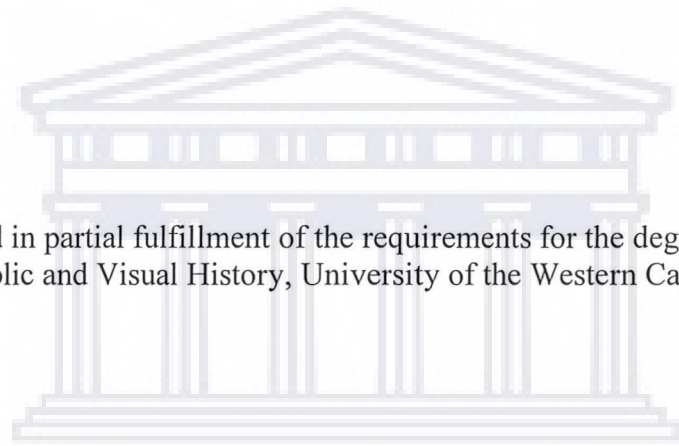


The South African Jewish Museum and the Lwandle Migrant Labour
Museum: Serving different publics in two community museums in the
Western Cape

by

Vincent Vusi Buthelezi

A mini thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Magister Artium in Public and Visual History, University of the Western Cape

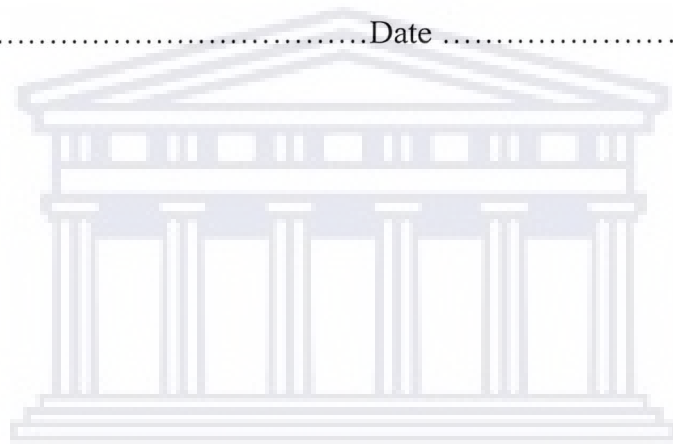


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Supervisor: Prof. Leslie Witz

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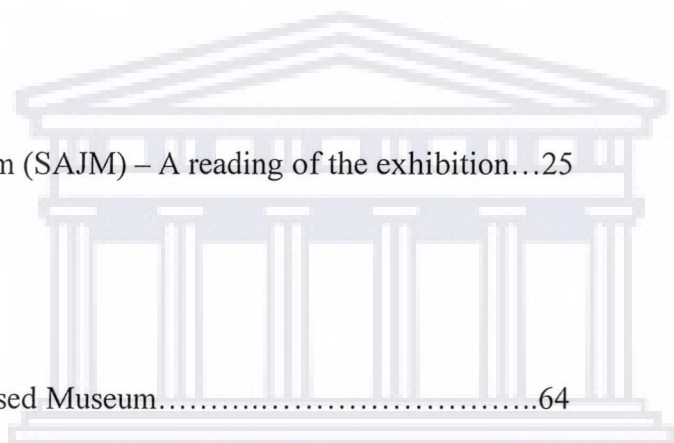
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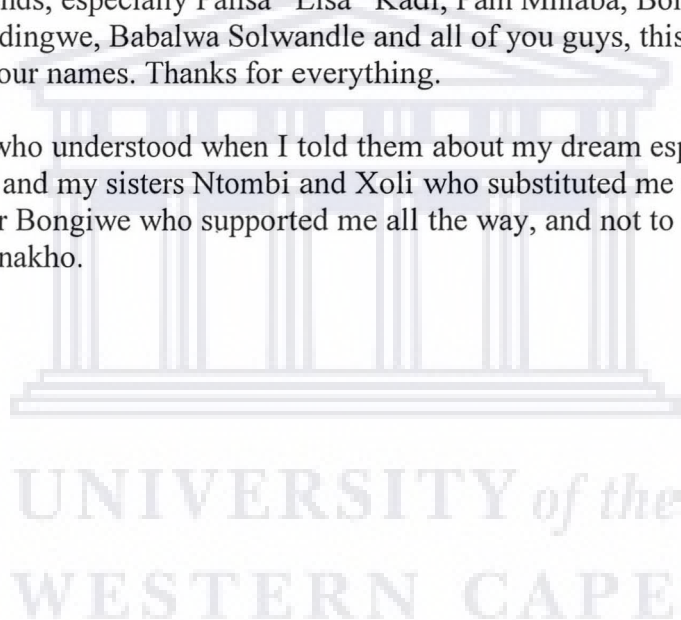
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Introduction: Communities and Museums

The 1990s came with many changes and developments in South Africa, especially in the political and social lives of people and their public institutions. The concept of transformation and transition became a household word, from red-carpeted parliamentary corridors to tiny gravel township streets and villages in rural communities. Two community museums emerged in the Western Cape cultural and heritage landscape in response to these political changes: the South African Jewish Museum and the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum. The extensively revamped South African Jewish Museum, which opened its doors in 1997, is situated in centre of the city of Cape Town (which under apartheid was designated as a white area). It is accommodated in the one of the oldest buildings in South Africa, the original building of the first SA Jewish synagogue built in 1862. The building has been extended, added to and extensively refurbished. The Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum is an entirely new institution in the post apartheid democratic South Africa. It is situated in a township forty kilometers from the Cape Town city centre. During the days of apartheid Lwandle township was designated as a place for black male hostel dwellers. The museum is accommodated in an old community hall, which was once a hostel dwellers recreational hall. However, in the days of apartheid it was difficult for hostel dwellers to access the hall. Writing as late as 1993 Sean Jones asserted that “permission to make use of the hall was difficult to obtain, because the CPA (Cape Provincial Authority) feared it would be used “for political gatherings”.¹ It had hardly been used by hostel dwellers and the township authorities

¹S. Jones, *Assaulting Childhood*, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993), p91

often locked it. The museum, based in this old community hall, opened its doors in year 2000.

Both museums claim to be community museums, but their location and intentions suggest that they are serving different kinds of publics in post-apartheid South Africa. This is a case study that critically evaluates and explores the fashion and nature of service of these two community museums seeking to serve their diverse audiences. The study takes the form of a critical analysis of these museums by mainly focusing on the exhibitions in these museums in relation to the communities they claim to serve and depict.

It should be consistently contemplated that these museums are still in the process of growing and establishing themselves. This affects the mode of their presentation, especially the stability of their display spaces and exhibitions. This work reflects material displays and exhibitions in these museums between 2002 and 2004. Hence the museums' outlook and the content might be slightly different today due to developments that have subsequently taken place in these institutions.

Establishing community museums in post-apartheid South Africa automatically implies dealing with extended legacies of racial divisions, where South Africa has a long history of separately organized and structured publics. Cloete et al emphasize that:

Colonial conquest in South Africa had two contradictory consequences. It brought together different racial and ethnic communities into a nation-state while simultaneously putting in place strategies and laws to prevent the unity of these communities into a nation. Racial, ethnic, cultural, gender, and numerous other kinds of divides were enforced during Dutch colonization and magnified under the British rule. It was, however, the

Afrikaner nationalists with their white supremacy who established the system of apartheid, which perpetuated the legacy of inequality, disparity, and poverty².

This has led to a high consciousness of divisions, with groupings sometimes ending up imagining themselves as separate ethnic or racial entities.

This nature and the complexity of these divisions highlight the question of how one starts to represent communities that carry the legacies of racial discrimination and are characterized by inequality. Different communities have access to disparate sets of resources and often the racial and ethnic categories serve to designate the community. The challenge for community museums in post-apartheid South Africa is to break through these categories. Both the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum and the South African Jewish Museum have signaled their intention to this project. However, as we shall see, it remains very difficult for both institutions to escape these racial legacies.

These racial divisions are in contrast to how museums are generally defined today. Museums, as we know them today, developed primarily in Europe in the 19th Century and extended to other communities of the world. Tony Bennett in his book *The Birth of Museum* pointed out that before the 19th century museums were not just for anyone's gaze or accessibility. Bennett maintains that museums were barred from the public gaze as they were "secreted in the studiolo of princes, or made accessible only to the limited

² N Cloete, et, al *Unity and Diversity; Culture, identity and the role of higher education in building democracy in South Africa*, (Cape Town: NCHE, 2002), p1

gaze of high society in the *cabinets des curieux* of the aristocracy”.³ This statement explicitly elucidates the fact that museum collections were originally not for public consumption. They were regarded as a social class phenomenon within European societies, meant exclusively for aristocrats and the affluent. However, during the 19th Century these museums changed to open their doors to the public, to assert a place among public institutions and to create public citizens. Common definitions of museums claim their publicness. According to T. Ambrose and C. Paine museums are today “treasure-house[s] of the human race. They store the memories of the world’s people, their cultures, their dreams and their hopes”⁴. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) similarly defines a museum as a “non-profit making, permanent institution, in the service of society and its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for the purpose of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of man and his environment.”⁵ These definitions highlight museums as places of universal human values rather than belonging to a racial or ethnic group.

But, it must be recognized that museums also play a complicated role as identities are produced through different mode of representations. Museums are centres of representation through exhibitions and displays. Corinne Kratz maintains that representation has almost “three senses which might called political, artistic and cultural

³ T. Bennett *The Birth of the Museums: History Theory, Politics*, (London: Routledge, 1995), p 59

⁴ T. Ambrose, & C. Paine, *Museum Basics* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p6

⁵ T. Ambrose, & C Paine, *Museum Basics* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p8

in their emphases.”⁶ Museums have mostly employed cultural and artistic emphases to produce certain forms of representations. For the South African Jewish Museum some religious and cultural symbolic components, specifically the ‘synagogue’ and other cultural artifacts like the ‘torah’ have been used in the formulation of Jewish community representation. The Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum has used the hostel and hostel life experience as its basic symbol of representation. Representation, however, also consists of politics. Kratz warns that the “politics of representation, then, center on debates about how particular topics, perspectives, and images become prominent, how their depictions are formed and interpreted and the social relations and inequalities reproduced through representational practices including institutional settings.”⁷ These museums have appeared to construct specific forms of representation of their communities with specific interpretations of images. These museums often emerged as individuals’ ideas, however they tend to take over as authorities depicting the communities they assert to represent.

Museums possess an ability to create a link between audiences and the museum exhibition, which develops into a broad understanding of what is (and is not) exhibited, and how this is related to individual lives. But, Kratz also maintains that the issues of representation “open questions about the rights, authority, and the power to control which voices talk when, and how much, in what order, in what language.”⁸ Audiences are also being drawn to the museums by carefully selected displays, which create meanings to individual as well as collective perceptions. Sharon Macdonald maintains that museums

⁶ C.A. Kratz, *The Ones that are Wanted: Communication and Political Representation in Photographic Exhibitions*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002), p220

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

are sites of contestation and that prompts museums to be a crucial cultural locality of our times. She continues to say that “through their displays and their day-to-day operations they inevitably raise questions about knowledge and power, about identity and difference and about permanence and transience”⁹. Part of this study concentrates on, and discusses, the museum displays, and their representation of “the community”. The concern here is based on whose past is being selected for documentation in the form of a museum exhibition and what criteria are used? This is what Ivan Karp means when he refers museums as “sites for play of identity”.¹⁰

Soon after the museum is given a name it claims its own identity and the identity of the community or the public it claims to represent and serve. Today, in post-apartheid South Africa people who were excluded from decision-making bodies are today being included and are trying by all of their abilities to let their voices be heard. These members of the community, sometimes had their identities and histories muted and oppressed. Karp warns, however, that there is a risk in delegating one representative of a community the authority to tell that community’s stories. Ivan Karp continues to warn that “in a significant degree, it is problematic in the same way as is allowing the traditional curatorial class—drawn primarily from among white, middle—or upper class, college-educated males to speak for all the minority cultures represented in the museum.”¹¹

⁹S Macdonald, & G. Fyfe, (eds.) *Theorizing Museums: Representing Identity and diversity in a Changing World*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers), p199.

¹⁰ I. Karp, *Museums and Communities: Civil Society and Social Identity*, (Washington: Smithsonian, 1992), p19

¹¹ I. Karp *Museums and Communities: The politics of public Culture*, (Washington: Smithsonian, 1992), p145

Hence, communities seeking to represent and interpret their historical pasts with a meaning through museums might be engaging in the self-same process of exclusion.

These plays of identity are evident in what museums see as their primary function, collecting. Museum collections are acquired in different ways. They are donated, bought, loaned or stolen. It is these collections, which form the basis of the claims of museums to be treasure houses of universal value. David Wilson maintains that, “the museum has always been interested in the influence of one culture to another and has in the past rather casually collected objects produced through the interaction of European and the indigenous cultures.”¹² However, museums collections were used sometimes to juxtapose the cultures of different “races” with an intention of depicting “Europeans” as superior and sacred. The question remains visible about who is responsible for selecting and bringing together these collections. Are these collections and the entire displays a result of mutual interaction and consensus from designated directly and indirectly involved stakeholders? James Clifford answers this in the negative. He asks the question: “Should museums be able to assemble exhibits of Indian artifacts (including loans from other institutions) without permission from the relevant tribal communities?”¹³ Clifford has offered a more realistic perspective about collections and maintains, “museums are better seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, and moral relationship – a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull”.¹⁴ Museum collection involves a combination of power relation, a politics of us

¹² D. Wilson, “Collecting”: *The British Museum, Purpose and Politics* (London: British Museum Publications, 1990) p31

¹³ J. Clifford, *Representing the Nation*, (London: Routledge, 1999) p446

¹⁴ Ibid

and them, inclusion and exclusion, and history of unequal relations attached to the collection itself.

Moreover, despite the claims of museums to universal knowledge and understanding, the people to be served are sometimes expected to pay to access the claims about their lives and their cultures inside these museums. Once money is involved the question of access to that service by the different audiences comes to the fore, especially in communities engulfed by legacies of division and inequality. Hence, museum audiences are aware of the fees attached to service provided. Of course, these charges are justified as providing, to a certain extent, sustainability of the museums. Both the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, which has very limited funding, and the South African Jewish Museum, which has extensive funding, use this argument to justify their visitor charges. At time of writing Lwandle charges visitors R30.00 (this also includes a township tour) while the Jewish Museum charges R50.00.

In conclusion, this brings forth the critical sense of exclusion and inclusion of some objects in museum displays and collections. Contemporary South Africa is striving for social integration. What is the role of community museums in this process and are they able to accomplish this integrative role? The rhetoric of 'rights' maintains the right of people to enjoy and form associations and organization. Under the Bill of Rights of the South African constitution "everyone has the right to freedom of association"¹⁵. The rights are not always accompanied by the means to exercise it. Some communities may

¹⁵ *The Constitution of South Africa* (Act 108 of 1996), Chapter 2: Bill of Rights, (Cape Town: Government Printers, 1996), p9

have rights but they may not have some means of enjoying those rights. Some communities have been exercising their rights and are well exposed to concepts like museums while others have been denied these rights in the past. That is why it is so eminent to trace the origin of museums, particularly community museums, and their operation in relation to the South African context.

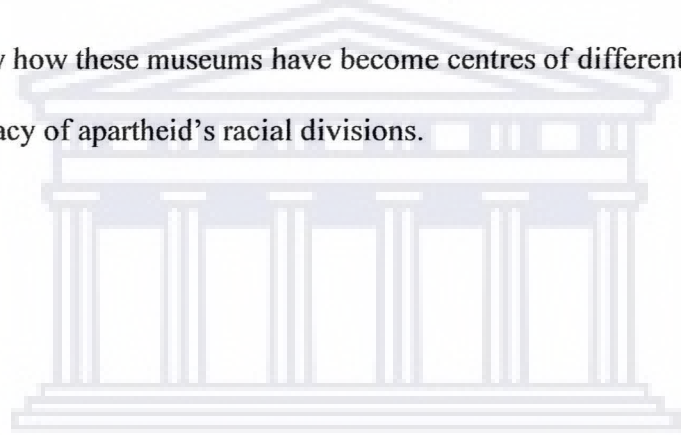
This work will focus on various aspects that constitute the idea of community museums and their role in representing communities. The first chapter directly focuses on the history and the background of the South African Jewish Museum (SAJM).

The second chapter provides a critical analysis of the South African Jewish Museum. It looks at how artifacts and museum displays have been used to portray the Jewish people of South Africa firstly as religious and cultured people and how they are associated in the display with the ancient Jews of the Bible. Other portrayals include the representation of Jews as economically successful people through unity and hard work, their success in Johannesburg and Kimberley, their ordeals as victims of racism which encouraged them to join the struggle against racism and apartheid, their strong relationship with Israel as well as the construction of Lithuania as the original home of South African Jews.

My third chapter focuses on the history of the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum (LMLM). The history of Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum is connected with the history of Lwandle, its development as the place for single males' hostels, its transition to a township and then the establishment of the museum.

Chapter four critically deals with the portrayal of Lwandle's inhabitants as victims of apartheid and racism through the museum exhibition and the township walk. A key image here is how the people of Lwandle withstood the ordeals of apartheid and how they have been affected by developments in post-apartheid South Africa.

In the concluding chapter I draw out the comparison between the two museums, based on their museum displays in relation to identities that these two museums are battling to construct. I try to show how these museums have become centres of different publics, perpetuated by the legacy of apartheid's racial divisions.



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Chapter One

A History of the South African Jewish Museum

The first Jewish Museum was established in 1958. How did it come into being and how did it happen that a Jewish Museum came into existence in a location that once belonged to a colonial empire? When apartheid rule ended towards the end of 20th century the Jewish Museum changed its name to become the new South African Jewish Museum. The Kaplan-Kushklick Foundation funded the extension and complete refurbishment of the museum.

The South African Jewish Museum is located on what can be called a “Jewish Campus” along Hatfield Street, behind the South African National Gallery, in the Company Gardens in Cape Town. The “Jewish Campus” accommodates other institutions like the Holocaust Museum and a Jacob Gitlin Library. A restaurant and museum shop on the premises also encourage visitors to stay much longer than the person might have planned. It is housed in one of the oldest ‘heritage’ sites in the Cape Town and the Western Cape, the Jewish Synagogue.¹⁶ The building is designed in Mid-Victorian synagogal architectural style,¹⁷ associated with institutional structures of western societies. The entrance of the building is supported by pillars that resemble ancient and modern institutional buildings of socialization like, religious temples, law-courts, and

¹⁶ N Murray ‘Representation of space’: Monumental building projecting Cape Town’s Gardens in the nineteenth century, (*Unpublished paper Contemporary Historical Research Seminar, University of the Western Cape*), 2001

¹⁷UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Jewish Museum Catalogue 3.09 1958

universities. Thus, the pillars at the entrance of the synagogue symbolize power and knowledge.

An artefact on its own, the first Jewish Synagogue was built in 1862 and consecrated in the 1863¹⁸. This historical building was converted into a museum, which was meant to preserve, conserve and promote Jewish heritage. One of the intentions of this exercise was to serve its people with knowledge of the past and preservation of this knowledge as a form of heritage.¹⁹ The museum started earlier than it is generally known. According to the Jewish Museum catalogue, which I assume to be one of the museum first catalogues, if not the first, the museum started in 1941.²⁰ In the centenary year of the Cape Jewish Hebrew Congregation in 1941, a society to establish the museum and the archives was formed. However exhibitions of artefacts that relate to Jewish life and history were staged even before.

