

**Graphic Language and the Poster Child: Images of Children in South African  
Political Posters of the 1980's<sup>1</sup>**

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Semantically, socially, intellectually, “childhood” is in its essence constructed in its meanings and usages. Childhood is a deeply powerful concept for a number of reasons. Much of its authority comes from a persuasive moral imperative that demands consensus on ethical and universalist grounds. Debates and discussions about childhood are often cast in terms of a fundamental universalism that (ideally) transcends the specifics of time and space.<sup>2</sup> Childhood is conceptually drawn as an exceptional space; a sacrosanct entity of unconditional and essential humanism. Perhaps these images are partially fueled by a broadly conceived unity of experience (since everyone was once a

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<sup>2</sup>One example of the power of childhood to command global consensus may be observed in the recent history of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Lawrence LeBlanc writes that its “rapid and widespread acceptance... is impressive and remarkable. No other specialized United Nations human rights convention has been accepted so quickly and with such apparent enthusiasm.” His comparison includes other conventions addressing fundamental human rights such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. He elaborates, “The Growing political significance of the convention is evident in the fact that its provisions are now taken into account in all serious discussions of the rights of the child, even among states that have not ratified it.” (LeBlanc, Lawrence. *The*

child). Constructions of childhood work by drawing on the emotional potency with which they are imbued, and people's deeply felt investments in seeing children as pure, innocent, good, unformed, and vulnerable. Of course, in contrast to these universalizing framings, childhood, as a social category and concept, changes historically. It is *not* a uniform social experience, and never has been. Within any society there is always a diversity of experiences.

The political, cultural, and social work of childhood lies in the conventions of its meanings and usages. That it can be used so powerfully without much definition, contextualization, or problematization becomes part of its capacity to do so much work. Suffering and violence vex and complicate the constructions of childhood in South Africa, where violence and childhood are structurally and practically linked through the apartheid system. Following the Soweto Uprising of 1976, images of children as victims of state-sponsored violence saturated South Africa and the world, shattering all sense of a sacred space for childhood under apartheid.

Thus apartheid South Africa is an especially valuable context in which to consider how "childhood" works as a construction. It was a society that emasculated African<sup>3</sup> men into "boys" and women into "girls," while the vast majority of children lived in abject poverty. On the one hand, children are remembered as the most vulnerable and defenseless of apartheid's victims. Yet, the history of the struggle for freedom in South

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*Convention on the Rights of the Child: United Nations Lawmaking on Human Rights.* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995; xi-xii)

<sup>3</sup>Although I do not wish to reproduce the imposed racial classifications including "African," "coloured", "Indian," and "white", I will bear these historical divisions in mind as they had a huge impact on the lives of all South Africans during apartheid.

Africa reveals that young people were also potent political actors, dangerous and willing to take on a whole government, armed with placards, songs, stones, military training, guns, and other weaponry. They were critical targets of state violence, but also powerful political players and agents of violence. But where to locate these constructions and the tensions and contradictions inherent within them?

One of the most fertile and accessible fields of representation may be found in South African political posters of the 1980's. As Giorgio Miescher has argued, posters are “stored visual markers of past experiences,”<sup>4</sup> “a form of visual communication... [that is] part of a broader context of showing, perceiving and understanding.”<sup>5</sup> “Posters are short-lived visual representations, made for very specific purposes at a certain moment of time in a specific place.”<sup>6</sup> By definition, posters are intended for public consumption and typically work within familiar repertoires of imagery and messages. Their success depended on capturing the shared values and common experiences of a viewing public. In South Africa, posters were usually produced in collective processes by and for people who sought to elicit and harness an emotional response geared toward achieving both concrete and abstract ends. Posters offer a rich field of inquiry because they exist simultaneously on so many levels: the aesthetic, political, material, social, and most importantly, communicative. Anti-apartheid posters, particularly those produced in solidarity or in exile abroad, brought to wider global attention the private suffering of the majority of South Africans, who were non-citizens in their own country. The ultimate

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<sup>4</sup>Miescher, Giorgio and Dag Henrichsen, *African Posters: A Catalogue of the Poster Collection in the Basler Afrika Bibliographien*. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2004; pg 9.

<sup>5</sup> Miescher, Giorgio, “Posters as Source,” 137.

goal of a poster is to make a lasting impression and imprint the image on the viewer's mind, lodging it in memory. Therefore, posters typically relied upon standardized visual conventions, messages, values, and sentiments and, with historical and cultural contextualization, can be read as an artistic barometer of society in a particular time and place.

