty shacks will do. I will make sure you lose this place.* (Manyaka 2018)

The Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act were passed by Parliament in 1950 and subsequently amended several times. These two acts were aimed at enforcing segregation (Christopher 1987).

One of the forced removals that took place following the passing of the 1950 legislations was the Sophiatown removals in 1953, whereby the apartheid government issued orders to the residents to move. Many Africans had title deeds to land and property in Sophiatown and adjoining areas, but the government was intent on turning them into landless workers. The racist government also prohibited occupation in the proximity of 'white' residential areas, such as Newclare and Westdene (Weinberg 1981). The Molefis experienced being forcefully removed, as Sana Maselatole Mobogoane relayed:

> *… There was a developer that came here in 2007, and we were told that he has bought the portion that we were occupying. As I speak, the Manyaka house has been broken down and a road is being constructed. The Rakomako family left in 2010. In 2015, we were told to move, and we refused. A TLB truck was sent to break down my family house. In 2007, Joe Marks's grandson Maisels*

12 Julius Malema is the leader of one of the opposition parties in South Africa called the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF).

> *came to tell us about the sale of the land and told us not to worry. He also told us that the developer will build us a house on the farm. Things changed out of the blue and we were told to move. Our house was destroyed, so was that of Maswanganyi. Other residents moved. They broke down our house while we were inside; they sent a TLB to destroy our house. Subsequent to this forced removal, we contacted Land Affairs, and our case is currently in the courts.*

Farmers, a key element in the National Party constituency, had no difficulty swerving the legislation they needed to bring about an end to labour tenancy. The Bantu Laws Amendment Act of 1964 enabled the minister to prohibit tenancy within any area. Large numbers of families were evicted by farmers and Department of Bantu Administration officials. Many of these families were removed to rural slums, which were called closer settlements (Unterhalter 1987). From the interviews I conducted, it became apparent that the voices of the families that lived on the Zwartkoppies Farm did not matter to the developer; hence, their forced removal went through.

Elusive freedom in a democratic South Africa

For the leader of Black Consciousness, Bantu Steve Biko, the notion of freedom for black people meant overcoming not only racism but being recognised as human. He believed that freedom meant free 'participation by all members of society, catering for the full expression of the self in a freely changing society dominated by the will of the people' (Gibson 1988: 9).

> *… My wish is to be treated the same way as others, like the way white people are being treated in this place. All these white people arrived way later than us on this farm, but they have everything – their homes are beautiful. But what have we, the same house that my father built for us when he arrived here in 1950? We do not even have fencing for security, but the rest of the white tenants have. I'm forever anxious that we may be kicked out of the farm at any time. We do not have title deed, so we are unsure of our future here* (Kwenda 1 2020).

Certainly, apartheid in South Africa left a legacy of great economic inequality and dismal poverty. Thus, the election campaign tagline of the ruling African National

Congress (ANC), 'A better life for all', aimed at acknowledging that the struggle for liberation meant the struggle to annihilate the effects of racial capitalism (Madlingozi 2007). Kwenda 2[13] conveyed their family's struggles as follows:

> *Although we now have electricity, it is izinyoga*[14] *connection and we had to fight for it. We are unable to do renovations or restorations to this house because we were told that it is more than 60 years, thus to that effect protected by heritage authorities. We have been promised on numerous times that we will get a shower and proper sanitation, but to date, nothing has changed.*

Progressives around the globe observed with wonder as Nelson Mandela became the first democratically elected president of South Africa. Many observers were amazed by the relative peace that accompanied the transition, given centuries of oppression and unrest, and they declared South Africa the 'miracle nation' (Madlingozi 2007). This remarkable transition was followed in 1996 by the crafting and approval of a transformed and inclusive constitution within which the Bill of Rights is embedded. Sadly, the Kwenda dream of enjoying all of these rights remains unfulfilled, as related below:

> *We were allowed to meet with other residents of Zwartkoppies and surrounding farms, but the manager told us not to say anything in these meetings since we had nothing to worry about pertaining to our residence in Zwartkoppies. These meeting were meant to discuss our future in the farms, as developers are saturating these areas.* (Kwenda 2 2020)

Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution (1996) encompasses the Bill of Rights, in which freedom of assembly is entrenched in section 17. This section, which is often read in tandem with freedom of association in section 18, states that it is 'the individual right or ability of people to come together and collectively express, promote, pursue, and defend their collective or shared ideas'. The right to freedom of association is recognised as a human right, a political right and a civil liberty.

13 Kwenda 2 is another member of the Kwenda family who chose to remain anonymous.

14 *Izinyoga* is a Zulu word translated as 'snakes'. However, in this context, the word means illegal electricity connection and is also widely used in townships and many areas of the South African society to refer to electrical cable thieves.

Even though they were 'allowed' to attend community meetings, the Kwenda family members' participation was restricted; therefore, their right to freedom of assembly and association could not fully be enjoyed in a democratic South Africa. Other farm residents' rights were violated as highlighted below:

> *No one informed us that a portion of the farm where my family house is situated would be sold or leased to someone for developments. After the sale, all services that we used to receive from the main house, which is now a museum, were cut without any notification. Things changed abruptly. The water supply was cut, and security personnel ceased from monitoring our house. Many of my family members died, and it was no longer safe living in that house, so we moved and would go to the house every now and then. The house was broken into numerous times. This developer who had bought the portion we occupied later on organised security personnel to monitor his land, so that meant our family house could also be monitored. However, in 2019, the security personnel left the area, thence our house was broken into continuously* (Manyaka 2018).

> *Now my grandparents' home is vandalised. It is in ruins.* (Ngobeni 2019)

> *When a democratic South Africa came into being in 1994, I thought life would change for us, but all is still the same.* (Kwenda 1 2020)

> *We were, in 2015, bulldozed on my ancestral land. Our house was destroyed because of new developments.* (Sana Mabogoane)

> *We were promised a shower and proper sanitation a long time ago; we are still waiting.* (Kwenda 2 2020)

Conclusion

Through this research, I found myself immersed in the aftermath of the colonial and apartheid legacies engrained by the effects of systems of oppression. This aftermath brought me to the Zwartkoppies Farm to be part of reconstructing the discarded and ignored voices in the archives. By and large, these 'servants' are still struggling for

freedom in this supposedly free and democratic South Africa. Although the country transitioned from colonial and apartheid eras into democracy, the living conditions of the Kwenda family have not improved at all. The Kwenda family occupies a portion of the Zwartkoppies Farm belonging to Ditsong Museums of South Africa, an entity of the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture. However, the family is in distress as they still struggle for basic services; thus, this family remains just as invisible as it was during apartheid. For the Molefi family, their forced removal 21 years into democracy was an act of disregarding their having arrived before Sammy Marks on Zwartkoppies Farm and a rehash of the 1950s forced removals. The use of oral history as a source in this study intentionally questions the status of written sources, usually presented as the ultimate truth, and gives a voice to the marginalised. Through the collection of oral testimonies by descendants of 'servants', gaps that were present in the archives have been filled and unrecorded information has emerged. These oral accounts were cross-checked for corroboration with what is in the archives and physical evidence in the form of settlements. My aim in including oral history in this study was to excavate the hidden histories, which entailed scratching surfaces and excavating histories that had been buried and taking the risk of tackling subjects that are uncomfortable to deal with. It is through the silences that were intentionally crafted by those who were in power that today we find ourselves asking pertinent questions of the marginalised. In decolonising, oral histories serve as a way to acknowledge and mobilise indigenous ways of understanding, documenting and sharing stories of the past.

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