Today the Jewish Synagogue has transformed from relaying religious wisdom to another forms of knowledge distribution as it is turned into a museum. This synagogue is portrayed by the South African Jewish Museum, as the unifying symbol and the point of reference for the Jewish people in any settlement where they exist in South Africa. Thus, the synagogue serves to portray the beginning and the institutionalization of the SA Jewish community. The Jewish synagogue was officially turned into a museum in 1958 through the ideas of Dr Louis Mirvish and who became the chairman of the museum

¹⁸See G. Saron, *The Jews in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Scarecrow Books, 2001), p7

¹⁹UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Constitution of the Jewish Museum

²⁰UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division,, Jewish Museum Collection, Jewish Catalogue 3.09 1958

society in 1941. The museum society was founded to advance the idea of establishing a museum and the archives. At its opening the museum hosted the Mr. I. Bavy, Minister from Israel. This brings the notion of link between South African Jews and Israeli Jews as we going to see this later in the next chapter.

The old Jewish Museum emerged as a cultural space, which kept Jewish ceremonial art and historical objects and documents that symbolize the Jews as cultural entity. These artefacts ranged from religious ceremonial to cultural art. Most of the ceremonial art that forms the first part of the new museum today were in the old Jewish museum. The old museum mainly encouraged the Jewish community not to forget their religion, culture and identity. There were eleven show-cases in the upstairs gallery of the Jewish Museum.²¹ The displays of the torah and its accessories in show-cases in the old Jewish Museum stressed the significance of Jewish religion among the South African Jews. As elaborated in the next chapter, the symbolic cultural instruments that are used on Jewish holy days to observe Jewish religious cultural rituals were dominating the old Jewish Museum. A Passover Plate in show-cases number four and a Kiddush Cup, which dominates up to the seventh case represent Jewish tradition as well as religion. Show-cases eight and nine displayed lamps, the Sabbath lamp and candlesticks as well as Chanukka lamps.²²

²¹ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Catalogue of items housed in the Upstairs Gallery

²² UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Catalogue of items housed in the Upstairs Gallery

Other than the instrumental objects and ornaments there were different types of symbolic clothing and photographs. Women were also represented in the museum collection. There were women's wedding gowns and night gowns which belonged to women mentioned below. Therefore the old Jewish Museum focused more on cultural representation, which exclusively concentrated on Jews as a cultured nation. Apparently the old Jewish Museum was about the Jews and for the Jews. Its representation of the South African Jewish community was exclusively Jewish.

There is evidence in the constitution of the old Jewish Museum about its objectives. Clause 2 states that "the object of the Museum shall be to create, encourage, foster and maintain an interest in, and collect, acquire and exhibit objects of Jewish interest, historical and otherwise."²³ According to the main reason mentioned above, a Jewish Museum was established to cover a broad scope of tasks. Collecting and conserving Jewish historical objects in order to display for the purposes of encouraging Jewish awareness is visible in previous museum notices and public invitations.

According to Eric Michaels who is today the SAJM Technical Director, in the old synagogue, from 1958 to 1996, artefacts were displayed in an exhibition space upstairs. The ground floor of the synagogue was an open space that was used for children's synagogue services. In this space children's education and other activities related to

²³ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Constitution of The Jewish Museum, Cape Town.

children took place. On the wall there was little photographic material for exhibition.²⁴

The artefacts that formed the museum of 1958 to 1996 at the upstairs of the Old Synagogue today constitute the first part of the new South African Jewish Museum. The old museum space up-stairs is now used as administrative space of the new South African Jewish Museum.

At the Manuscripts and Archives division at the University of Cape Town Libraries, I discovered that there were more than artefacts displayed in the old Jewish Museum. As far back as 1926 the Old Synagogue, even before the museum existed, hosted exhibitions. The Cape Town Maccabean Association staged the exhibition of 'Jewish Art and Antiquities' on Monday 31st May 1926.²⁵ Joseph Sachs in the foreword to the exhibition catalogue warned, "Not every Jewish artist is conscious of his racial origin, or intent on showing in his work".²⁶ This exhibition was used as a stage to revive and encourage Jewish people to be conscious about their identity as Jews and as cultural producers. However, the SAJM does not only claim to be Jewish but also attempts to show Jews as "cultured". The representation of Jews is fabricated to demonstrate that Jewish culture is not static, it changes with times.

Between 1941 and 1954 antique materials were acquired from different generous contributors. In 1954 an exhibition of Jewish religious art was hosted by the South

²⁴ This is part of the account provided by Mr Eric Michaels about the original setting of the museum before 1996, (recorded interview between Vusi Buthelezi and Mr. Eric Michaels on the 17.11.2004 at the SAJM, Cape Town).

²⁵ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Catalogue,

²⁶ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Cape Town Maccabean Association Catalogue

African Jewish Board of Deputies. This is said to have generated interest²⁷ in the museum, which led to a more organized museum space. In 1956 after the renovation of the old synagogue showcases were installed in the gallery with a purpose of exhibiting Jewish ceremonial art.²⁸ During this period the Cape Council of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies appeared to be much involved. Ceremonial silver, which was recovered from the Nazi loot in Europe was exhibited in the museum. During this period the first curator of the museum Mr. F.L. Alexander was appointed.

Most of the artifacts and objects in the Jewish Museum were collected through donations and some were on loan from the members of Jewry. From one of the archival materials there is a list of donors between 1958 and 1962.²⁹ The Great Synagogue Ladies Guild donated R300.00 for chandeliers; Dr. Louis Mirvish gave copper plates, books, photographs, registers, a chanukah lamp, and other materials. Mrs E Alexander donated ceremonial trowels and keys, which are also on display in the new SAJM. It is apparent that the Jewish Museum was built on a foundation of Jewish displaying culture with an aim of representing what constitutes a Jewish background. One of the explicit aims of Jewish Museum and Archives was to provide the “premises of the Old Synagogue as a lively centre for cultural activities.”³⁰

²⁷ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Jewish Catalogue 3.09 1958

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Donors to the Jewish Museum 1956-1962.

³⁰ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Jewish Catalogue 3.09 1958

Since, the museum's inception in 1958 it has been instrumental in staging activities of advancing Jewish interest and consciousness. In 1970 between the 23rd February and 9th March, the Jewish Museum presented 'Exposition and Lectures'. This activity was also going to take place in South African Cultural History Museum.³¹ The Cultural History Museum, housed in the previously known as "Old Supreme Court" preserved colonial structures.

In Chairman's report of 1974 acquisitions were made from different donors, a set of Rimmonin, a Yad and a Bissamin container from Orenburg in Russia, to mention a few.³² During the same year Mr. Frank Bradlow gave a lecture on the life and works of the late first curator of the museum and a photographic exhibition, "Synagogues in the Peninsula", was set up to parallel the Cape Town Festival.³³ During the Cape Town Festival the following year special displays of old bibles and Megillat Esther, Jewish textiles and embroideries were made. The museum also participated in an exhibition entitled "Tapestry of South African Women" held at the BP Centre.³⁴

Jewish Museum has consistently demonstrated Jews as religious entity by always linking their exhibitions with their house of worship. During 1981 different artists and

³¹ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Brochure/public invitation

³² UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Jewish Museum Chairman's Report-1974

³³ Ibid

³⁴ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, Jewish Museum Collection, Jewish Museum Chairman's Report-1975 & 1976

photographers held the exhibition of the Great Synagogue's 75th Anniversary displaying the work of art that depicted the synagogue building.³⁵

The Jewish Museum had communicated to its public in both Afrikaans and English. The South African National Gallery and the Jewish Museum issued a public invitation for the 25th Anniversary of the Jewish Museum in 1983 written in two languages, English and Afrikaans.³⁶ Another undated Jewish Museum catalogue reflects the same. It reads "Catalogue: Jewish Art from the Collection of the Jewish Museum/*Katalogus: Joodse Kuns in Die Besit van die Museum.*"³⁷ The Jewish Museum kept to the official bilingualism of Afrikaans and English, which was made to be recognized as the only significant and existing languages in South Africa at the time.

In 1991 just three year before the first non-racial democratic elections, the Jewish Museum staged an exhibition to commemorate 150th anniversary of the congregation. Libby Robinson, the curator of the day planned the exhibition.³⁸ The content of the exhibition to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Jewish congregation today constitutes much of the current exhibition of the new South African Museum. However there was lot more that formed the exhibition of the museum and that was available for possible selection future exhibition. The main exhibition image was a big ship in the harbour with a

³⁵ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, The Jewish Museum Collection, The Jewish Herald, 27.01.81

³⁶ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, The Jewish Museum, 25th Anniversary of the Jewish Museum Cape Town, 3.8.83 – 11. 9.83

³⁷ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, The Jewish Museum collection, newspaper clip, 2000 (no day and month date provided)

³⁸ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, The Jewish Museum collection., Newspaper clip (no date provided)

crowd of Jewish people arriving in South Africa. In this photograph children appear to be dominating the number of passengers on this ship.³⁹

The Jewish Museum was converted and incorporated into a new South African Jewish Museum (SAJM) in 1996 through the initiative of the Kaplan-Kushlick Foundation. According to South African Jewish Museum directorate, the SAJM does not get any funds from the government, it is a family trust initiative (Kaplan-Kushlick)⁴⁰.

The power of SAJM is mostly invested in the collection and modern advanced display facilities, complementing the architectural design work by Cape Town architects Dennis Fabian Berman Hackner, who were assisted by two overseas museologists, Rene Sivan and Dorit Harel. “The structure is used as an architectural metaphor of bringing the old and the new, across the water.”⁴¹ However, the duties of this team are clearly broken down below by the museum director. The new museum setting goes beyond the claim of Jews being cultured but also a progressive modern community.

Handler and Gable reveal in their work that some changes and new exhibitions in museums emanate from the fact that “history changes”.⁴² Indeed, South African Jewish Museum representation of the Jewish community has changed between 1958 and 1997. This demonstrates how museums presentation and interpretation of history can change

³⁹ UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archive division, The Jewish Museum collection, brochure (no date provided)

⁴⁰ Recorded interview with Ms Shea Albert the director of the SAJM, in the SAJM on the 15th.12. 2003.

⁴¹ G. Norris, Saturday Argus, 16/17. 12. 2000, p5

⁴² R Handler, & E. Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) pp59-61

over time, depending on the context and the period that the museum exists in. Turnbridge and Ashworth maintain, “Much heritage is movable. Such artifacts can therefore be moved to what at the time is felt to be their rightful place in accordance with the history then being related...”⁴³ The transformation of old Jewish museum to a new South African Jewish Museum accompanied by new themes and rearrangement of artefacts prompted SAJM to mostly concentrate on presentation of the victories and glories by certain individual and events over evil impositions that fits in the current political situation in South Africa. The presentation of political oppression based on racial terms, perpetuated by the white racist Afrikaners and English people over Jewish people, the success of South African Jewish community is portrayed to be overcoming those political detractions through unity.

The SA Jewish Museum, houses objects and artefacts that claim to present and represent evidence of the evolution of the SA Jewish community and their involvement and integration with the entire South African society. Through the Kaplan-Kushlick foundation initiative the new museum concept has claimed to distance its representation from being exclusively Jewish.

The story of origins of the Kaplan-Kushlick Foundation is presented by the new South African Jewish Museum. It maintains that the foundation is a trust of two families, which has a long history. Isaac Kaplan and Solomon Kushlick are brothers in law of Rachel Bloch. They married the younger and older daughters of Rachel Bloch respectively. They became business partners of what is known as Cape Gate, a company that still exists

⁴³ J.E. Turnbridge & G.J. Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, (Cheschester: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), p51

today. The company started when Isaac Kaplan was approached by a customer to make a gate in 1928. He realized that he make more gates in cheap way. Isaac and Solomon made the gates and that is when they realized they could start a company. Isaac and Solomon Kaplan are the sons of Max and Rose who migrated from Lithuania in 1876. Isaac needed about £500 to start this business but he had only £100.00. It became clear that he needed external hand in order to put the idea into a reality⁴⁴.

This entire narration as we shall see later links with the notion of Jewish success that is the key to the museum. Solomon Kushlick was interested in Isaac's business mission; he therefore, came with assistance as he had a store in Parow. He contributed three hundred pounds to add to Isaacs and Solomon's. Solomon Kushlick was born in Razeckne in Latvia with his mother and siblings they joined their father in South Africa in 1910. Solomon was a business-orientated man whom is described as a financial genius⁴⁵. It is obvious why he supported Isaacs' business plan that ended up raising considerable sum of money, which later become the main financial basis of the SAJM.

According to Michaels there are several people who contributed to the re-making of the SAJM. Beside Kaplan and Kushlick, who contributed extensively through financial support in the project, there is Eric and Sheila Samson who financially contributed in the building of the exhibition space in the lower gallery⁴⁶. This exhibition space in the lower

⁴⁴ This story is digitized history of South African Jewish Community, (Discovery Computer Centre, in the SAJM lower gallery)

⁴⁵ See SAJM Discovery Center, lower gallery

⁴⁶ see the SAJM museum sketch plan

gallery of the museum called Eric and Sheila Samson Exhibition gallery, which normally accommodates traveling, and temporary exhibitions.

There are a number of people who are openly acknowledged for the success of the museum and its existence. Besides the information supplied by the museum and by the museum catalogue about the contributors in the museum development, I conducted some interviews with the current management of the SAJM where the following information about the people who were involved in museum development was given. According to the museum director (Shea Albert) a museologist from Israel, Renee Sivan, executed the museum concept and curatorial work. Dorit Harel carried out the exhibition and the interior design from Harrel designers also from Israel. This hire of Israelis to come and design the layout of the South African Jewish Museum simply signifies the intention of authenticating the Jewish presentation and brings in the link between South African Jewish community and Israel Jews. Were there no museum designers in South Africa?

The answer is yes, there are. But the implication of using Israelis relates to the authenticity of the Jewishness and Israel connection. Michael Hackner did the architectural work from Dennis Fabian, Berman and Hackner Architects. The museum technical director, Eric Michaels was a project Director when the project started and he is still working for the museum as the Maintenance and technical director. The first director of the SAJM from 1997 to 2000 was Vivienne Anstey.

The interesting issue noticed in both the interviews made between the managing staff, Ms Shea Albert and Eric Michaels and myself is that the builders and the researchers are not

mentioned or not easily remembered as part of museum process of constructing of Jewish community representation and memory. Most other contributors are mentioned in the interviews. Maybe this is because those that are mentioned are also in the museum catalogue. The researchers and the builders are not mentioned, even in the museum catalogue where all contributors are published there is only a name of the building constructors that erected the new building. Only the name of the building construction appears on the wall of the museum next to the plan of the old synagogue. No names of bricklayers, they are both faceless and nameless. Is it the lack of space and time in the catalogue and availability of space in the museum? For example some people are mentioned and singled out by name but the members of building construction team are blanketed under the construction name. This suggests that they are treated as not equal as the designers and architects.

However, museums are fond of famous names and when the SAJM was officially opened, the museum went for one of the most famous and prominent figure in the country and world wide to unveil the museum. The new SAJM opened on the 13th November 2000. Nelson Mandela was invited to open the museum, and a big party was thrown in his name. Why Mandela not Mbeki as a president of the country? Were there no members of the Jewish community who could be officially delegated to open the museum? The answer to these questions can be found through an article in the *Sunday Times* dealing with the SAJM.

The article in the Sunday Times, claimed that “Mandela’s life has been punctuated by the associations with Jews, from Lazar Sidelsky, the lawyer who articulated him in the days when no white firm had ever articulated a black lawyer to the lawyer who prosecuted him at the Rivonia trial, Percy Yutar.”⁴⁷ South African Jews are said to have stepped out of the shadows and into Mandela’s life playing a role in the struggle that many other white South Africans failed to match.⁴⁸ Through this statement, on one hand the SAJM claims a ‘white’ identity and on the other hand it uses Mandela to claim a place in the struggle of non-racialism. As we are going to observe in the next chapter Mandela is used a centre figure to present South African Jews as integrationists.

In conclusion the SAJM has been encouraged by the new changes in South Africa that brought about the end of racial discrimination and racial inequality. In 2000 the South African Jewish Museum attempts to portray South African Jews as part of new democratic South Africa as well as an integral part of the history of South Africa. The sense of this integration has been crafted around culture, religion and politics. Most objects and artefacts on display attempt to show the correlation between Jewish tradition and universal tradition. The depiction of racial victimization of Jews by the South African authorities establishes a relationship and commonality with African people of South Africa who experienced racial prejudice and hardship under the white minority rule. The Jewish struggle against racial prejudice is then associated with the struggle against apartheid where Mandela acts for “black South Africans”.

⁴⁷ Sunday Times Metro, January 2001 (in this newspaper clip, the day and the month is not provided)

⁴⁸ Ibid

Chapter Two

The SA Jewish Museum (SAJM) – A reading of the exhibition

Underlying the narrative in the SAJM is a story of South African Jews as, religious and cultured, economically successful, people who are victims of racism (and hence are anti-racist in their actions and deeds) and who also have a strong relationship with Israel. The museum also continuously and repeatedly highlights Lithuania as the South African place of Jewish origin.

The Religious and Cultured Community

The first thing that seems to make the South African Jewish Museum most intriguing is the lighting. Its glittering power gives life and vivid sight to even the tiniest text, artefacts and objects in the museum. As one enters the museum, on the left-hand side, along the wall of the synagogue are golden plaques that reflect a brief history of the synagogue, its metamorphosis to a museum through the initiative of Dr. Louis Mirvish in 1958 and the 1996 initiative of Kaplan-Kushlick Foundation. The other note is made of significant individuals like Ben Norden who, in 1820 is said to have organized the first Orthodox Congregation of Ten Members. These members were Marcus Constatt, Ben Norden, Morris Stoman, Abraham Horn, Nathan Moss, Adolf Gorden, Samuel Rudolf, Morris Hart and Adolph Gordon.

The SAJM is driven and crafted under the theme of *Reality, Memory and Dreams*. By “Reality”, the museum refers to life experiences of Jewish community in South Africa. Memory, focuses on the history of origin “roots in eastern Europe”, and dreams, “vision of

the future.”⁴⁸ This is how inclusion and exclusion of people and objects in museum is structured.

The glittering collection, in a glass display just on the right-hand side as you enter the first part of the museum, is based on presentation of collection of the objects and artefacts of different religious and ritual ceremonial art of historical Jewish tradition, which serves as a representation of Jewish heritage, culture and identity. The Jewish cultural heritage is not just presented to demonstrate that it has greatly influenced the South African Jewish community to develop and grow from within as a part of the larger South African entity, but also as part of a universal tradition of living.

This display exhibits symbolic objects and artefacts, which demonstrate the significant times and the ways of utilizing these products, which distinguishes and embodies a sense of identity. These objects and artefacts are used in different occasions that only take place on specific days that are assumed to be of high significance in Jewish life and holy in human life. This exhibition attempts to connect the South African Jewish community with their spiritual world. Hence, the SAJM director maintained that the museum is one of “spiritual fulfillment.”⁴⁹ The historical Jews are presented as having a strong faith in their religion. In this display there are objects and artefacts that complement and attach meaning to Jewish religious holidays.

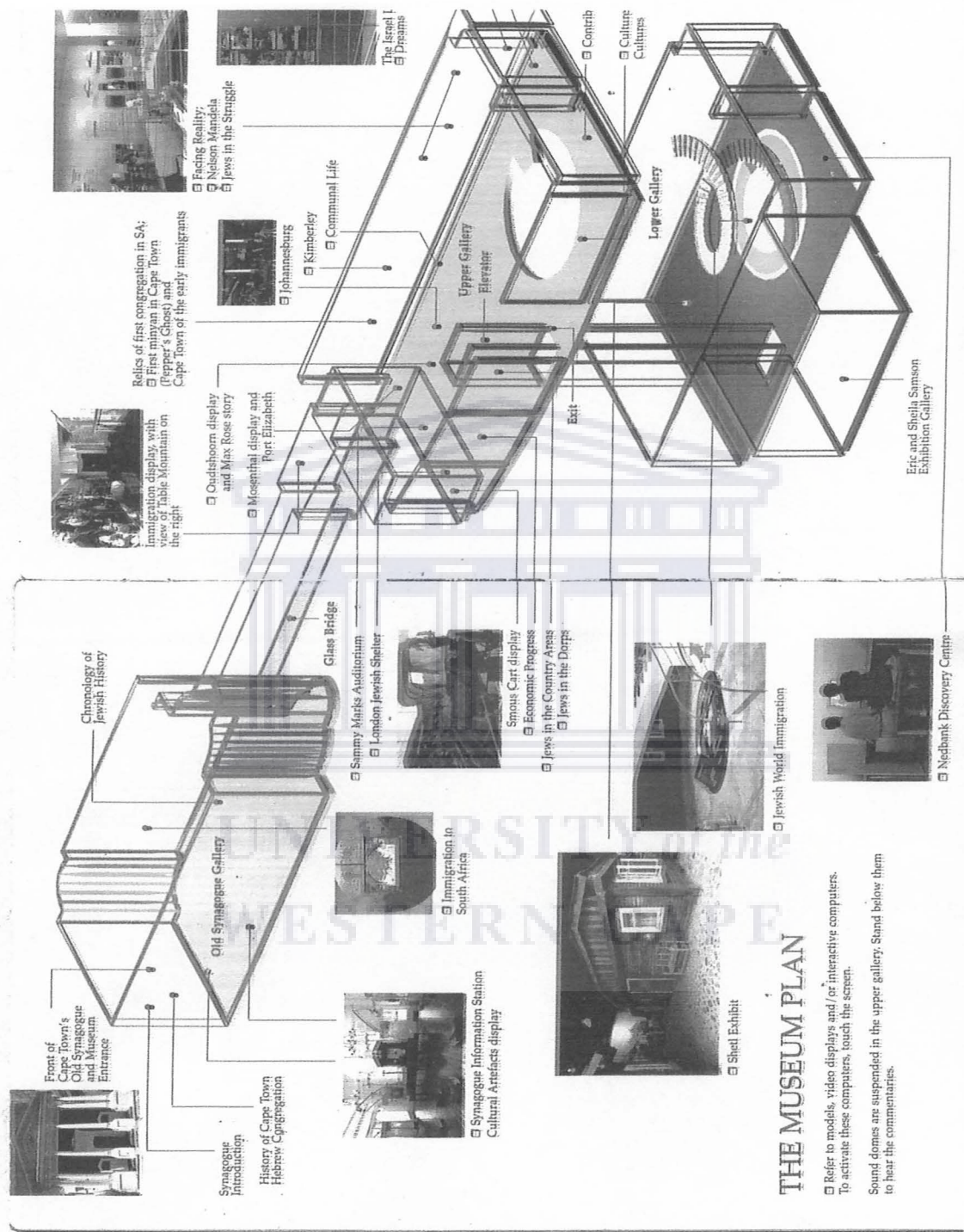
⁴⁹ M Robertson, *South African Jewish Museum Catalogue*, (Cape Town: Scan Shop, 2001) p1

⁵⁰ On the 3rd November 2002; Shea Albert SAJM director appeared in a national television on the SABC1 “Tapestries” as part of South African multi-cultural promotion.

One of four beautiful glass panels introduces Jewish Ceremonial Art displayed in a protective glass cabinet which is lined along the right hand side wall of the Old Synagogue. The Jewish ceremonial artifacts are subdivided. There are those selected to present Jewish religious and ritual ceremonial occasions. There are also objects that are used in the performance of fulfilling these liturgies. This section of the museum is one that presents South African Jewish community and Jews in general as a community rich in a religious-based heritage.

Shifting ones eyes along the wall on the right hand side a huge glass display cabinet exhibiting artefacts that define the Jewish people. These artifacts are classified and categorized into different ceremonial occasions and circumstances. There is a category of religious and cultural artifacts those that are used in fulfilling the religious related rituals. This includes the Torah, Jewish Holy Days and a human life cycle

The initial aspect of the story in the SAJM is the one that associates the Jewish people with an ancient Biblical culture. The story, being told and illustrated by the artefacts, links the Jewish people with an ancient religion, and the Torah seems to represent this assertion. Artefacts, housed in the Old Jewish Synagogue, are presented as a symbol that represent the loyalty and dedication to a religion and the whole environment of the first phase of the SA Jewish Museum is filled with artefacts that are based in the sense of spirituality. Soon after you enter the SAJM you are being encompassed by the ideas of spiritual connection.



Map 1. South African Jewish Museum Map/Sketch, South Africa Jewish Museum Catalogue, 2000

This part of the museum is allocating the SA Jews and the Jews in general next to the ancient Jews of the Bible.⁵⁰ Most of the artifacts and objects are either associated with religion or the ancient Jews.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett maintains that “between 1851 and 1940 Jews represented themselves at international expositions in Europe as and America in a wide range of ways. They defended such universal values as religious freedom. They framed the presentation of Jewish subjects in terms of art and civilization and secured for Judaism a central place in the history of religion.”⁵¹ The SAJM highlights and emphasizes this definition of Jewishness, by using different kinds of artifacts including ornamental artifacts, and exhibits all attached to significance of religious meaning and practices. The museum has selected and made artifacts into a spiritual motivation to the Jewish community with a religious heritage as their vehicle to their growth and success.

Each object on display contains historical and cultural meaning that is connected to Jewish people with their spiritual fulfillment. The old but carefully and adroitly conserved artifacts, which are intricately designed and crafted, attract and provoke the museum visitors’ mind to engage him/herself with the skill that human beings have developed since the formation of societies. This is the sense of being a universal culture. On the other hand it shows, how people have developed the meaning of culture and religion by creating and

⁵¹ SAJM exhibition - old synagogue artifacts exhibition Jewish ceremonial art section in the Old synagogue.

⁵² B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage*, (Barkeley, California University Press, 1998) p79

producing certain symbolic objects over the centuries. The objects and the artifacts in the museum claim the Jews more or less had a unique position in social practice and beliefs and, at the same time, it asserts the sense of universality.

One of the items on display in this section is a Shofar, the Ram's horn that is used on Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) as a symbolic call to awaken individuals to personal responsibilities. The Shofar has been put on display to establish and emphasize the relationship between the Jewish people and the Holy Bible and that Jewish people are Godly. This object is linked by the museum display with a bible book of Numbers 21: verse 1.⁵² This is has been chosen to represent the South African Jewish community as a direct heirs and generations of the historical biblical Jews.

On display there are also objects and artifacts that the SAJM asserts represent the Jewish human life-circle; the birth, growth, love and loss for each moment of passage. The normal stages that are universal that a human being is expected to pass and the rituals that surround each process of transition are on display to authenticate and legitimate these rituals. These objects, are protected in one huge glass cabinet and are classified according to different themes, representing cultural and religious ceremonial arts. The setting and categorization of these artifacts places the Jewish people in a universal map. Moreover most of the interpretations attached to certain artefacts and their use is linked to both cultured and (religious) Biblical conventions and incidents. There are a number of objects and artifacts, which are selected to depict a typical Jewish person. For example on display

⁵² SAJM display on Religious Ceremonial Art in the Old Synagogue.

there is *The Ketubah*, which is a copy of marriage contract, which is pronounced by Rabbi under Bridal canopy. This (marriage) obviously brings the notion of universal culture and the involvement of a Rabbi without doubt brings in religion. There is also a glass that is broken by bridegroom, this glass is said to symbolize the reminder of the destruction of Jerusalem. *The Tallith*, is a shawl garment with fringes of Four Corners worn during prayer. There are other uses of *Tallith* are on the bridal canopy as a cerecloth and in funerals. *The Tefillin* known as *Bar Matzvah* boy's passage into manhood to full observance of the Ten Commandments which constitute the donning of Tefillin. On display there are the two small leather boxes with verses taken from the Torah attached by leather thongs in the forehead and left arm. These connections constructed through those displays between the life cycle and the bible's Ten Commandments also attempt to emphasize a representation of Jewishness as a connection to God and their consistent intimacy and faithfulness.

The museum has tightened its claim of the SA Jews strong relationship to ancient Jews and God by putting the Torah on display. On the far left inside the glass display is the Torah and its case with a descriptive label of each component. The museum portrays the Torah Scroll (Pentateuch or Five Book Moses) as the central body of Jewish life. The Torah Scroll is mainly used for religious teachings. It is wound on two rods called the tree of life. The Rimoinin (finials) pomegranates decorate these rods. According to the label, the *Keter* is the crown, which adorns the Torah. There are two traditions for Torah covers. These are traditional European Ashkenazi Torah scroll and Sephardic Jewish from Eastern Mediterranean and Oriental community. According to the label the decorative shield is

called *Tas* a name of festival, which is used by the Europeans Jews. The Torah is kept in a wooden case always overlaid with precious metals. During the teachings to touch the sacred text a *Yad* (hand) is used to as pointer while one is reading the Torah script. Torah Pointers are usually made from ivory, wood and silver.

This whole list of artifacts are gathered and arranged to provide a narrative that portrays the culture and religion of Jewish people. These artifacts demonstrate the Jewish people as a perpetual community from ancient times based on holiness and cleanliness. Artifacts and objects are selected and associated with certain people to define and interpret Jewish people through commitment to religion. Tony Bennett maintains that, “for the artifact, once placed in a museum, itself becomes, inherently and irretrievably, a rhetorical object. As much, it is just thickly lacquered with layers of interpretation as a book or film.”⁵³ Hence most of objects and artifacts on display, for example the synagogue and Torah have multiple interpretations. They firstly symbolize religious connections that identify and distinguish Jewish community and also as a house and book of wisdom, which forms the basis of Jewish education. They eventually represent the source of success and unity among Jewish people as mainly resulting from their religion⁵⁴.

The SAJM has assumed the responsibility of identities to people of Jewish origin.

According to museum exhibition and displays it seems that all South African Jewish

⁵³ T Bennett, *The Birth of Museum* (London, Routledge, 1995), p146

⁵⁴ The dark room story of the establishment of the first Jewish synagogue in the Cape town by 17 men led by Benjamin Norden

people belong to Jewish faith and pursue Jewish principles, traditions and customs, which are defined through religion.

Computerized videos and glass panels that introduce the visitors to the synagogue exhibition occupy the left and the centre spaces. The open space at the centre forms the debating and address space filled with wooden benches facing the direction of the Ark, which was used during the first Jewish meetings and congregations in Cape Town.

There is also an selection of newspapers that reflect the consecration of the Synagogue.

The Cape Argus of Tuesday of the 15th September 1863 on a frame on your left hand side immediately when one enters the museum, communicates the awareness that the Synagogue was under construction. *The Cape Times* of the 14th September 1963 proclaimed the 100th years anniversary of the synagogue. Also on the same wall there is a frame of the Old Synagogue blue print dated 1862.

Behind the benches facing the entrance are four introductory glass display boards. Starting from the left is the one carrying the theme of the museum. The next one towards your right hand side is one displaying the housing of the museum theme on a computerized screen. Further towards the right, is the one screen displaying the interior of the museum

There is a history of Jewish immigration to various countries. A board and an electronic screen device against the wall provides information about the trends of immigration of Jews from different places in the Middle East and Africa, including a short history of other European immigrants' arrival in Southern Africa.

The next part of the exhibition, if you leave the old synagogue, serves as the transition from an old world of wars and persecutions by Tsar in Russia and other parts of Eastern Europe to a new world of economic prosperity.

The Social and Economic Transition

Walking from the Old Synagogue heading for the new building of the museum, one is welcomed by a bridge with a dim transparent glass wall on the right hand side. Looking through the glass the visitor can see Table Mountain. This creates the imagination of an arrival in Cape Town. This connects the photographic images on the bridge with Table Mountain symbolizing the arrival of Jewish immigrants. Along the wall on the left hand side is a big photograph that covers the wall. On this photograph there are children, women, and men appearing to be concerned and serious. The mode in the photograph reflects an immigration process, of old and young with their luggage. The three children facing the camera reflect different emotions. The two from right to left are looking bright as their faces seem to be full of hope as if there is light in front of them. However, the one closer to the camera seems to be younger also seems to be sad and confused. This is intended to reflect the complicated process of immigrating, as it carries no clear anticipation and predictions about life in the unknown future. Just in front of the photograph are artifacts of luggage: a cane trunk with leather straps, with a bundle of baggage fastened in cream white cloth, a big green suitcase and two small suitcases. A lamp, anchor and rope, signify the voyage at sea. This part of the exhibition conveys the

sense of crossing over from the traditional and cultural Jewish to the economic and political Jewish life in South Africa.

Constructing Jewish Economic Success and Dignitaries

A narrative that tells of the positive rise of the Jewish people in South Africa dominates the upper gallery. It is dominated by the stories of the economic success of Jews in South Africa. The SAJM is preoccupied with the great South African Jews portrayed as the fathers and pioneers. Here it is only the great, especially males, who seemed to be prominent actors in South African Jewish history. Ironically, the success of SA Jewish people is portrayed to be independent of other social group. The Jewish people are depicted as working very hard and thus becoming economically successful. This arrangement is what Handler and Gable identify as the version of the story that focuses on “great men” and elite that overlooks the experiences and works of the majority actors.⁵⁵ The museum message highlights the sufferings, hard work and eventual victories of Jewish people in South Africa over multiple evils and conspiracies. In the museum it is only the positive contribution of the Jewish community to South Africa’s social, economic and political development is referred. How these developments may have been oppressive or negative towards African peoples’ lives is not referred to at all.

The rise of the South African retail industry, and gold and diamond mining, dominate the message of the museum at the start of the upper gallery. Most of the people who were involved in making those ventures successful such as the workers are not recognized.

⁵⁵ R Handler & E. Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*. (Durham: University Press, 1997) p4

On the left side facing the entrance to the Upper Gallery glass display case with several items including a silver trophy. According to the label it is said to be a gift to the first Jewish doctor in South Africa Dr. Fraenkel, a founder of the Tikvath Yisrael Congregation. There is a captioned photograph of Aaron de Pass: (1825-1877), with a label reflecting him, as “first President of the Congregation in 1849”. There is also a Sefer Torah, which is said to be brought by Aaron de Pass in 1848 from Britain. In this cabinet there is also a trophy presented to Benjamin Norden in 1857 awarded by the residents of the Cape on his departure to England. His photograph is also displayed. He was the founder of Tikvath Yisrael, the first Hebrew congregation. The two artifacts and two men respectively are used to symbolize and provide an interpretation of the Jewish community as victorious, strongly dedicated to education and religion.

Next to this display is a photographic panel with illustrative text that serves as the assertion of Jewish community as successful through its strong attachment to religion, unity and traditions. On this display there is a photographic reflection of the day of first congregation on the eve of the Yom Kippur in 1841 when seventeen men met in Benjamin Norden’s house at Helmsley Palace in Hof Street, Cape Town. The label states that from this meeting a body to see to it that Jewish identity was retained through the teachings of restoration of basic rites of Judaism was established. In 1849 the first Reverend of the congregation was appointed, Isaac Pulver. After fourteen years Joel Rabnowitz conducted the consecration of the synagogue in 1863 in Cape Town. In this panel there is also the copy of the official minutes of the first meeting of the congregation of seventeen men. The

objects and the people displayed in this part of the museum attempt to portray the Jewish community as a people of good morality with rich values. Most of museum components on display emphasize that the establishment of religious institution that perpetuate unity among them. Just after this panel there is a dark room with⁵⁶ images and voices of Ben Norden and seventeen men, which emphasizes on the beginnings and the growth of Jewish values, traditions, institutions of learning and thought.

The success of the Jewish people is presented as being largely and continuously attached to religion. For instance on the left hand side of the entrance to the upper gallery is a photographic painting by an unknown artist reflecting of Cape Town in 1864, which is supposed to reflect Cape Town in early days. The painting has a text on it “History of Jewish arrival and settlement in District Six and migration to Johannesburg”. This is implicitly an assertion that Jewish people are among the first settlers in the Cape. Advancing further there is a glass cabinet. In this display there is first torah scroll, which was brought from London by Aaron De Pass. The emphasis is on Jewish people as religious people, as indicated in the earlier displays.

On the right hand side, as one enters the upper gallery, is a model of the first Port Elizabeth synagogue, which is also described as the symbol of identification and source of Jewish unity in their place of settlement. Just behind the model there is a panel that covers the South Africa Jewish population around the Eastern Cape. This panel carries the textual explanation and the map that highlights the Cape Colony, which is titled “ Early Jewish

⁵⁶ SA Jewish Museum exhibition Upper Gallery

Settlers of Cape Colony” and is subtitled “The Mosenthal Story”. This story reveals the economic success and expansion of the South African Jews from Cape Town. By the middle of the 19th century the Jewish community had extended to Grahamstown, Port Elizabeth, Durban and East London. This expansion according to SAJM embodied economic and trade possibilities. This is proven by telling the story of the Mosenthal brothers who became prosperous in Port Elizabeth where they developed a chain of stores. Julius Mosenthal is also represented in this history as the first Jew elected in the Cape Legislature Assembly in 1858. This notion claims the place for the Jewish people in the higher position in society and in positions of political power. Symbolically, the Mosenthal Brothers have been used by the museum to construct the story of and the explanation to their economic success. The sense of unity and hard work is elevated as the root and the secret of Jewish economic success.

This is carried on further through the display of artifacts. There is also a glass cabinet display with a photograph of Joseph and Adolph Mosenthal and their involvement in the diamond and ostrich feather trade. There is also a cheque of Mosenthal Brothers of five pounds dated 1854 with a stamp from Cape Town offices. In 1856 the Mosenthal Brothers became leading wool traders in importing and selling merino and angora goats. A blue book is also on display that carries the story of how angora goats came to South Africa. There are also exhibits of angora skins, merino wool and pair of scissors that of cutting sheep wool. This part of the exhibition portrays the SA Jewish community as natural and successful economists in international business and the export trade. Hanging on the wall is a painting that reflects the Mosenthal Brothers establishments in Burghersdorp,

Murraysburg, Richmond, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Hope Town and Graaff Reinet.

Thomas Bowler was commissioned by Julius Mosenthal to do the painting.

The ostrich feather business is also declared by the SAJM as one of the Jewish success stories. The story is told on a panel that young man of sixteen years old Max Rose popularly known as the 'Ostrich King', who migrated from Lithuania, started an ostrich farm in the dry land of Oudtshoorn in the Eastern Cape.⁵⁷ The museum exhibition maintains that the feather business was booming in the 1930s and Max Rose became popular all over the world. There are also newspaper cuttings with headings of the time about feathers. This part of the museum is about success after success. According to Mrs. Sheila Lawrence, a museum tour guide referring to the mansion on the photograph maintains that belonged to Max Rose, it became a school and house of prayer.⁵⁸ Max Rose has been lined up with other individuals deemed to be Jewish pioneers in the tradition of Sammy Marks.

Sammy Marks has a special place in the museum. There is a mini auditorium that carries a short film about his life. There are rows of about sixteen seats where people sit to watch the documentary. This documentary film tells the story of the social and economic success of Sammy Marks and his contribution to the Jewish community and South Africa at large. Nevertheless, the museum does not reveal how Marks became as popular and successful as he was. Mendelsohn reveals that he exploited the informality of the 'Boer' government which "depended on personal relationships between the legislators, and officials on the one

⁵⁷ Upper Gallery; a short Video that narrates the life of Max Rose 'Ostrich King'

⁵⁸ A guided museum tour by Mrs. Sheila Lawrence : 13.03.2005

hand and their clients, the public on the other... The small change of relationship with Boer officialdom were cases of liquor from Hatherley distillery, wedding presents and occasional spree.”⁵⁹ This documentary contains the memories of Zwartkopies where people like Isaac Lewis, Sammy Marks and Paul Kruger were friends and partners in mining business. In this exhibition, Sammy Marks is elevated as one who contributed to many community development ventures. But how much damage did Sammy Marks and others made with the collaboration of Paul Kruger and other mining capitalists to economic racial inequalities in South Africa? This question is not even posed by the museum displays.

Moving away from Marks auditorium a golden interactive computerized display at waist height on a wooden stand showing and enabling the visitor/tourist to search for the history of different Jewish communities' settlements in different parts of the country. On its stage, the display reflects the map of South Africa with a heading on top, “Jews in the Dorps” and an instruction that tell the visitor/tourist to “To navigate Touch one of the directions on the compass below”. This is complemented by a big computerized panel display, which shows the direction and location of some of the places South African Jews settled.

The SA Jewish Community Success in Johannesburg

There is a great deal of emphasis on the mining industry, where the museum concentrates on the contribution of the SA Jewish people in developing Johannesburg as a trading centre. This is also stressed through the portrayal of the distinguished members of Jewish

⁵⁹ R. Mendelsohn, *Sammy Marks: The Uncrowned King of the Transvaal*, (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1991) p86

community who participated in the early days of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. It also claims that in most South African big towns Jewish people emerged as entrepreneurs. The story of success of the SA Jewish people is conferred to a few individuals. These individuals are glorified for their contribution in the economic sphere, especially people like the Barney Barnato and, as referred earlier, Sammy Marks.

However, it also reflects on the ordeals they encountered along the way to their success. The story of economic success is succeeded by the story of Jewish life in hard conditions of racism and anti-Semitic environment.

In many recent accounts of industrialization and manufacturing in South Africa authors consistently point to the ways that workers were exploited. For example, African people were prohibited apartheid racial laws from joining or forming trade unions,⁶¹ 'Black' people were not regarded as employees, but as wage earners and white people as employees. So, how does the SA Jewish community, which is proud of Jewish success in the Rand (Johannesburg) and Kimberley's gold and diamond mines, account for the exploitation of African people in mines and other industrial areas? Jack and Ray Simons maintain, "Diggers, some with families, lived in wagons, tents, huts or galvanized iron sheds. Africans, who usually walked barefooted to the fields, often arrived in an emaciated state: 'weary, grimy, hungry, shy, trailing along sometimes with bleeding feet and hanging heads, and bodies staggering with faintness."⁶² Johannesburg is identified by the SAJM as

⁶⁰ T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1983), p188

⁶¹ J & R. Simons, *Class & Colour in South Africa 1950-1950*, (London: IDAF, 1983) p37

one of the most places the Jews achieved most of their economic success, yet the history of workers in the industries and manufacturing sector are totally ignored.

The story of Johannesburg is presented in separate, distinctive panels. This story is introduced by the model of the “Great Synagogue” in Wolmarans Street in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. The Great Synagogue was founded in 1887 and consecrated in 1914 and brought together the two major Jewish congregations that split in 1891. According to the exhibition this is one of hundred places in Johannesburg that are identified as outstanding in terms of cultural, historical, architectural and natural interests. It is mentioned on the label of the model that a private buyer now owns this building. Then, there are eight panels opposite that illustrate Jewish contribution in the process of making the “City of Gold”.

The exhibition text claims that the Jewish community members had been part of Johannesburg since 1886 and when the city was officially founded in 1905 Jewish people were there. During the first and the second decade of the 20th century Jews were mayors of Johannesburg.

The panels from right to left contain a photograph that represents the early days of Johannesburg, showing scattered settlements and people busy at work. There is also a drawing reflecting the building of a bank, named as the “Bank of Africa”. Another photograph shows the Johannesburg as a city in 1890 with the view of Loveday Street and

the Winchester House. There is also the view of mining operation at Crown Gold Mining Company in 1895. There is a view of a Johannesburg market square during 1888. The view of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange as early as 1888, of which its second building, it is claimed, was constructed through the efforts of the Jewish pioneer, Barney Barnato. There is also photographic view of Simmonds Street with chains that barred vehicles from traveling along after normal trading hours for trading purposes after working hours. This photograph is captioned "Between the Chains". Another photographic view of 1907 shows the third building of the stock exchange in Hollard Street featured in this exhibition. A panel that reflects a topic of Johannesburg commerce and culture shows the views of Johannesburg clothing ventures, and the photo of Blance Fenton, the actress and the singer of her times and the Globe Theater in the 1891. There is also a copy of a newspaper advert for a play entitled "The Sky" that featured one of the famous actresses of those days, Sarah Sylvia. This part of display depicts the Jewish community as pioneers and the founders of economic and the cultural vibrancy of Johannesburg.

There is also a glass cabinet display. On display are three panoramas and artefacts that show the evolution of Johannesburg. In the first display there is 1886 map of Ferreira's Camp, a portrait of Max Rossetenstein the first recorded shopkeeper, a photograph of Ferreira's Camp and the panorama of the early camp. This panorama shows the wagon and two horses next to it under the tree. There are six tents that match the colour of the wagon and one block house that are still under construction. Five men seem to be busy with the construction of the house and others seem to be busy on unspecified activities except one who is sitting behind the timber.

These panoramas clearly portray the Jewish people as discoverers of Johannesburg. The tents are in an empty space of land where there are no signs of life before. This panorama claims truly the discovery of an empty land by the South African Jewish people where they had started everything from the scratch. One of the obvious objectives of this panorama is to portray South African Jews as pioneers and drivers of the most successful area of economies in South Africa. By this assertion the SAJM is perpetually portraying the South African Jewish people as the drivers of the economies on the Rand. But what is not evident from the display how many African people were exploited in the mines and factories.

The exhibition boards that present the economic success of the Jewish people in diamond and gold mines and other entrepreneurship do not reflect any experiences of difficulties in terms of acquiring rights of business ownership from the union government. The rational logic of the involvement and participation of Jewish community in the economy clearly defines the nature and the level of racial oppression directed to other victims were severer than the South African Jewish community. African people had no power of owning mines or business, as they were accommodated in mine compounds. The only recognized participation and contribution was to sell their cheap labour power to 'white' business owners including the South African Jews. In mining industry "The diggers then submitted draft rules which would bar Africans and Coloureds from obtaining licences to search for, buy, sell or otherwise trade in diamonds. Only few licensed Coloureds diggers remained to give credence to the Cape's doctrine of liberalism."⁶²

⁶² J & R. Simons, *Class & Colour in South Africa 1950–1950*, (London: IDAF, 1983) pp 37-38

The second display panel towards your left shows the view of the first Johannesburg Congregation. The view of Barnett & Co. Alexandra Restaurant and Bar is also in this panel. The view of the “Bodega”⁶³ a typical Jewish Bar is also reflected in the exhibition. There is also a view of the first committee of Whole Hebrew Congregation with the founder member Emanuel Mandelsohn. Complementing this exhibition is the diorama of the Jewish typical bar in which a meeting was held on the 10th July 1889 that possibly established the Johannesburg Congregation.⁶⁴ That this is be highlighted attempts to portray and emphasize unity amongst community members under the Jewish faith. This portrays that the Congregation and the advancement of Jewish faith as a responsibility of all Jewish people wherever they are. So once again, their Jewishness is defined through religious practices.

On a third panel the trading culture is displayed where copies of shares certificates that reflect the trade cooperation between the colonial government and prominent Jewish businessmen like Barnato, Mandelsohn, and Bruce. There is also a photograph portraying Harry Solomon the president of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in 1894, 1897, 1898, 1903 and 1905. The history of economic influence by the South African Jewish people is declared to have started at the beginning of South African industrialization in this part of the exhibition.

⁶³ Upper Gallery Johannesburg panel

⁶⁴ SAJM exhibition in Upper Gallery ‘Jews in Johannesburg section and South African Jewish Museum Catalogue (Cape Town: Scan Shop, 2002) p14.

There is also a panorama of Simmons Street with chains along the corner that only allows pedestrians to walk through especially for trading purposes. In the panorama, there are images of only men doing their trading business. Males only wearing smart clothing with hats in the trading area (street) outside the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. A woman and the child are just standing outside the chains, clear enough off the trading area. This image portrays the sense of exclusion of women and children by men in trading and commercial activity. Taking into account the constructed evidence from the panorama where woman and child are standing behind the chains of the trading zone of which has been the case in South African communities in the past centuries. This whole presentation also claims the economic pioneering position for the South African Jews in establishment of the South African economic engine, especially the male section of the community.

The success story of Jews in Kimberley is linked to that of Johannesburg. The South African Jewish story of Kimberly like that of Johannesburg is the story of pioneering, recognition, economic success, and unity through Jewish faith perpetuated and organized by the Jewish synagogue. Like other portrayals of other towns, a model of a silver synagogue represents the Jews in Kimberley. The model crafted in 1902 is said to be on loan from the Griqualand Hebrew Congregation of Kimberley. There is also a copy of the Order of Service by Rev. H. Isaacs on the 14th of September 1902 and a photograph, which show the interior of the synagogue and the Ark. The story of Kimberly is told by four panels, which is mostly made up of newspapers clips with diamond trade news from different newspapers all over the country and abroad: *The illustrated London News*,

Diamond News & Vaal Advertiser, The Cape Argus. Here the Jewish people are elevated as pioneers of diamond buying and dealing.

The SAJM depicts these 'great' individuals and pioneers as if in Kimberley they were on their own, building their ventures and as if they were doing all the work alone. They appear to have dug the diamonds from the shafts, pulling them to the surface, washed them and screened etc. According to evidence given by the exhibition, photographic, panoramas etc. the Jewish community is presented exclusively all by itself.

The story of both Johannesburg and Kimberly appears to be one sided as it leaves a vacuum and many questions are not dealt with. The museum reveals the Jewish community as being influential participants in economy and political governance of South Africa, but there are no highlights of the conditions they were operating under. This representation denies the contribution made by the thousands of Chinese indentured labourers and the Africans. It hides the highest degree of exploitation that took place especially in the mining industry of Witwatersrand. According to Charles van Onselen, "From 1906, however, Chinese did help the industry gradually recover its financial footing. The army of indentured labourers dramatically reduced the costly turnover of unskilled labour and enabled the industry to expand production at a crucial moment in its history. In addition, and at least as important, was the manner in which Chinese labour helped the mine owners to undercut the African labour, and after 1907 black wages in the industry declined in both real and monetary terms."⁶⁵

⁶⁵ C. van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic Development in the Witwatersrand 1886-1914: New*

Members of the Jewish community increasingly became part of the ruling classes in South Africa and increasingly saw themselves as part of South African white community. This is a question the museum only partially deals with as it is taken as given that Jews were part of the white community. The negativity of racism, daily exploitation of people in mines and other businesses under the segregationist and apartheid labour laws, and other discrimination against people not classified as white is silenced and exiled from the story told by the museum in its eagerness to show Jewish success. Also in the SAJM, South African Jews who were falling under working class are not visible in the museum presentation. The story of Jews is only about Jews as leading figures in business and there is no single indication of Jews as members of the working class or peasants in South Africa.

Construction of Anti-racist Apartheid Struggle Heroes and Heroines

Another crucial part of the exhibition on the upper gallery after the exhibition on Jewish success is the depiction of the Jewish community as victims of racial discrimination and their fight against it. There are three panels that specifically focus on political history of South African Jewish community that claim the victimization and reaction of this community. They are just above the boardroom table of that depicts the structure that represents the South African Jewish community interests, the “Jewish Board of Deputies”.

This part of the exhibition brings the bases of the political depiction of the South African Jewish community as both victims and heroes on three panels. The first panel starting from the left talks about “fighting immigration restrictions.” It refers to the 1902 South African Immigration Restriction Act and contains a photograph of the delegation that represented the Jews, which met the Cape Governor to discuss the alleviation of the impact of the Act. This seems to have had worked because under the same topic it is indicated that in 1906 the Immigration Restriction Act was amended by inclusion of Yiddish as a one of the European languages. The certificate of Yiddish as a European language is also displayed. There is also the 1930 Quota Act that posed restriction to immigrants from Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Palestine. It is claimed by the museum that this Act was implicitly directed to Jews only. The text in the display reads: “Although the Act made no specific mention of Jews, they were certainly the targets of this legislation and East European Jewish immigration was virtually stopped”⁶⁶. This part of the exhibition depicts the Jewish people as a target of the South African restrictive laws based on racism. It claims that a distinctive aspect of racial discrimination was their language, which was identified by the South African government as a non-European language.

The second panel under the topic “Facing anti-Semitism” is a representation of the 1930 Quota Act, which is claimed to have negatively affected Jewish immigration to South Africa but also reveals that the Jewish refugees from Germany were not affected by this law. Alongside the text is a photograph of *The Stuttgart* a ship that brought five hundred German-Jewish refugees to South Africa. This mass arrival is said to have increased the

⁶⁶ SAJM Upper Gallery Exhibition on “Fighting Immigration Restrictions”

political tension that led to the introduction of the 1937 Aliens Act with a copy of the government gazette of this law is displayed on the wall. These claims legitimate the third panel depiction of Jews in this part of the exhibition, which concentrates on the involvement of Jewish people in the struggle against apartheid.

The third panel and the last the key components of the three panels is a panel that is headlined “Apartheid Dilemma”. This panel does not elucidate whether it was the Jewish community that was facing the dilemma of apartheid or victims of apartheid and how. However this implicitly claims the Jewish community was affected by apartheid and legitimates the right of claiming a position as anti-apartheid activists. Under this title is a text written in red; ‘To “speak out” or not to “speak out ” and some other pieces of text of speeches from Arthur Suzman chairman of Jewish Board of Deputies. Just below this exhibition is the table and chairs that represent the Jewish Board of Deputies but, in the middle between the exhibition on the wall is a big title that says “Facing Reality: the voice of the organized Jewish community”. But it was rare to find a demonstration of the ‘organized community’ along the streets of apartheid South Africa, unless those demonstrations were held not under the banner of the ‘organized community’ such as the Jews for Social Justice. There is no direct organized group of activists named after the Jewish community on display in the SAJM that was active during the struggle against apartheid. Organizations like the Jews for Social Justice are not recognized by the museum.

Below these three panels on the wall is the mirror also lining the wall and just opposite to the mirror is the table and fifteen chairs that represent the Jewish Board of Deputies. On the chairs are written names of the first members of the Jewish Board of Deputies. The table is covered with a glass on top and some historical newspaper cuttings are displayed under the glass that covers the table. At the centre of the table there is a computer monitor containing resolutions taken by the Board. There is also an audio system that narrates a history of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and the SA Jewish community.

The element of exclusion and turning a blind eye to the historical contributions of the ordinary people emerges. It is evidence that this victorious political and economic representation of the South African Jewish community is extremely exclusive. Hence, such roles of ordinary people like Ms Marion Crawford. Crawford a member of the “first Jewish anti-apartheid group, Jews for Social Justice (which) was inaugurated in September 1985 at a public meeting in Johannesburg.”⁶⁷ Crawford had defied the white apartheid law of employment on African people, as she was asked for a fine for breaking the law for employing an African domestic worker “illegally.” She chose to go to jail. The reasons that prompted the museum researchers and exhibitors not to reveal such risky step (explicitly fighting against apartheid) in contribution towards a democratic free South Africa are not easily known. Crawford and her organization which openly revealed its identity as “Jews for Social Justice” deserve to be acknowledged and their contribution recognized no matter how small it is for the clear reason that they did not hide from the crowd. They stood out as

⁶⁷ C. Cooper, et al. *Race Relation Survey Part 1*, (Johannesburg: Institute of Race Relations, 1987) p324

“Jews” against apartheid (social injustice), contradicting the policy of the Board of Deputies, which stood primarily for Jewish interests.

The role and the impact of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies affecting other social groups of South Africa are not dealt with. It is uncontested that the museum story is mostly based on Jewish community experiences. But it does leave some unanswered questions, like why the Board was not at loggerheads with the apartheid regime at some point? The answer may be that it was circumscribed by the objective of representing South African Jewish interests. The operation and the effectiveness of the Board of Deputies in the museum demonstrates that the main aim of the Board was to protect the interest of the Jewish people in South Africa not to fight for a non-racial society.

These are some of the specific gaps in the story of the “apartheid dilemma” that need to be filled. Some of the Jewish people had already explicitly demonstrated their discontent towards apartheid policy while thousands of them had accepted it and benefited under the system. The involvement and the disappearance of Africans and other peoples in the museum demonstrate another misrepresentation of the SA Jewish community. The SAJM turns a blind eye to the interaction of Jewish community members in other levels other than in politics as I have above indicated there is no sense of who worked for them in their businesses, in the retail, mining and other industries.

Just next to the table but just a little further on the wall, is the two by one-meter enlarged copy of a page extracted from the former South African president Nelson Mandela’s book

Long Walk to Freedom. Here “Mandela,” as popularly known by South African, is positively commenting about the Jewish people in his life as he says. “In my experience I have found Jews to be more broad-minded than most whites on the issue of race and politics, perhaps because they themselves have historically been victims of prejudice.”⁶⁹ . Just next to this is a video of Nelson Mandela and just above is the speaker with the voice of Nelson Mandela narrating about the Jewish community contribution in South Africa in 1964. This setting implicates and portrays the intimacy of the SA Jewish leaders to Mandela as a charismatic and acclaimed world leader.

Through Mandela the SA Jewish Museum claims the story of anti-apartheid struggle. Rassool maintains that “post-apartheid South Africa has been largely represented as coming about as a ‘miracle’ that was made possible by the ‘wisdom’ of heroic leaders, especially Nelson Mandela”⁷⁰ . Rassool questions the new modes of interpretation of South African history in the post apartheid era, which are based and concentrates upon Mandela as the sole freedom fighter and the messiah of the African people in the struggle against apartheid. The SAJM also endorses the notion that the triumph of freedom over apartheid is solely due to Mandela. The mass media and other friends of the liberation movement had constructed Mandela’s image to symbolize the entire struggle against apartheid. For example the anti-apartheid movements and international media all over the world were not very interested in other Robben Island prisoners, their campaigns were focusing on Mandela, popular campaigns like the ‘Release Mandela Campaign.’⁷⁰ In the Robben

⁶⁸ SAJM exhibition panel on Nelson Mandela

⁶⁹ C. Rassool, “The Rise of Heritage and The Reconstitution of History in South Africa”, *Kronos Journal of Cape History*, No.26, (2000) p1

⁷⁰ Release Mandela Campaign Concert Video, UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye

Island Museum, Mandela is the “Island” itself. Noel Solani has also noticed Mandela has been portrayed as the ‘saint of the struggle’ against apartheid and racism. Solani argues that this started with Rivonia Trial and the media and publications that followed especially by Mary Benson’s about “Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress”⁷² which described him as the people, as the ANC and a messiah. The South African Jewish Museum endorses this proclivity in its exhibition. Mandela is portrayed the only messiah fighting alongside the Jews in the struggle against an evil social system.

Before the 1990s there was nothing like Mandela in South African museums, because of certain obvious reasons of which one may be the fact that Mandela’s name and showing his image was illegal. For these reasons the Mandela exhibition and those condemning the previous white oppressive government of apartheid would have been not on display to the general public. Nevertheless, Mandela’s biographies have been produced in the past in different expressions. Ciraj Rassool maintains, “ Through his release, it was believed that Mandela would deliver the South African from evil. The discursive construction of Nelson Mandela has moved through different phases, from born leader to sacrificial hero to Messiah, culminating in symbolic father with paternal authority in the public sphere.”⁷² Hence his release has been the impetus for different sections of communities including the South African Jewish community, to claim him as their hero in their exhibitions and public displays.

⁷¹ N. Solani, “The Saint of the Struggle: Deconstructing the Mandela Myth”, *Kronos*, No. 26, (Bellville: University of the Western Cape, 2000), p44

⁷²C. Rassool, “The Individual, Biography and resistance in South Africa”, *Unpublished Paper, UWC South African and Contemporary History Seminar*, No.72, (UWC, 1997) pp 37-38

There is also a wooden panel with a bright light hanging over it that reflects the struggle against apartheid and the human rights fighters. Some names of prominent figures are displayed in this panel. Names like Solly Sachs, the general secretary of the Garment Workers Union who led a protest in 1952 appear in this panel. Aemann Kellenbach, Gandhi and Sonia Schlesin who donated Tolstoy farm to Gandhi's movement is used as a symbol of Jewish dedication in the struggle against racism and commitment. Helen Lieberman who ran a self-help scheme for 30 years are included in the list of contributors in fighting against the laws of apartheid. The selection of people who happened to be somehow not self-centred, morally and politically righteous, is done to represent and portray most of the South African Jewish community as an anti-apartheid, community activists.

After this wooden panel there is an audiovisual screen and a photographic exhibition on "Political Activism and Social Conscience". The screen shows selected activists like the unionist Ray Alexander, Helen Suzman of the Progressive Party, Ruth First of the South African Communist Party, Ronie Kasrils, David Bruce, Max and Audrey Coleman. This screen claims the involvement of Jewish community in the struggle for liberation.

Just next to the touch screen is a historic photographic exhibition panel of some of the same images of people and events shown on the screen. Both the screen and the panel are complemented by overhead voices above the visitors' head emanating from the sound bells. These voices tell the stories of involvement in the struggle against apartheid. This part of exhibition is intended to reflect Jewish interaction with other social groups,

especially Africans. However, even in this exhibition the story of the struggle against apartheid is once again built around Mandela. For example one of the photographs on the exhibition is Mandela with the former Member of Parliament Helen Suzman. The other interesting photograph is that of the crowd lifting Isie Maisels into the air as a sign of victory after the acquittal of treason trialists in 1956. The museum seems to be interested only in the person whom defended approximately one hundred and fifty political leaders, charged by the state of high treason. For instance the museum does not tell and reveal the identity of the person who prosecuted Mandela in a case sentenced him into life imprisonment. Percy Yutar, a prominent member of the Jewish community⁷⁴ who prosecuted Mandela in the Rivonia Trial but never appears in the museum exhibition like Maisels who was in the legal defence team of the Treason Trial where Mandela was among the accused. Maisels is portrayed as hero of both African and Jewish community. Percy Yutar only appears in a video of the museum's anniversary, which is not shown in the museum but shown in the auditorium, which is outside the museum building.

The author and the authorizers of the exhibition in the South African Jewish Museum have decided to include and exclude some significant events and people. The story and the message that is conveyed by these exhibitions concentrate on the "big names" like Mandelas and "victorious moments" like economic success. The exhibition only represents the Jewish community as one of successful, in the South African economy and overcoming social injustices.

⁷³SAJM video on the museum official opening by Mandela, Percy Yutar was one of the guests.

What about those who betrayed the struggles against human exploitation? The SAJM is wrapping and sending the message that Jewish people in general were all victims of apartheid and racism and they were ultimately opponents of the apartheid system based on their background as being victims of racism.

In any way, which is also indisputable is the fact that SA Jewish community started to interact with Africans well before the anti-apartheid struggle. However, the museum introduces the SA Jewish interaction with Africans after only two centuries in South Africa. The museum does not reflect any relationship or interaction between the Jews and Africans before that.

The South Africa Jewish/Israel Link

While the SAJM is busy highlighting the integrative relations with Africans through Nelson Mandela on one hand, on other the SAJM is also claiming the strong link between the South African Jewish community and the state of Israel.

The museum has elevated the SA Jewish community's strong relationship with the geographically distant Israeli state. The claim is made that it is spiritually close. In the far left hand corner of the upper gallery, there are two exhibitions both complemented by an audio display. One is a photographic exhibition with captions and the other is a screen display. The two exhibitions reflect the "Israel Link" with the South African Jewish community and their dream of the land of promise. In these exhibitions it is maintained that the South African Jewish community is generally nurtured in the love of Zion and the

political movement, which was formed in 1880s. This prompted the establishment of the South African Zion Federation (SAZF). Also reflected in the exhibition is the Receipt Certificate of Erez Israel Foundation fund of the Jewish National Fund, posted in 1924 to Woodstock, Cape Town. The impression in this exhibition is that one part of South African Jewish community's dream is to go back to Israel. However, on the other hand this part of the exhibition attempts to divide the SA Jewish community into three categories, those who want to become Israeli citizens, those who want to remain South African citizens and those who want to explore the whole world

The SAJM demonstrates a strong prevailing social link with Israel. The South African Jewish community through SAJM, and its media mouthpiece *SA Jewish Chronicle* projects the link of SA Jews with Zionism and Israel as a strong one. This relationship is demonstrated in articles where both Zionism and Israeli-Palestine issues are raised.⁷⁵ The South African Jewish community is shown through its newspaper mobilizing against Palestine as they support the building of 'apartheid' wall separating Palestine and Israel. One article maintains that "a period of separation might be just what is required to allow temperatures and frustrations to cool, good sense to prevail and trust to be built".⁷⁶

Another of the publication, which is published jointly by Israel and South African Jews condemns the African National Congress and specifically Ronnie Kasrils (who is of Jewish origin) as a supporter of a sanctions campaign against Israel.⁷⁷ In a nutshell this museum theme somehow puts the South African Jewish community situation whereby it is implied that a uncontroversial link exists with the Israeli state. On the exhibition that deals with the

⁷⁴ *Cape Jewish Chronicle* article Vol. 21 No. 25, (June 2004), pp1&p10

⁷⁵ "Telfed", A South African Zionist Federation (Israel) Publication, (Cape Town, 2003) p45

⁷⁶ SAJM Exhibition upper gallery "Link with Israel"

Israel link with South African Jews there is a photograph with aircraft and the photographic scenery that reflect the contribution of South African Jews in the establishment of the Jewish State. Thus, despite the assertion of a choice of dreams, it is one dream that is given prominence.

The last exhibition in the upper gallery attempts to reflect other South African people's cultures. Photographs of crowds line the nine-video screens on the wall that are ever changing pictures of different cultures. This exhibition does not provide a clear indication of whether the exhibition titled "Culture among Cultures" is comparing Jewish culture to different cultures of the different cultural groups in South Africa. Or else, trying to reflect the impact of these cultures on one another. However, this is not reflected in the exhibition. For example Johnny Clegg is sometimes known as "Zulu Boy" because of his involvement in Zulu cultural art. Johnny Clegg can speak Zulu fluently and excels in African music and dance. It would have been educative and interesting to know to what extent cultures affect one another in this multicultural society. But the influence of multicultural South Africa on members of Jewish community is ignored. The museum only chooses to reflect Clegg as a contributor to South African music (and that he is Jewish).

After the last exhibition that deals with multiculturalism there are steps that coil down to the base of the museum "the lower gallery". Following the steps down to the lower gallery, as you reach the bottom just on your right-hand side is a glittering round shape with an electronic display monitor that exhibit the points of immigration from all over the world heading for Israel after the formation of the Israeli state in 1948. Most of this space

is the continuation and the emphasis of the strong connection of SA Jews and the 'Holy State' (Israel). Just a few meters towards the right-hand side the oval shape display is a big shining copper model of Jerusalem. The model is hung using wire strings that are fastened onto the panel that introduces the story of the South African Jewish link with Israel from the Upper Gallery. These wire strings symbolize and form a construction of a strong image of the relationship between the state of Israel and South African Jewish community.

Lithuania: The Place of Origins

The last section of the exhibition is based on the presentation of Lithuania depicted as the place where most or all of South African Jewish people originated. This panel tells the story of Lithuanian Jews' condition of migration. Jewish life in Lithuania is presented as a place of poverty, which was exacerbated by the oppressive conditions they faced under Russia. In 1881 during the assassination of Tsar Alexander II the Jews were attacked and many migrated safely. Most went to America. However, from 1881 to 1910 about 40 000 Jews migrated to South Africa, gold and diamonds acting as one of attractions. Most of them came via Britain as an interim shelter was arranged in London for poor Jews to wait for ships to South Africa. They assisted in boarding traveling, medical care and legal aid. According to the SAJM 22 000 Jews were accommodated in the London shelter from 1892 to 1914. This is also another case of hardship experiences by the Jews who were to be in the future described as the South Africa Jewish community. The story of a happy ending always features to support the portrayal of victory over evil, where eventually South Africa became the place of non-racialism and a place of economic success.

Complementing this “Lithuania Migration” is a glass display that shows names, age, origin and a date of arrival of some Jews in South Africa. They range from seven years to more than fifty years. There is also a photograph of the building of the Poor Jewish Temporary Shelter. The collection of official papers like a passport and visa of 1914 which is written “Transit only, Good-single Trip” and Union-Castle Mail Steamship Co. ticket (luxury Lines) from Britain to South East Africa is displayed to demonstrate the trail of the path traveled towards the current epoch of success.

Just further two or three feet from this world immigration display is the Shetl Exhibit on a rock-paved floor. This is the most intriguing exhibition in terms of the reconstruction of a replica of a Lithuanian village. Two wooden cabins are attached to a human-size wall photographic panorama that reflects the dwelling setting of Lithuania. The two reconstructed cabins complements this photograph to show types of houses. This exhibition represents the ‘memory’ division of the museum theme as this provokes memory of the villages of the land left behind. The houses are built mostly of wood: The cabin on the right-hand side with two white painted frame windows, an old armchair bench with blue deteriorated colour that reveals the colour of the wood is outside the cabin.

Inside the cabin on the right there is a collection of artefacts. Tailoring materials and tools, and the whole setting of the environment, almost carry the authenticity of a tailor’s shop. If you enter through the door there is an old brown wooden cupboard with upper glass doors and a small kitchen table at the corner with a lamp and brass kettle. At the centre of the room is a long table with eight chairs. White cloth covers the table with two candlesticks at the centre of the table surrounded by a plate with cakes and resemblance of ancient bread

and a glass jug with wine like liquid inside. This table is said to be representing the Sabbath table. If you are standing at the door on your way out from the cabin, looking further just at the corner of the opposite cabin is a model of a reconstructed village well. If you just turn to your right there is a compartment that represents the bedroom view and study venue.

The South African Jewish Museum is vehemently attached to all South African Jewish people but with the sense that elevates Lithuania as the basis of their place of origin. This idea may somehow be detrimental to other SA Jewish members who might not be coming from Lithuania. The German, the English, etc. may feel excluded and not recognized from the “South African Jewish Community”. A non-recognition of Sephardic Jews by SAJM is one other specific feature that signifies how far can exclusivity and non-representativity play its role in the museum.

On the far left-hand side of the lower gallery is a computer centre called the “Nedbank Discovery Centre”. The computers contain a database on the history of the South African Jewish community, some information about Judaism and on Israel. The Eric and Sheila Samson Exhibition Gallery is facing the tail-end of the stairs. This gallery is used for temporary exhibitions. The gallery has a small auditorium for film screenings and a live performance spaces. Exhibitions in this part are always changing, lasting from six months up to a year. In the year 2002/3 there was a Mark Chagall exhibition and in 2004 was Irma Stern painting collection, which is part of University of Cape Town’s Irma Stern Museum’s collection.

The observations made above about the SAJM leads to conclusion that SAJM, through exhibition display of different artifacts and other new technological means, has drawn a particular image about the South African Jewish community which is also attempting to fit in the post-apartheid era where the concepts of the “ struggle against apartheid, racial segregation, victory, and reconciliation” are mostly utilized by most communities to claim their places in the new South African political environment. The initial aspect of SAJM exhibition represents the Jewish culture as universal but unique. Representation of the Jewish community as victims of racism and their involvement in the struggle against apartheid are claimed through the icon of Mandela. While enjoying South African citizenship their Jewishness and relationship with historical biblical Jews necessitates their link with the Holy City of Jerusalem and Israeli state as a place of the future and Lithuania as a site of origin.

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a stylized classical building with columns and a pediment.

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Chapter Three

The First Township Based Museum

Since the late 1950s, Lwandle Township was an isolated place and treated as a transient entity under apartheid. There is very little known or written about this place or the museum itself. This chapter contextualizes the history and the significance of the place and the development of a museum as a new institution of its kind in South Africa. The evolution of Lwandle based on apartheid laws has passed through different stages, from 1960 when it was first developed, to 1996, when the original hostels were renovated and converted into homes. This development brought about new innovations, which also led to the establishment of a new identity accompanied by the emergence of public institutions like a library and a museum, the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum.

Lwandle was developed as an area of isolated black single male's hostel residences, providing cheap labour in the Helderberg Basin for factories like AECI, Gants Canning company and the local municipality. The lack of cheap labour in the area compelled the Stellenbosch Divisional Council to ignore "the Coloured labour preference policy – which barred Africans from a wide range of jobs in the Western Cape if Coloureds were available"⁷⁷. This place was not meant to accommodate families but only African single males. It was not absolutely planned as a township, which is a formal location accommodating African families in urban areas, but only to accommodate African single migrant labourers. Lwandle was planned as an extended compound.

⁷⁷ R. Omond, *The Apartheid Hand Book: A Guide to South African Everyday Racial Policies*, (Ontario: Penguin, 1985) p96

If one takes a taxi from Somerset West to Lwandle today s/he must mention to the taxi driver that s/he is going to emaHolweni so that the taxi must go via his/her destination. 'EmaHolweni' is a Xhosa term for hostels, a place of 'amaGoduka'. AmaGoduka is also a Xhosa term for migrant workers. Today Lwandle has no hall like structures for residents and is no more a place of 'amaGoduka', but the term 'EmaHolweni' remains as an identity of Lwandle. It is situated 40km from the City of Cape Town and five kilometers away from the Central Business Districts of the three towns (Somerset West, Strand, and Gordon's Bay), which were meant to acquire labour power from the Lwandle.

For more than 25 years, Lwandle remained a place of accommodation for single males. Between the 1960s and 1990s, the apartheid laws and regulations shaped the lives of the people who lived in Lwandle. The hostels were fenced with a single entrance and exit. This made it easy for the police and hostel guards to control and regulate the access to the hostels. The Urban Areas Act (1957), which confined African people into the so called reserves which was mainly rural and the Pass Laws as a social control instrument among others made life difficult for Africans in cities. Under the Urban Black Consolidation Act (1945), Africans had no rights of permanent residence in cities or in particular, except those who fell under section 10 of Urban Areas Act. They had to go back to the Bantustans every time when the employment contracts expired. This alone created a sense of a consistent attempt at the isolation of migrant workers from broader society. The way of life created by the migrant labour system also affected the lives of their

families tremendously. These men were subject to separation from their families for almost three quarters of the year. When their wives visited they were always at risk of being arrested as trespassers. Bulelwa Dunga arrived in 1980s, in her story emphasizes that “Children where not allowed in the hostel.”⁷⁸ “If [I] was in Cape Town, I stayed in Crossroad”. One of the community members who had frequently visited Lwandle during the early hotel days, Mrs Molo maintains in her interview with Kutala Vuba that, “When we visited our husbands in Lwandle, although I was fortunate, I was never arrested. Women were always arrested by the watchmen sometimes by the police and your husband will have to pay your fine in Strand police station. If you slept in the hostel you have wake up early in morning to hide in the bushes and return late in the afternoon when men are back from work. Life at eMaholweni was very difficult.”⁷⁹

The hostels were under constant surveillance. Police and hostel guards known as ‘Watchmen’ claiming they were looking for trespassers raided their residential area⁸⁰. “At 02H00 the police would mercilessly wake us up and we will be asked to produce our identity documents.”⁸¹ This made it difficult for Lwandle people to have overnight visitors as the visitors were subjected to arrest if found in hostels.

However, due to the fact that the apartheid policies did not anticipate the permanent presence of Africans in the city things changed when the struggle against apartheid

⁷⁸ Unpublished Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, Oral History Project, interview between Bonke Tyhulu and Bulelwa Dunga (29/08/02) Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum.

⁷⁹ Unpublished Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, Oral History Project, interview between Kutala Vuba and Mrs Molo, 02.05 2002

⁸⁰ Recorded interview between Vusi Buthelezi and Enoch Mjoli, Unpublished Oral History Report, Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum: 13. 04. 2002

⁸¹ Interview between Bonke Tyhulu and Joe Telanisi, Unpublished Oral History Report, Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum: 11.09.2002

mounted in the eighties. A variety of sources of international and national political pressures prompted the apartheid government to reform by abolishing the pass laws and influx control. In 1986 the then President PW Botha announced the relaxation of pass laws.⁸²

This proclamation opened many opportunities to African people who were always circumscribed by the pass laws. Families who were separated by the pass laws, and women who were victims of jail as trespassers when they visited their husbands and boyfriends, were now free to visit and stay with their husbands in hostels. This is the turning point of hostel life in South Africa especially in Lwandle. People flooded in from the Eastern Cape to friends and relatives with the aim of accessing jobs and basic facilities like education and health care. During this period the Lwandle hostels witnessed population congestion. The space of two by two metre square, which initially accommodated four men, was now accommodating four families. This mass movement of the people from the rural areas to Lwandle created a lack of space in Lwandle hostels.

The period between 1986 and 1996 is a turning point of Lwandle social setting. The change in population size and character in Lwandle brought about different elements of socialization. Households were just a metre away from one another. Four families lived and used a space designated for one person. The social conditions were never humane especially in regard to children's upbringing.⁸³

⁸² M. Ramphele, *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town*, (Cape Town, David Phillip, 1993), p16

⁸³ M. Ramphele, *A Bed Called Home*, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1993), p72

Once families started moving into Lwandle the white community of the Strand demanded that Lwandle people be moved to Khayelitsha or Mfuleni Township along the route to Cape Town⁸⁴. The only reason for this was that the white people of Strand did not want to be neighbours of black people, but they wanted their labour. Through resistance by Lwandle community and some Somerset West white community who were concerned about their employees the proposal never bore fruit.⁸⁵

The Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum was borne out of both apartheid's development as well as its demise. In 1994, the new democratic government took over and in 1996 introduced a housing improvement program under its Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP). The Lwandle Hostels were to be improved so as to accommodate families instead of single males. A project to accomplish this housing problem in Lwandle called "From Hostel to Home" was put in place. It is out of the project where the need was seen by certain specific interested individuals in the vicinity to preserve one of the original hostels for historical purposes, which led to the establishment of the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum.

The museum idea had come mainly from two people, Bongani Mgijima and Charmian Plummer. The idea of the possibility of museum prevailed in the mind of one local youngster by the name of Bongani Mgijima, who was busy with his Post-graduate Diploma in Museum and Heritage studies offered by the University of the Western Cape

⁸⁴ B Mgijima, and V Buthelezi, "Mapping Museum-Community Relations in Lwandle" Unpublished paper presented in Heritage in Southern and Eastern Africa: Imagining and marketing public culture and history conference, (Livingstone: 2004) p8

⁸⁵ Lwandle Migrant labour Museum Video and Unayo Na Imepu exhibition

together with the University of Cape Town and the Robben Island Museum. Mgijima who was originally from Alice grew up in the hostel environment in Lwandle in the 1980s staying with his father who was also a Lwandle hostel resident. Charmian Plummer was popularly known for her community involvement in Lwandle, that included helping with raising donations for a crèche. Her and Mgijima's ideas complemented each other.

A campaign started for preservation of Hostel 33. A Museum Steering Committee was established comprising of the Lwandle community members including Bongani Mgijima (first museum curator) with Charmain Plummer (from Somerset West) to take the proposal to the municipal authorities. Letters and memorandums were relayed between the Museum Steering Committee and the municipality for the declaration of an old Community Hall as a museum repository. Initially, a letter was written to the Helderberg municipality to ask for a museum as an artifact repository.⁸⁶ On the 28 July 1999 the Old Community Hall and Hostel 33 were officially declared by the Museum Steering Committee with the permission from the Helderberg municipality to be utilized by LMLM.⁸⁷ This led to a leasing agreement between the municipality and the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum⁸⁸.

⁸⁶Letter from Mrs Charmain Plummer and Bongani Mgijima to the Chief Executive Officer of the Helderberg Municipality, 15. 07. 1999, Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum records

⁸⁷ A memorandum sent by Lwandle Councilors to the Director of Administration, Helderberg Municipality, 28.07.1999, Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum records

⁸⁸ B. Mgijima & V. Buthelezi, "Mapping Museum-Community Relations in Lwandle", Unpublished paper presented in Heritage in Southern and Eastern Africa: Imagining and marketing public culture and history conference, (Livingstone: 2004) p13

This community hall had been used by the hostel dwellers for different recreational activities as highlighted previously. There were music contests and a variety of traditional dance and music events that were once staged in this hall. In these vibrant music and dance competitions, the migrant workers forgot about all the hardships they endured in all their daily lives. This is where memories of the way things were done back at home were triggered and commemorated.⁸⁹ However, the laws and general environment of the apartheid period did not promote public gatherings among black people. Hence, it was not easy to access the hall.

It was this community hall, which became a part of museum. The museum initially existed as an empty hall. Hostel 33, as part of the museum was the museum visitors' centre of attraction. The museum building itself is an artifact and partly evokes memories of the history of Lwandle and the South African migrant labour system. This building still looks largely the same as it did during hostel days, the hollow interior with a stage at the far back of the hall.

But the museum has had several exhibitions in the community hall. According to Mgiijima and Buthelezi "In May 1999 the committee decided to mount a temporary exhibition, at the Old community Hall, entitled "Raising the Curtain" with the intention of popularising the museum project. This exhibition was mounted out of nothing. Charmian Plummer, the Chairperson of the Museum Committee approached photographers she knew from Somerset West and Strand to come and photograph scenes

⁸⁹ LMLM Oral History report, Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, 2003

in the township. Indeed they agreed and donated their works to the museum which were mainly of the local people and local school children.”⁹⁰

The museum’s first exhibition was staged in 1999 before the museum was officially opened. This exhibition was the original initiative by Bongani Mgiijima. The theme of the exhibition, “Raising the Curtain,” referred to sheets that were hung by the migrant workers alongside their bedsides to avoid shining lights at night and to secure some privacy. There were no switches for the lights, and later to prevent the opposite roommate to access his bed activities especially with his partner, (in the period after 1986), which served to create a sense of privacy.

This first exhibition was mounted in an empty hall. The museum was hollow with photographs along the wall. Leslie Witz took photographs of this exhibition, which allows us a flash back on the exhibition and activities of the museum. The first mission statement of the museum featured in this exhibition, which aimed “to Commemorate the Migrant Labour System and Hostel life” is displayed at the foyer. If one views the content of the exhibition it is clear that the museum was initiated with very little funds.

The poster that introduced the exhibition is written “Raising the Curtain: Images of Hostel life”. In the foyer below the museum entrance price list was a photograph of three African women sitting outside the old Lwandle hostel. There are photographs of school children and members of the community in the exhibition. From the collection of

⁹⁰B. Mgiijima and V. Buthelezi, Mapping Museum-Community Relations in Lwandle, Unpublished paper presented in Heritage in Southern and Eastern Africa: Imagining and marketing public culture and history conference, (Livingstone: 2004) p10

photographs it also appears that the museum started to associate itself with arts and craft from its inception. As the hall was empty with only photographs on the wall, the interior space was used by crafters especially bead work.⁹¹

In May 1st 2000, the “Workers Day” the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum was officially open as the first township based museum in Cape Town in the Western Cape Province of South Africa and the only museum that specifically commemorated the migrant labour system and hostel life in the Western Cape.

An exhibition entitled “Memorising Migrancy” was mounted in order to coincide with the official launch of the museum. “It consisted of photographs from the UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archive, and contemporary photographs some of which were used in the very first exhibition.”⁹² Most of these photographs were reflecting landscape of the Eastern Cape. The photograph of a signboard indicating the boundary between the ‘white’ South Africa and Bantustan of Transkei “Welcome to Transkei” was one of the photographs that formed this exhibition. This photograph suggested that most people of Lwandle were from Transkei. Other photographs were linking the Lwandle with pass laws. There was no direct story related people of Lwandle and their experiences.

The first museum curator departed in February 2002 and I became museum manager a month later. After a year and a half after Mgijima’s departure and after a year and a half

⁹¹ Photographs taken by Leslie Witz of the “Raising the Curtain” exhibition, Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, 10 June 1999.

⁹²B Mgijima, and V Buthelezi, Mapping Museum-Community Relations in Lwandle, Unpublished paper presented in Heritage in Southern and Eastern Africa: Imagining and marketing public culture and history conference, (Livingstone: 2004) p14

working in Mgijima's place, I put a lot of pressure on municipality officials about the space to be fenced. At last the museum is fenced and restore the dignity it deserves as an historical building that house the significant institution, which was never been imagined before in the township. Although this fence introduces a sense of limitation and detachment from the community who had access to the premises of the museum, it also introduces the sense of protection and preservation. Landscaping of the premises and building transformation works accompanied the fencing of the museum which brought about new look. The local municipality on behalf the City of Cape Town spent a large sum of money (R200 000.00) after a long discussion between the museum management and the Helderberg Municipality. It was agreed that the money to be used on landscaping which nevertheless changed the museum and the library premises into green spaces⁹³. Small part of this money was utilized to erect three, three by two meters display boards attached on a iron bar that runs from the right-hand side meant to be the exit of the museum and the opening of two double glass doors which were planned to be the new entrance and exit to the museum. This forms part of the continuous development and change of museum outlook of newly established museums.

From 2003 the museum has completely changed its old appearance, from a dumping ground into a green park view with beautiful trees and a restaurant. The developmental change of the museum exterior and interior started when the City of Cape Town donated more than R300 000.00 for the establishment of the restaurant "*Imbizo*". Out of this money the museum restaurant was built out of 2x12metres and 1x6metres shipping

⁹³ Recorded meeting between the Museum management and Helderberg Municipality Housing Department authorities

containers. The furniture and appliances as well as the start up restaurant stock were bought out of the fund. The restaurant started to operate in October 2003. The restaurant was set up to complement the museum's income by selling refreshments to tourists and the local community members.

However, the improvements of museum landscape and the restaurant have changed the museum premises for the better. This has laid a foundation for a fundamental change to the whole museum setting. From the outside view one can observe the change that has taken place through signs and landscaping since 2003. In 2005 the museum is preparing the new exhibition to complement the beauty of the external views, which is accompanied by the development of the whole neighbourhood.

Between 2002 and 2005 Lwandle Township, under the government housing development projects, also grew rapidly. On the western side along Nomzamo the new section of houses known as "Asla section" by the local people originating from the name of 'housing development company' - (ASLA MAGWEBU) Development Construction. This area has already reached Strand and Loswell. However it cannot integrate with Strand (white area) because there is a wall, which act as boundary that prevents integration. From the north the railway line also serves as demarcation between this area and Strand Somerset West residential areas (formerly and white areas). However the nucleus of the whole new sections in the area is *Emaholweni* where most of history of the place is traced.

During the period (2002-2005) of this study the museum had an exhibition themed “*Unayo Na Imepu?*” *Unayo na Imepu* means “do you have a map?” in Nguni language. In fact most of the exhibition displayed in Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum is covered in two languages of the three traditionally used by different publics in the Western Cape. The main museum exhibition “*Unayo Na Imepu?*” conveys its message in English and Xhosa languages which this exhibition has become one of the pioneers attempted to meet the change of language superiority in museum. Through this exhibition the LMLM is endeavouring to claim an identity as a museum that speaks to the local community, most of whom are more at ease with Xhosa language. This exhibition is relating the apartheid migrant labour system with Lwandle hostel life. This exhibition has also used some of the UWC-Robben Island Museum Mayibuye Centre images which symbolizes the national struggle of liberation against apartheid. This, at some point attempts to claim Lwandle, as a place of apartheid victims.

It is imperative that Lwandle Township is not viewed as a township that emerged like all other South African townships. Instead, if museums are, as I also believe, “culture-collecting strategies as a response to particular histories of dominance, hierarchy resistance and mobilization,”⁹⁴ then, the Lwandle Township (*Emaholweni*) meaning hall-like houses has become an open-air museum. The apartheid architect of hostels and the features of social poverty as legacy of apartheid has become one Lwandle tourists gaze. The tourists gaze of historical hostel buildings which once served the apartheid ends and the visibility of poverty among the previously disadvantaged African communities

⁹⁴ J. Clifford, *Museum as Contact Zones*, in D Boswell, & J. Evan, *Representing the Nation*, (London, Routledge, 1999), 451

become a significant historical scene. Hence, Lwandle is one of the existing debris of the history of colonialism and apartheid rule. The transformation of hostels to family units did not affect the original outside appearance of the hostels only the interior part is changed through partitioning. The hostel appearance setting still exists. Unlike other converted hostel, it is the only part with not solar panel. If one is curious about knowing about how the actual hostel setting looked like, just take that person to Lwandle and one need not to enter the museum as hostel structures still look the same as in the 1970s and the 1980s. The township itself brings the sympathetic feeling that triggers the memories of pass laws, trespasses, watchmen, and all other experiences of apartheid and migrant labour system. Most of realities of apartheid features are on display to museum visitors where poor children are wandering along the hostel blocks pathways others are visited in crèches.

The location of the museum suggests its origin and the community it claims to represent is mainly characterized by migrancy emanated from apartheid laws of racial segregation. The most intriguing thing is that almost all eighty percent of people who are closely working for the museum are outsiders; they are not from the local community. The management is purely not from the community and the board consists of only two full-time citizens of Lwandle, the others are from other parts of Cape Town and one from Germany. This, to certain extent reflects the lack of commitment from the local community members. However, this may not show a lack of commitment but emphasizes that the people of Lwandle are not a community that is attached to its place, sharing common values and norms of their history and culture.

Most members of the community only perceive that the schools are responsible for taking children to museums as excursions. A tiny percentage of the community connects or associates themselves with the museum or museum activities. To me this shows how the apartheid laws embedded in African people's lives. They still don't regard the urban residential areas and their institutions as their permanent homes. They still regard themselves as visitors as the apartheid policies maintained. This has also extensively affected the participation of the Lwandle community in museum affairs and museum development. This perspective coincides with what Leslie Witz significantly noted in the subject of museums on Cape Town township tours, that;

“This perspective on township museums does not only emanate from the structures of tourism industry. It is mirrored in the difficulties within townships of establishing museum communities. Museums have come to represent a place in the metropole, which one may be taken for a brief school excursion. They are not regarded as places of one's own community, but places associated with and belonging to another”⁹⁵

Nevertheless, the museum has become one of the unique pieces of tourist attraction in the tourism landscape of the Cape Metropolitan. Although the museum is situated far away from the city centre it remains a popular destination in the so-called 'cultural tours', the township tours. Most visitors to this museum are the international tourists. Even when it comes to national visitors they also 'white'. This situation reflects the unbalanced relationship whereby the previously oppressed 'Black' people are selling the scars of their oppression to the former oppressors.

⁹⁵ See L. Witz, Museums on Cape Town's township Tours, *Unpublished paper for Museums Local Knowledge and Performance in an age of Globalisation Conference*, (Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, 2001) p6

Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum celebrated its fifth anniversary in May 1st 2005. The LMLM has been nearly for five years in the map of tourists' minds and in brochures in information centres. The official opening of LMLM came as a benchmark and a historical pioneer in bringing history for the people to the people and a step to practical public participation in making of public history. This anniversary is a continuation of LMLM to consistently changing its character over time. The museum has changed its representation since its existence.



Chapter Four

The Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum: The Apartheid Victims as Model of Hope and Development

Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum seeks to tell the story of experiences of 'Black' migrant workers in South Africa. There are three elements to the museum. The first story, being constructed through the exhibition portrays Lwandle's people as victims of apartheid especially the impacts the highly complex Group Areas Act and Separate Development policy which linked to the notorious pass laws. Secondly, the museum conducts a tour termed to be a 'township informative walk'⁹⁶ which mainly focuses on juxtaposing the scars of apartheid and the new developments since the fall of the apartheid regime. Finally, the museum incorporates Hostel 33, which forms a key part of the walk. This is meant to recall the living conditions of migrant life.

Lwandle Community and Apartheid Victims

Stuart Hall acknowledges that the museum “exists to acquire, safeguard, conserve and display objects, artifacts or work of art of various kinds”⁹⁷. But, he argues further against this claim, that museums are sites of representation. For example, in exhibitions, “photographs have three effects: they enhance the representation of exhibition; they substitute for the physical presence of ethnographic ‘objects’ or ‘subjects’; and they ease the work of representation by providing a ‘real’ context which either contextualizes the

⁹⁶ Mrs C. Plummer, the former chairperson of the LMLM, Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum Video, 2000

⁹⁷ S. Hall, *Representation*, (London, Sage, 1997) p159.

object or allows a blueprint for the display design.”⁹⁸ The museum has staged several exhibitions since its emergence, which mostly consist of photographic narration. The LMLM representation is not interpreted through objects but mostly through photographic images that mainly represent South African national experience, which is intended to forge the local experience.

The social and economic background of the people of Lwandle has a great influence on the museum content. The Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum is not a typical museum, which consist of objects and artifacts, which link the history and experience of the people. This is evidenced by the fact that the many of people of Lwandle are unable to loan or donate memorable artifacts, because the little they have they need to use in their homes. For example if one requires that a certain particular family to donate or loan a stove that they were using in the hostel before they moved into a house or in a converted hostel one would encounter difficulty in terms of getting that stove donated or loaned just because they are still using it. These objects and artifacts are what the museum expects to construct and present the identity of Lwandle people as migrant labourers. But, except for hostel 33 and passbooks, the museum is hardly displaying any artifacts that depict local migrant labourers experiences. There were beds, cupboards and paraffin primus stoves that were used by hostel dwellers, to mention a few, that could remind one about the life in the hostel but are not available to the museum. This situation has somehow prompted the museum to stage exhibitions that hardly use artifacts that speak directly to the Lwandle community but to mainly external audiences especially tourists. Maybe that is why Mgijima and Buthelezi maintain, “The background of Lwandle residents, which is

⁹⁸ S. Hall, *Representation*, (London, Sage, 1997) p177

informed by legacy of apartheid and poverty, prompted the museum leaders to step out from the conservationist to tourism discourse.”⁹⁹ There is very little to conserve, oral history seems to be the basis of what can be reconstructed.

The exhibition that ran between 2002 and 2005 (*Unayo Na Imepu?*) tells a double-sided story of Lwandle. It traces the history and the origin of the “location”, how and why the apartheid government in the 60s established dwelling space. It also goes into detail about the processes government and Mr. Van Vuuren the former owner of the land went through and the disputes that emerged between the state and him to build the ‘Bantu’ hostels and other changes that took place up to the 90s. The other layer of the story locates Lwandle under the big umbrella of apartheid victims who through the spirit of ‘freedom’ are in the process of development. It also shows the renovation and alteration of hostel in family houses and eventually the emergence of the museum.

Leaving the reception area, before the museum exhibition starts on your left-hand side of the museum entrance is a big frame of signatures of the members of the community who pledged to support the museum. Just to the left in the corner passing ones eyes over the donation box, is the list of different years that construct the frame of the legislation that suppressed and circumscribed, with brutality, the movement of African peoples. The main exhibition consists of poster type colourful panels mounted on the wall of the museums. The exhibition produces a combination of Lwandle history, which is about the

⁹⁹ B. Mgijima & V. Buthelezi, Mapping Museum-Community Relations in Lwandle, Unpublished paper presented in Heritage in Southern and Eastern Africa: Imagining and marketing public culture and history conference, (Livingstone: 2004) p19

experiences of migrant workers, and the general social life lived by the African people during apartheid particularly under Group Areas Act of 1950 and 1966, and the Urban Black Consolidation Act of 1945, which complemented the Pass Laws. Mostly, the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum exhibition consists of a series of panels, which have photographic evidence and testimonies of other parts of Lwandle as South African history.

The first three panels of the exhibition are aerial photographic landscapes of Lwandle before and after the Lwandle hostels were erected. The first panel represents Lwandle as an empty space until the late 1950s. This photograph resembles tradition colonial photographic work that portrays “Africa as an empty land.” Photographs of empty lands did not necessarily produce hundreds of white settlers ...The relationship between politics and representation is far more subtle, problematic and open-ended”.¹⁰⁰ In this case the empty land to be known as Lwandle was secured to be developed to accommodate African single males instead of settlers.

Hayes maintains that “At times when expeditionary photographs were being taken from the mid-19th century, the European horizon was being transcended or pricked by the air balloon which then made their way to into Africa’s military history between 1890 and the 1910s. Intriguing connections might be drawn between genres of photography and representation of topographical knowledge, which was then extended administratively into a full-blown forms of repression as aeroplanes scaled new heights to survey and take

¹⁰⁰P. Hayes, et al 'Photography, history and memory', in Wolfram Hartman, Jeremy Silvester and Patricia Hayes (eds), *The Colonising Camera* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1998), p4.

aerial photographs. Photographies of the land slipped away here from the effective and subjective potential of the landscape genre into a more objective tone of sheer facticity.”¹⁰¹.

All three panels in LMLM contain aerial photography, represent the change of the landscape over decades. These panels alone suggest how aerial photography has been used for negative oppression of African people in South Africa. Here aerial photography was not used for military expeditions as Hayes indicated, but for racial oppression and population control. The last two panels on aerial photographs represent the change in Lwandle landscape between the early 1970s and the year 2000.

The photograph on the first panel was taken in 1957. The following panel is an aerial photograph, which was taken in 1975, which represents the landscape of Lwandle as an isolated hostel labour camp. The third panel has a photograph take in the year 2000 which represent the original hostels with of informal settlements surrounding Lwandle hostel, which is now no more a hostel but a township. However, the three panels in some ways represent the nature of highest degree of surveillance against African migrant labourers by apartheid government. The museum uses the second and the third panels to show the degree of surveillance in which Lwandle was put under apartheid as well as population censorship. According to the exhibition “Aerial photography is based on the idea that by looking at an area from above everything about a place can be known and situated on a map. Once mapped the landscape can be controlled and governed. Everything is visible.

¹⁰¹ P. Hayes, *Vision and Violence: Photographies of War in Southern Angola and Northern Namibia*, *Unpublished Paper University of the Western Cape, Contemporary Seminar*, UWC: 2000

Those who are surveyed cannot hide and have no privacy. But aerial photography can also help us to find out and understand changes over time. We can see where people lived, how their situations changed, and how areas grew and expanded in different ways”.¹⁰²

These panels are demonstrating the isolation between the Lwandle and the nearest ‘white’ residential areas, as apartheid demanded a reasonable distance between the two. That is where the application of the principles of the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, the Group Areas Act and the Urban (Black) Consolidation Act. “Controlled’ areas were to be proclaimed”¹⁰³ under the Urban (Black) Consolidation Act, and Lwandle became one of the controlled areas. Implicitly, these panels pose questions about the socialization of South African society under apartheid. Why was a “location” of migrant workers which was going to serve the local towns built in a isolated area? Why were the hostels not built closer to their place of work (in Somerset West) and closer to transportation systems? Why were men enclosed in a compound separated from their families?

By focusing on the landscape, the aerial photographs show how ‘black and white’ divided spaces were legitimized as a fact and naturalised under apartheid. This is the power of ‘facticity’ in aerial photography that Hayes refers to above.

Following these aerial photographs are another three panels that tell the story on how Lwandle landscape was acquired from Mr. CPJ Van Vuuren to make way for hostels. The

¹⁰² LMLM “Unayo Na Imepu? exhibition

¹⁰³ R. Omond, *The Apartheid Handbook*, (New York: Pelican 1986) p37

copies of original correspondence between the national government office of Native Affairs under Prime Minister Verwoerd and the Stellenbosh Municipal Division Council and Mr. Van Vuuren are on display. According to this part of the exhibition, the government compelled Van Vuuren that if he did not accept the offer decided by the government, the government would expropriate the land. The archival evidence from the exhibition data state that only £14 000.00 was paid, instead of £18000.00 that Van Vuuren wanted. In this panel one can sense out that the apartheid government could even go as far as to sacrifice other white individuals' interest to fulfill apartheid goals.

The other two panels also show municipal archival documents of the plan of the area where the hostels were to be built and the buffer zones. Following these panels is a panel that deals with the impacts of Pass Laws on the people of Lwandle. Here the museum attempt is attempting to link the Lwandle experience with the national experience of migrancy and migrant labour system and the impact of Pass Laws on African people in cities. The museum has used an example of the original farmhouse, "wit huis", which was used as a temporary police station to claim a link with national experiences of pass arrests. This panel has newspaper clips and quotes of interviews from Lwandle residents. "*Lwandle skoon gemaak*" This is a newspaper cutting on the panel which means Lwandle has been cleaned after the police arrests in the hostel. An interview extract reads thus, "They arrived at 4:00 in the morning they say they are looking women they open the curtain closing (off cubicles) and look under the beds. They shake the cupboards to feel if

there is any one inside. “At 1:30 and 3:30. On 30th April 1986 residents of Lwandle were violently awakened to find the entire hostel surrounded by the regional police.”¹⁰⁴

The exhibition continued with panels containing photographs by Eli Weinberg and Leon Levson. Here the museum attempts to link Lwandle’s experience with a national experience of migrant labour. Photographs depict an old woman being asked to press her thumb for *Dompas* identity. Another shows a scene of an arrest for being without a passbook. These are both photographs by Eli Weinberg. A photograph by Leon Levson shows newly arrived men from rural areas arriving in town. Not only does this panel link Lwandle to a broader narrative but the text also comments on the role of social documentary photography, that Leon Levson’s photographs are often used to tell the story of urban and rural life. But they also invite us to engage with the meanings of South African history. Sometimes, they lead us to certain interpretations, at other times they generalize the South African experience. And yet they also ask questions about how we tell the story of migrancy, imagine different narratives and challenge older ones.

The last two panels of the museum exhibition introduce the changes and the advent “From Hostels to Homes Project” that led to the establishment of the museum. On the panel there are photographs of the blueprints of the new planned family units and the photographs of hostels under renovation. The last panel reflects photographs of the museum official opening on “Workers’ Day” in 2000. The other photograph has one of the successful ex-Lwandle hostel dweller, Sandile Dikeni, who then was a newspaper reporter and now working for one of the Black Empowerment ventures. Bongani

¹⁰⁴ Unayo Na Imepu, The White House/ Wit Huis panel

Mgijima and Charmian Plummer, who were the champions of the museum project also feature in this panel.

The central space of the museum is used for temporary exhibitions on green zig-zag boards. Usually, the exhibitions that are mounted here are also not related to Lwandle specifically but represent national experiences. This partly speaks to the community and partly to tourists as it is normally based on holidays of national significance like Women's Day and National Youth Day. Ironically Lwandle as mentioned above did have only men, in its history until the second half of the 1980s where women and children flocked into hostels.

On your way to the exit point is the exhibition installation made up of a collection of migrant workers' belongings displayed in wheelbarrows that are covered with glass on top. This exhibition has traveled to Paris as the Mayor of Paris invited the artist, University of Cape Town Professor Gavin Young in 2000. One of the belongings on display in the wheel barrow are the historical identity documents (passbooks) which played a harsh role in controlling movement of African people especially migrant workers and job seekers in cities. There is also a display of correspondence of migrant workers in the form of letters, by which migrant workers communicated with their families. There are also old shoes, cow horns, herbs, vases, plates and copper coins in these wheelbarrows. This artwork attempts to bring together most vital objects in provoking apartheid and migrant labour system, which separated families. This exhibition fits well in the concept of LMLM. The most interesting components of this installation

are letters, which demonstrate distant communication and sustainability of family bonds. The passbooks, which symbolize the social restriction and surveillance, make an interesting point in telling South African history in this exhibition especially in linking it with Lwandle hostel life. The wheelbarrows represent manual hard work that migrant workers face especially in mines where the most common tools are pick, shovel and wheelbarrows to extract the production from under ground. Placed in Lwandle, they link the specific migrant labour experience to a more universal one in South Africa.

Hanging at the back towards the exit is the apartheid 'beach sign'. This is a famous artifact in the museum because it evokes empathy in most tourists. Lwandle somehow is an ironic or a contradictory name to be used for people of Lwandle. The place was named Lwandle, which means 'beach or sea', but the people who live in Lwandle were circumscribed and had no access to the sea or the beach by law from its inception in the 1960s up until 1994 where all people of South Africa were proclaimed to be equal.

Before visitors are taken for a 'township walk' they are offered to watch a 20minutes documentary video based on a history of Lwandle that consolidates a story of racial discrimination. The video is set up to tell a visual story of Lwandle, characterized by the sense of being victims of poverty and unemployment perpetuated by the apartheid regime. Selected members of the community which include the first curator of the museum, Bongani Mgijima, a library staff member, and Mrs Charmian Plummer, a board member and the city and township scenery appear in the video to construct a story of rising from the ashes of apartheid destruction. This includes historical photographs from

the UWC Robben Island Mayibuye Centre, which are used to associate Lwandle people with victims of apartheid the oppression. It also represents the response and community struggle to their success after the fall of the apartheid regime through developing cultural tourism.

The video tells a two-folded story of hardship and poverty inherited under apartheid's migrant labour system and the development brought about after the fall of the apartheid regime. However it starts by showing the well-known and world wide popular feature that uniquely symbolizes Cape Town, the "Mother City" as it is popularly known to its locals; the beauty of Cape Town landscape and its settlement at the foot of the Table Mountain. With the flow of narration careful articulated by Khaya Dlanga, the visual footage shifts from the blue oceanic view. As he introduces Lwandle as a place that bears visible "scars of injustice", scenic shots of Lwandle hostels with its dilapidated informal settlement conditions invade the screen. Children are said to be "dying of malnutrition" and the lack of infrastructure and public institutions. As the footage portrays people of Lwandle as victims of apartheid, a new image turns to build up on the screen.

The story then moves on to echo the advent of democracy and development that is progressing in the community. The change that came with democracy represents Lwandle as a tourist destination through its museum with an arts and craft centre and Hostel 33, which was preserved after development that renovated and converted hostels into family units took place. It is left to visitors to draw a picture of the legacy of apartheid in the current free democratic society, where Cape Town and its suburbs is completely different

from the African township. These two are two different worlds in one city, developed and underdeveloped. After the video screening the township walk follows. The township walk generally is the extension of the video and tourists are always excited to see the remaining original hostel, Hostel 33.

Township Walk: Lwandle as a Model of Post-Apartheid Social

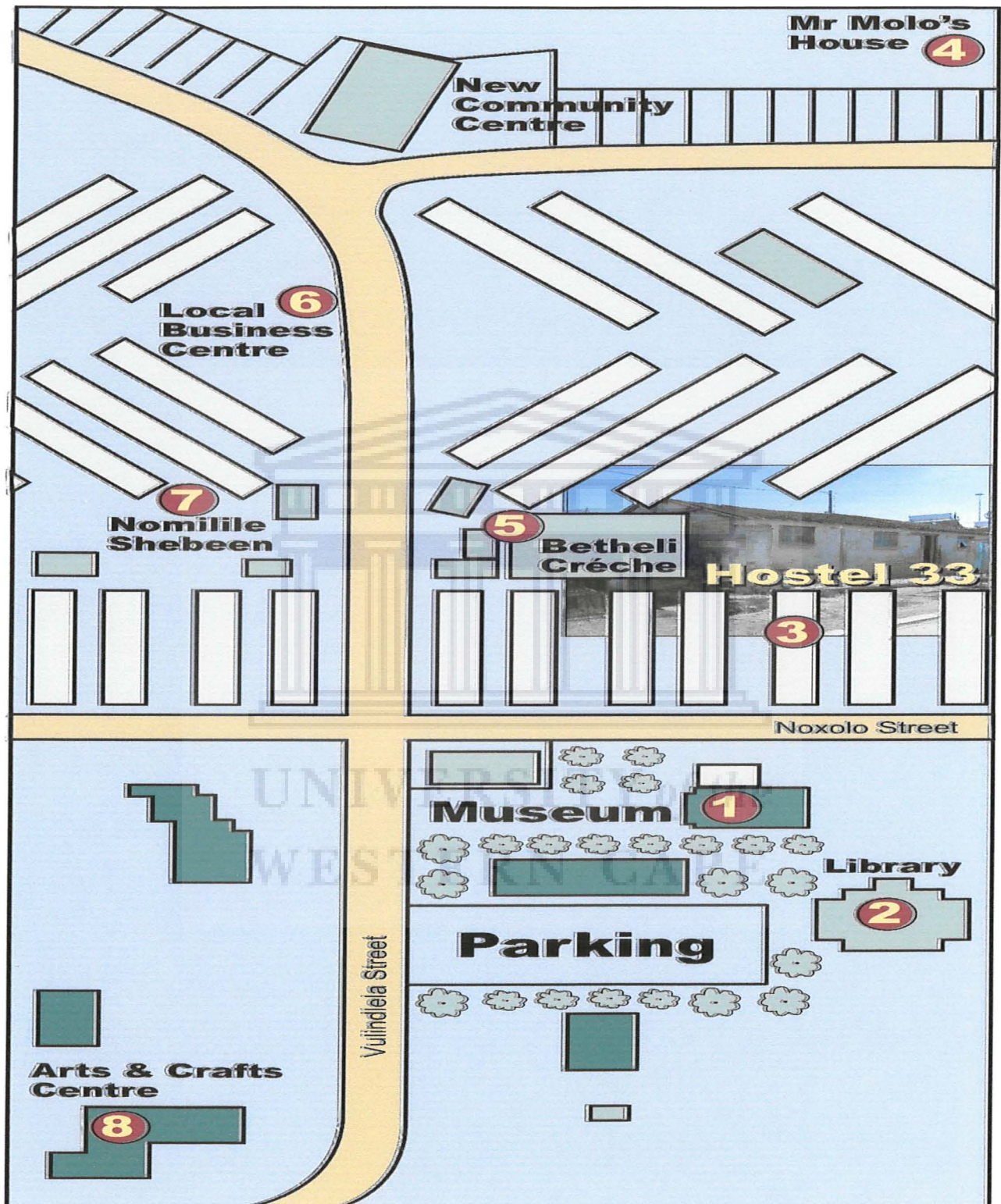
Development

By elaborating on the exhibition and the video, the township walk attempts to reveal problems posed by the apartheid migrant labour system on the Lwandle community as well as the positive changes brought by the new democracy. By visiting the places like Hostel 33 the narrative that underlies it condemns the system that was implemented in South Africa. The visitors are taken to view these conditions in Hostel 33 where all the original components of hostel setting which appear in the photographs taken in 1989 that appears in the “Hostel Life” panel in the ‘*Unayo na Imepu*’ exhibition.

The Township Walk.

Analyzing township tours, Witz maintains that “It is almost as if the tourist is being offered a journey to an exotic destination outside of the city, where the attractions are beermakers, traditional healers dancing, taverns and shanty towns.”¹⁰⁵ In townships people are on show in one way or another in a living museum. This is the version of township tour in townships close to city, for example like in townships such as Langa, Gugulethu and Nyanga and so on. But Lwandle does not fit in this version because the

¹⁰⁵ L. Witz, “Museums on Cape Town township tours”, Unpublished paper for Museums Local Knowledge and Performance in an age of Globalisation Conference, Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, (2001) p2



Map 2. Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum Township Tour Sketch, design by Jos Thorne, 2005

tour route does not include dancers, traditional healers, taverns and hardly beermakers. However, the walk between the transformed hostels also stages Lwandle as people and their living condition become part of the tourist gaze.

The township itself brings the sympathetic feeling that trigger the memories of pass laws, trespasses, watchmen, and all other experiences of apartheid and the migrant labour system.

Like the video, the township walk or the township tour as it usually called, aims at juxtaposing the past and present developments. It seeks to show how people used the previous apartheid structures for their benefit. The walk includes visits to several local structures, new and old. The walk starts from the museum and the local Hector Petersen Library. The crucial question about how the name Hector Petersen related to Lwandle is frequently asked by the tourists. A satisfying answer is not readily available except for the guide to mention that Hector Petersen is a national symbol for youth and education and the guide will begin to tell a short history of Petersen and the 1976 youth riots of which tend to link it with youth and education. The aim of this visit to the library is to show visitors community development since the place was converted into a normal residential area and how other communities can assist in terms of development of the library. This visit has prompted visitors to donate books and educational material for crèches and primary schools.¹⁰⁶ This also includes the effort made by the present government in terms of encouraging the culture of learning in its communities. As a

¹⁰⁶ The good example is Suki Turner who visited the Museum originally from London in 2002 March. Since then she has been sending educational materials including school furniture and clothes to the museum to distribute in schools, crèches and old age homes.

result these visits to the library tourists from abroad have been sending books and other equipment for child development.

From the library the route goes to Hostel 33, which will be dealt with separately later. From hostel 33 the walk continues. Depending on the time that tourists are prepared to spend the tour includes a visit to Mr Molo. He is one of the oldest citizens of Lwandle since hostel days. This provides the opportunity for the tourists to get the story of apartheid and pass laws from the horse's mouth. Along the way to Mr. Molo's house the route passes along the housing development called Fatyela Square named after one of the local African National Congress leaders who was assassinated before the first South African democratic election. These houses also add to the story of community development and the government dedication to provide houses to poor people. From Mr. Molo's house the walk takes its direction to local crèches especially towards Bethel Crèche.

Bethel Crèche is one of the oldest crèches in Lwandle and is accommodated in the old hostel dwellers communal kitchen. This building was used by the hostel dwellers as their place to cook their food. The hostel dwellers were prohibited from cooking in their hostel rooms so they had to move out and cook in a big open building with stoves ready for them to come with their pots. This aspect of the tour attempts to tell the story of creativity among the previously oppressed people in converting structures of oppression to that of empowerment. Here the tourists take photographs of happy children, "it might perhaps be useful to shift our focus to another link in the chain of the ways meanings are produced

within the signifying process: to the time taking the photograph, and to the relationship between the photographer and the subject.”¹⁰⁷ The power relations here favour the visitors as they carry vast technology with them, cameras that generate excitement to children when it flashes. Tourists always have sweets, which also persuade children to pose in front of the camera lens. What meanings are formulated and attached to the images of children of Africa? “A poor and hungry African child” only fascinated by the camera-flash or maybe ‘backward.’ However there is more to this, as some tourists are sympathetic to the conditions that the crèche operates under and they vow to sponsor the crèche with money, toys or books.

The walk extends to the Town Square where local people are doing their business selling all sorts of things, new and second hand, ranging from crafts to clothing and food, cooked and uncooked. Then the tour continues to the sheeben. This is a strategy used by township tours which are closer to the CBD of Cape Town, so the tour end up visiting the sheeben to certify those who already have pre-conceived ideas about the township. This not about going against the policy of the museum, however, as Witz noticed that “the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum has endeavoured to become a destination on the township tour route. This is presented as to “learn more about the migrant labour system (1958-1994)”. He continues to state “while the museum does not want to locate itself as an exotic destination, the tourist industry demands places of difference. The museum has to consistently mediate the pasts it collects, presents and represents in order to ensure that

¹⁰⁷ J. Spence, *Cultural Sniping*, (London: Routledge, 1995) p147

it becomes a “Destination Culture”¹⁰⁸ and a sheeben is one of the popular pre conceived cultural elements of the township tours in the Western Cape. However Luvuyo Dondolo provides a clear picture about the township tours in the Western Cape as he maintains “township tours are presented as an alternative to cultural village performances as tourists are invited to see the local residents in the townships as more authentic and in non-performative environment”¹⁰⁹. He also extends to say, “this new South African tourist image – township tours – has caused a shift in the presentation of ‘authenticity’ as the focus of that (authenticity) is now mostly based on townships. But there are some critics who argue that “almost invariably on the Township Tours, the ‘Struggle Route’ way to the ‘Shebeen route’. However, Witz maintains that “township tours primarily present themselves as offering insight to post Apartheid progress and development”¹¹⁰. Township tours appear not be integral part of Cape Town as a tourist attraction destination but as physical case studies of apartheid experience and rehabilitation of its wounds. This put Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum as part of the package of the ‘township tour’ in a critical position in regards to Cape Town ‘cultural tourism’ to meet the expectation of the tourist.

¹⁰⁸ L. Witz, “Museums on Cape Town’s township Tours”, Unpublished paper for Museums Local Knowledge and Performance in an age of Globalisation Conference, (Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, 2001) p6

¹⁰⁹ L. Dondolo, “Depicting history at Sivuyile Township Tourism”: Unpublished paper for Mapping alternatives: Debating new heritage practices in South Africa, Center for African Studies, (University of Cape Town) 2001

¹¹⁰ L. Witz, Museums on Cape Town’s township tours, Unpublished paper for Museums Local Knowledge and Performance in an age of Globalisation Conference, Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, (2001), p2.

There is only one popular sheeben that still brews traditional beer in Lwandle, which is run by a middle age woman popularly know to her clients as Nomilile. In the sheeben the tourists are introduced to *Umqombothi* the traditional beer and the way this beer is shared by those who drink it. The tourists are also told how the beer is brewed. The visit portrays that Africans are still holding in their traditional life of sharing. In a sheeben you find people drinking together in a 1 or 2 liter container instead of each drinking alone.

The tour ends by the visiting the newly renovated former beer hall building, which represents the national experience the 'beer halls'. When beer halls were introduced were boycotted all over the country.¹¹¹ The narrative of this aspect of the tour is based mainly on the exhibition panel in the museum that depicts the photograph of the ruins of the burnt down building of the Lwandle beer hall (*KwaJabulani*) which also forms part of the narration that portrays the post-apartheid era as a symbol of development which features a township walk narrative. On the photograph is a figure of a man standing outside the ruins of the building. There is an insert of a white building with colourful African Art and bold writing which indicate that the building is an "Art and Craft Centre". This Arts and Craft Centre is a renovation of old *KwaJabulani*. The narration here is about the rehabilitated place, which was once used as instrument for social and family destruction of African people. The sense of narration is based on fighting evil for the benefit of the good. Hence, the Art and Craft Centre is portrayed as a cleansed place transformed from the evil of apartheid to social development. The point usually made by the tour-guides is the positive approach taken by the community members in welcoming the opportunities of participating in community projects to development in the post apartheid era.

¹¹¹ Robben Island UWC Mayibuye Archive, IDAF Collection, Strike the Rock, video, 1999

Hostel 33

The last part of the museum is hostel room 33 known as ‘Hostel 33’, which is the core of the museum. This is the only hostel room still preserved to reflect the original conditions of hostel life. However there are still problems about Room 33 because this part of the museum is still occupied by the people who were living in this place before the Hostel to Homes Project. These people did not get improved accommodation during the first issue of houses in Nomzamo, the newest Lwandle extension reserved for housing, and were also not covered in the provision of renovated and converted hostel project. The hostel room is divided into two main halves, each half meant to accommodate sixteen people. At present the museum uses one half of the block for tourists as the ex-migrant hostel dwellers still occupy the other half. This occupation has taken almost six years since the first arrangement reached between the museum and the municipality about the site. This is the most challenging issue. The museum is practically not able to solve the accommodation problem as all the power and scope for resolution is in hands of the municipality.

Rassool has argued that “ almost every sphere of heritage production has seen complexity, controversy and contestation.”¹¹² There are still some complexities with the museum utilization of Hostel 33. This problem started at the early stage of the museum and hostel 33. Mgiijima and Buthelezi had noticed that a major contestation and perhaps

¹¹² C Rassool, *The Rise of Heritage*, 1999, p 2

contradiction played itself out on the very same day that the museum was officially opened as an event to ‘unchain the past’.¹¹³ Hostel 33 residents who had earlier endorsed the museum project¹¹⁴ wrote a note on the hostel door “disagreeing with you that the hostel be used as a museum first give us accommodation”¹¹⁵ This raised the question of preserving Hostel 33 for the purposes of a museum while there is a lack of housing in Lwandle. This unearthed the issues of imbalance of economic and social welfare created by the previous apartheid regime, the housing shortage for Africans people and the hostel system. The museum board found itself in a double bind. How does one begin to intervene in the allocation of housing in Lwandle, which is fraught with its own problems? The museum’s board had no alternative but to intervene and negotiate alternative accommodation for Hostel 33 residents. However, the damage was already done to the credibility of the new museum, which sought to position itself as a community-museum on the basis of being “The first township – based museum in the Western Cape.”¹¹⁶ After negotiations with the Hostel to Homes project managers four of the eight families staying in Hostel 33 residents were relocated to renovated family units. Since 1998 an undertaking by the project managers to relocate the remaining four families was agreed upon but this has not been achieved. This also posed a problem for the museum because museology work could not begin until the families move to new houses. At the same time tourists visiting the museum insisted on seeing this “original historic hostel”.¹¹⁷ The museum negotiated a deal with Hostel 33. The museum could

¹¹³ District Mail, Friday 20 May 2000

¹¹⁴ Letter and Placard wrote by Hostel 33 occupants to the museum committee, 30. April. 2000

¹¹⁵ This noticed was posted on the door of hostel 33 on I May 2001, the day the museum was officially launched. See a photograph of this notice at Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum.

¹¹⁶ Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum and Art and Craft Center , Brochure 2001

¹¹⁷ *ibid*

bring visitors to the vacant hall of the hostel. While this was a compromise on the part of Hostel 33 residents and Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum the latter realized that museum-community relations are very complex and fragile.

This dilemma is also taking place in New York City in the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, 97 Orchard Street.¹¹⁸ In this case the museum wants to turn or incorporate the adjacent building next to the museum to be part of the museum. But the owner of the adjacent building has developed his building, reportedly, “the landlord’s improvements of that building had compromised the Museum’s structure and affected the outlook of the museum.”¹¹⁹ Just like LMLM Hostel 33 the Lower East Side Tenant Museum is based on preserving experiences of people and of migration as these building’s preservation represent the histories of these sites. The adjacent building owner in Orchard Street refuses to hand over the building to the museum while the representative of the city council is favouring the idea of incorporating this buildings to the museum. This has also cause a lot of confusion that led to the convening of a museum board meeting and the community where different views came up about what has to be done about the building in 99 Orchard Street. This matter is similar to that of ‘Hostel 33’ of Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum where the local municipality has agreed to the preservation of one hostel.¹²⁰ But, the municipality never attempted to solve the problem of accommodating the Hostel 33 occupants, it has become the problem of the Museum and the Hostel 33 occupants to negotiate for the ongoing government housing distribution. Since then

¹¹⁸ S. Sayrafiezadeh, *A Fight Over 99 Orchard street*, <http://www.mrbellersneighborhood.com/story.php?storyid=1378>, posted 2003.09.02 (accessed 2005. 08. 24)

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ LMLM video documentary

though Hostel 33 was declared as a section of the museum almost eight years ago virtually it still does not belong to the museum.

However, the building contractor (ASLA) had promised that the remaining people who still occupy Hostel 33 would vacate just towards the end of 2004. Charmian Plummer, museum board member and the then museum coordinator (myself) have been continuously consulted with the Ward Councilor Mr. Xolani Sotashe, and the contractor about the accommodation of the Hostel 33 residents. However, the relationship between the museum and the people in Hostel 33 is complex. When the museum brings tourists to view the historical building there is always cooperation but this not always voluntary and willingly. Occupants of Hostel 33 become living museum objects. They are a spectacle of tourists camera lens. This situation brings to fore several questions. Is LMLM' s commercialization of culture compromising the dignity and privacy of Hostel 33's occupants? Are the local authorities and other relevant decision makers in favour of conserving this part of historical experiences of South African history or not? The answers to these questions are complex. Hostel 33 acts as the tourists' point of attraction in Lwandle rather than the museum in the Old Community Hall. Being a tourist destination is a right thing as it accomplishes the museum goal but ironically the occupants of hostel 33 have become part of the township walk package.

The basic idea of visiting Hostel 33 is aimed at telling the apartheid story of hostel life conditions and its contribution to moral degeneration among African people. This is the story of apartheid human disrespect and undermining of Africans and human beings that

deserve privacy and family environment. This is the story of how apartheid government reduced African people to labour tools other than human beings. This is preserved as physical evidence of migrant labour system experience. However this tour is somehow a continuation of surveillance by the outsider. Tourists with cameras capture the local peoples' images outside and inside their homes.

The tour narrative of the hostel conditions begins by introducing and welcoming the visitors to Hostel 33. The tour guide reminds the visitors about what they heard and saw in the museum documentary video. The visitors are alerted to compare the building in front of them (Hostel 33), which has no geyser while other renovated hostel buildings have solar panel and geysers, which make them, appear modern and beautiful. The guide leads the visitors into the hostel and opens the iron gate to access the unoccupied room on the left-hand side of the hostel. Here the guide starts to describe the conditions and the number of people who used to occupy the space during the time when the compartment was accommodating four single males and when these compartments accommodated four families. Basically the story of Hostel 33 condemns the inhumane conditions under which the migrant labourers lived.

As the narrative continues, the tourist are given a picture of living conditions when the hostel was still occupied by single males. "There is cupboard with four doors", the story begins. "This cupboard belonged to the four hostel mates who used to stay here. There are four bunk beds here and in the other compartment and so on. This means that the whole of Hostel 33 accommodated thirty two people." This part of the narration

persuades the visitors to empathize with apartheid victims. Visitors are also told that hostel dwellers were not allowed to cook in their rooms and that there were three communal kitchens they had to cook and eat. The story of the abolition of pass laws in 1986 which changed the condition in hostel is brought in. “After the pass laws ceased this space would accommodate four families while in other rooms there will be two families. Before women and children joined their husbands there were no partitions, there were only these half walls and one could see people on the other side of the room.”¹²¹

The story continues to say “due to these inhumane conditions, where more than one family was sharing a space of single bed and a lamp table, one of crucial things was privacy. So these partitions were only erected after 1986. This period is defined as a turning point of hostel life and migrant labour system. There was no space to accommodate family setting. There was a curtain hanging (*umdiya diya*) separating the beds. These are wooden storage space and these nails served as clothes hangers”, says tour guide pointing at the walls. “When women started to live in hostels they declined to use the communal kitchen for cooking. The only space between the beds and along the corridor was used for cooking and children’s play. The hostels were congested with children and, adults permanently competing for a space.” In the narrative apartheid is condemned of creating an image of moral decay and children are described as victims of the evil system. “Children were exposed to different kinds of experiences and activities. Children used to sleep under the beds and in passages showing the visitor the line formed by partitions dividing the compartments, so they were exposed to inappropriate and immoral activities before time”. Moreover, adults were experiencing

¹²¹ The museum tour guide narrate the history and the hostel life conditions in Hostel 33.

difficulties in great variety. It became difficult for one man if three of his room-mates are having their wives or girlfriend. This is said to have caused animosity among inmates who have stayed together for a long time.” In the narration it is family destruction that is emphasized. Under the migrant labour system families were forced to live separately and a number of families were also forced to concentrate in a small space. As the story is told, all the time visitors are taking photographs. Hayes et al maintain, “There appears to be a very strong connection between visual history and oral history... images can activate powerful mechanisms of remembrance or association.”¹²² These photographs will serve the memory of the visitors to activate and refresh their remembrance about their experience and the imagination of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. The history of poverty and oppression is clearly complemented by scenes of the preserved partitioning structures of wood and cardboards, the black- moulded roof caused by open fire smoke and the rough walls and floor. The camera captures all this to take back to Europe and America as evidence and reflection of Africa engulfed by poverty. Lwandle becomes another representative of images of African poverty.

Visitors are also told about the future plan of Hostel 33. “This hostel, in future, will be reconstructed to represent the two distinctive periods of Lwandle living conditions, which is the periods from 1960 to 1986 and from 1986 to 1996. This will portray a period when men were restricted and the legitimate hostel residents and period of families sharing

¹²² Patricia Hayes, Jeremy Silvester and Wolfram Hartman, 'Photography, history and memory', in Wolfram Hartman, Jeremy Silvester and Patricia Hayes (eds), *The Colonising Camera* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1998), p 9

hostel space.”¹²³ It is emphasized that since the museum is still not under government budget it is difficult for the museum to execute most of the plans as this is a community initiative, which is underfunded. The story of Hostel 33 always but implicitly appeals for help of developing the plan and how much the whole newly born museum needs support.

The overall representation of Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum is based on a portrayal of Lwandle community as one of the victims of apartheid, who endured the brutalities of the apartheid pass laws. The museum present itself as symbol of community development and nation building as its township walk introduces the projects of development and stories of victory and hope from selected community members. Poverty is on display all over the show. Hostel 33, collectivizes and imposes the creation of memory of migrant labour system and serves as an identity element of Lwandle, and the real visitors’ attraction to Lwandle and Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum.

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¹²³ The museum tour guide narrates the history and the hostel life conditions as the future plan of Hostel 33.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: Struggle over Identities

Since 1994 new institutions have emerged among communities especially those who claim to be apartheid victims, to express and represent themselves as part of post-apartheid South Africa. The two museums, Lwandle and the SA Jewish Museum have emerged based mostly on claims to represent the conditions experienced by the respective communities. They both claim to have experienced racial discrimination, as “Blacks” and as “Jews”. The two museums, through different artifacts, images and symbolic structure are forging identities of the communities they claim to represent in the post apartheid era which assert a ‘free’ democratic society.

Ivan Karp maintains that museums have been involved in reconstructing self-identities.¹²⁴

The LMLM has used different symbols and images to construct the identity of the community it claims to represent. LMLM has used images of national experiences under apartheid to claim a place under the umbrella of apartheid victims. Based on memorialisation and the notoriety that ‘apartheid’ and its legacy has acquired nationally and internationally, LMLM has become a tourist destination of the part of ‘apartheid’ South Africa. The same museum asserts to be a ‘centre of memory’¹²⁵ of national experience under evil apartheid rule while simultaneously positioning itself as a custodian and a narrator of the community story. SA Jewish Museum is well situated,

¹²⁴ I Karp. *Civil Society and Social Identity, The politics of public Culture*, (Washington: Smithsonian, 1992) p24

¹²⁵ LMLM letter head “Centre of Memory and Hope”, Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, 2004

and is one of a cluster in the city's tourist and a cultural space. It has created the identity of being a representation of South African Jews and their international connections.

Museums in South Africa have become tourism centres and points of tourist attraction. Hence, South Africa has put much focus on improving tourism capacity as a part of social economic development, education and entertainment. Different attractions are grouped logically to match the categories of tourists' interests. These categories are carefully orchestrated, packaged and formalized as tourists' routes. The government agencies, through different departments e.g. Arts and Culture, Tourism, Environment and Sport, Economic Development etc. is also highly involved in shaping and promoting the tourism sector as an economic boost and empowerment to the previously disadvantaged communities. As part of this mission Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum has become a package "off the beaten track"¹²⁶ of the popular wineland route. These previously disadvantaged communities are classified and categorized as "cultural tourism",¹²⁷ whereby townships are scrutinized by tourists with the assistance of local tour operators with an idea of discovering the African cultural authenticity and boosting local economy. These tours range from two hundred and twenty and two hundred and fifty Rands upwards per tourist. Cultural tours are classified as threshold to apartheid experiences. Hence the location of a tourist destination or attraction becomes significant in this case. The sense of centre and the periphery come to the fore. This indicates that the attractions that are situated at the city centre are more advantageous in terms of accessibility than

¹²⁶ L Witz, "Museums on Cape Town's Township tours", Unpublished paper for Museums Local Knowledge and Performance in an age of Globalisation Conference, (Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, 2001) p10

¹²⁷ City of Cape Town Sector Education Training Authority course in "Credited Tour Guiding" classify township tours as 'cultural destinations, (2003)

those in the periphery, in the townships. This division is perpetuated by the tourism industry. There are so called Cape Town “points of attraction”,¹²⁸ which benefited during apartheid, and are well financed in the CBD of Cape Town and Cape Town cultural tours. The SA Jewish Museum is situated in one of the Cape Town city centres’ point of attraction, “the Company Gardens” and there are those situated on the peripheries in the townships like LMLM are classified as “cultural tours,” exoticized not as points of attraction’. The difference between point of attraction (in the city) and cultural tours (townships) is always emphasized in the course of ‘Accredited Tour Guiding’, offered by the education and training service provider registered with the Sector Education Training Authority (SETA)¹²⁹. It is always repeated that this nature of disparity is the one that extends the tourism product.

This alone constitutes a great impact in perpetuating the uneven outlook and identities of the two museums. They are the same, in the sense they claim to be international and national, LMLM in its mission statement claims to ‘commemorate trials and tribulations of migrant labour in Southern Africa’.¹³⁰ The LMLM draws national incidents of pass laws, apartheid signs etc to attach the national experience to the community narration. On the other hand SAJM claims international status, ‘SA Jews link with Israel’ and owe their origins from Lithuania. However, SAJM also claims national identity by drawing in its narration the national ‘Nelson Mandela and as a “South African” (not Cape Town or Johannesburg) Jewish Museum. They both equally contain part of the history that constitute significant building blocks of the integral history of South Africa, which also

¹²⁸ Ibid

¹²⁹ Ibid

¹³⁰ LMLM Mission Statement, Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum

overlap to cover a wide spectrum. The SAJM covers the history of international migration and general local social development. The LMLM encompasses the migrant labour system and meanings and experiences attached to it. Nevertheless, the SAJM is far wealthier than the LMLM.

The LMLM is not telling the core story about the community as to who they are, where they come from etc, as it is the case in other community museums, where certain individuals of the community are sometimes glorified as community representatives. The exhibition relates and associates the popular national events of apartheid stories with much emphasis on pass laws and linking to the general history of the place as apartheid constructed residential area. Their photographs are at times reduced to a “local photo album” in the exhibition area. The main exhibition does not focus much directly on local people’s history except the Beer Hall incident and the museum opening where only Bongani Mgijima, as local person only appears in the exhibition panel. The most motivation that prompted Mgijima to be on exhibition is his status the first LMLM curator. To some extent this may be the result of the people who were involved in setting the exhibition. The team, which compiled the existing, exhibition, consisted of only Mgijima, Kutala Vuba and Noyise Mhlathi as local community members and University Professors and History Department post-graduate students from the University of the Western Cape and abroad. Somehow the exhibition may bring the sense of imposition of stories to people of Lwandle by a group of academics.

So Lwandle Migrant labour Museum become partly the community museum and partly educational institution of the local students and the surrounding area as well as a tourist destination. Local high school children and university history students from UCT and UWC visit the museum to research about history of migrant labour system and hostel life.

The Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum is formulating the identity of Lwandle people as migrant labourers. While on the other hand people of Lwandle are struggling to adopt the citizenship of Lwandle as most of them are not originally from Lwandle but they all come from different parts of the Eastern Cape and from other provinces. The other fact is that today most Lwandle people are no longer migrant labourers. Most people of Lwandle still claim roots in the rural areas (*ezilalini*) of the Eastern Cape and other provinces¹³¹. Labour migrancy has almost become an unconscious traditional activity. The question is whether the people of Lwandle imagined themselves as Lwandle's community or whether they still regard themselves as migrant workers. The lack of commitment and involvement of Lwandle people in the museum and other community development may suggest a lack of a feeling of citizenship. Unlike SAJM and the members of its community Lwandle people are unable to make a contribution even of loaning the artifacts if donating is difficult due to poverty they face.

The SAJM is producing a complex identity. The first aspect of the SAJM representation claim a pure and sacred Jewish identity attached to its cultural traditions and religion. The museum also claims a holistic approach in the fight against apartheid and as people who are always anti-racist. The few members of the Jewish community who explicitly fought

¹³¹ This notion become evident when one asks someone "where is your home" mostly males they will

against apartheid seem to represent the whole South African Jewish community even those who decided to collaborate with capitalists in diamond and gold fields.¹³² Not revealed is when the Jewish people began to assume the white status of superiority over black people and other racial groups in South Africa.

The name of the museum as it suggests “Jewish”; it carries a specific connotation about the type of audience. This might be meaning the audience the museum is specifically directed to or the audience to which the museum belongs. This indicates that although South African Jewish community has enjoyed the status of South Africaness, they also want to remain distinct as Jews. The SA Jewish community has used its best figures and objects in its museum as representation its “identity”, as a progressive entity within a national and international perspective. Indeed, Karp maintains, “In order for the communities to exist in time and space, they must be imagined and represented by individuals as components of their identities”¹³³. There remains an unanswered question: whether, other than the South African Jewish acculturated middle class, does the ordinary South African Jews fit him/herself in with this identity of “white middle class English speaking Jewish community”? Are they “white”? What does “white” mean in political context? Where would be the origin and trajectory of Jewish people then? Seemingly the latter has been dubiously employed to move with the winds as the museum now claims a post apartheid identity. Nevertheless, the point here is that SAJM is a white museum in all respects, it tells a narrative of a community as a bounded entity without any reference to black South Africans until the so-called “apartheid dilemma” represented. However,

¹³² J & R. Simons, *Class & Colour in South Africa 1950–1950*, (London: IDAF, 1983) p37

¹³³ I Karp I et al, *Museum and Communities: The politics of public Culture*, (Washington: Smithsonian, 1992), p21

the museum still represents the SA Jewish community as a victim of racism and discrimination by the Europeans. Obviously, the SAJM claims that Jews denounce the use of skin colour as an element of defining race to project itself and the Jewish community as always having been opponents of racism.

However the most visible characteristics of SAJM and LMLM is the imbalance of financial power manifested in their outlook and content. If one looks at the geographical locations of these museums one can establish the sense of imbalance of socio-economic power. The most interesting fact is that SAJM is situated in a powerful territory (next to institutions of authority) and LMLM in the peripheral land of the destitute and weakened. The very fact that these museums are situated in contrasting locations provides an account of economic and racial status in a South African context. Urban areas in South Africa traditionally are a space for white people and the rural/township areas as site for Africans. The Urban white and rural/township perception draws the issue of rich white and black rural/township poor. Here the question begins to arise, whether these museums stand to serve their specific imagined communities or they mean to serve the open fragmented publics. To answer this question one should look at how these museums attempt to communicate with their audiences, whether through exhibitions or the language use. The exhibitions in museum carry messages; objects and artifacts carry some symbols that reveal the social and economic status of the donors. Normally artifacts are acquired and displayed by the museum are collected from the people who are related to the museum itself. Furthermore, the quality of artifact, ornaments, and other precious objects symbolize how affluent the community is related to the museum. This including

the price of the museum entrance fee says it all, while brochures and the catalogue on the other hand also suggest the affluence of the museums.

The LMLM has explicitly appealed to a wide range of publics. On the one hand, through its brochures, by the instrument of language, it is appealing to English speaking largely white audience. While at the same time it communicates with the local African people through the Xhosa language. For LMLM is very cognitative that it introduces its communities to the culture of heritage and history conservation. Through its strategy the LMLM portrays itself as a benchmark in township heritage conservation and tourism and 'gateway' to African culture. African people in South Africa were previously prohibited to take a responsibility of conserving and interpreting their own history and heritage. Hence it is relevant for the LMLM to bring awareness to its communities. Africans in South Africa were only allowed to use separate institutions from those used by whites. In some institutions they were completely not allowed as most institutions were treated as whites only institutions. Museums are some of the institutions that were traditionally white institutions. So people in townships are gradually involving themselves with these institutions. It appears from the brochures that the museum has not much of a collection so far. The LMLM brochure is mostly filled with pictures of activities that the community can offer to tourists including music and traditional dance as well as craft. However the museum has made its way to be one of valuable historical and information points for academics and students of higher learning. This has made LMLM one of the service providers of information to communities of different levels and interests.

It should be reiterated that the locality of these institutions inherited from the apartheid social setting, which in a South African context determines the socio-economic status, as based on racial division, which stimulates the selection of different publics that are eventually served by these two community museums.

In conclusion I maintain that both museums are located in areas that were racially classified under apartheid. The legacy of apartheid however still haunts and tests the identities and the mission of these museum institutions. The museums are constructing communities through creation of stories based on a selected angle of the presentation, which appeals to different publics. However, both museums are presenting a story of racial victimization, their perseverance, and their struggle for success from difficult conditions. All these claims and stories are constructed to accommodate different publics. It is left to the visitors (local, national, or international tourist) to fit themselves in one way or another in the scope of the stories selected and constructed by the museum.

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