Posters were part of broader range of related media including t-shirts, pamphlets, murals, banners, posters, buttons, placards, graffiti, stickers, advertisements, newspapers and magazines, and peace parks.<sup>7 8</sup> Each of these mediums has various and overlapping publics, and they were each a part of the visual field of resistance. Television was introduced in South Africa in February 1976,<sup>9</sup> providing a new range of visual images for some people. As the authors of *Images of Defiance* note, apartheid ideology was forced onto all members of South African society through a dense web of institutions including the media. This coincided with the “deliberate state impoverishment and underdevelopment of townships and rural areas [which] ensured that resources for media production even such basic requirements as electricity were out of reach for most

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 148.

<sup>7</sup>Peace Parks were built mainly in Gauteng (?) townships in late 1985 after the July state of emergency which led to the break down of essential services like refuse removal. These included beautification campaigns involving the clean up and removal of rubbish, mural painting, tree and shrubbery planting, mural painting, and creative sculptures often with inscribed messages, meanings, and found objects. Typically named after exiled struggle heroes, for example Nelson Mandela Park (Mohlakeng), Oliver Tambo Park (White City), Sisulu Park (Orlando West), Steve Biko Park (Mohlakeng). As Williamson documents, “It was clear to the state that the youth groups, in making the parks and calling them after leaders like Nelson Mandela, were reaffirming their cultural and political beliefs. On the pretext that the parks were being used as places to hide arms, the security forces systematically destroyed them.” (from Sue Williamson, *Resistance Art in South Africa*, pg. 89)

<sup>8</sup> And the related non-visual fields including jokes, plays, songs, and poetry.

<sup>9</sup>Sanders, James. *South Africa and the International Media 1972-1979: A Struggle for Representation*. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000.

communities.<sup>10</sup> In spite of these limitations, grassroots activists found ways to speak out: “By producing their own media, however unsophisticated, organisations claimed their right to be heard.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Posters as a source**

Like any other source, posters allow for the possibility of multiple readings. Clearly, there is a range of viewing techniques for different people related to any number of factors including knowledge, experience, nationality, race, class, and gender. In an international context, for instance, images whose socioeconomic dimensions would be both familiar and understood in South Africa might be read differently but toward a similarly anti-apartheid end.

The basic questions of Who? Where? When? And even Why?' are often answered only partially at best. Language choice provides clues about intended audience. Most posters were created through a collective process, and many producers were operating underground at the time of their production. These factors made it undesirable and unsafe for producers to assert their authorship. Posters are rarely dated by year, complicating attempts to read them closely for subtle chronological shifts. Such knowledge isn't lost, but is walking around in many experience – based memories.

As a set, the body of posters under examination is a but a shard of a fragment in

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<sup>10</sup>The Posterbook Collective. *Images of Defiance*. South African History Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, 2004, pg 2. *Images of Defiance* was first published by Ravan Press in 1991 and was reprinted to commemorate the tenth anniversary of democracy in South Africa. Updated only with a new added preface by Nelson Mandela

<sup>11</sup>ibid.

terms of capturing the experiences, memories, and historical events of the period under examination, but it is one which makes a claim toward a certain representativeness. It is also important to remember that the majority of posters were issued by the UDF, COSATU, the ANC, and its affiliates. The posters in question have been stripped from their original context, but still have much to offer. Individually and as a collection they make a claim toward a certain representativeness. Posters reflect the issues and sentiments of a certain time period, and can help the historian to capture a sense of the times and prevailing attitudes of a given period. Within the themes of representation one can trace general historical shifts. Posters may be read from many angles: in terms of the circumstances of their production, aesthetics, iconography, distribution, and reception.

For the purposes of this paper, posters provide an important record of dominant images, experiences, frames, and grammars through which childhood has been remembered and constructed. As such they articulate consciously constructed histories of the struggle against apartheid. An inquiry into these articulations makes visible some of the gaps and tensions within the shared public memory of childhood posters helped document and produce. What can posters tell us about the socio-political reality of the times they represent? They reveal marks on the historical record, but require extensive historical and cultural contextualization.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>To fill this context, I have consulted evidence about the sociopolitical milieu of children in the late apartheid period that was collected via the TRC; *Growing Up in a Divided Society*, a collection of activists' and academics' analysis of various facets of childhood in South Africa in the mid 1980's; comparative analyses of posters in Namibia (Giorgio Miescher) and Mozambique and Ethiopia (Berit Sahlstrom) and I have started conducting interviews with people who were involved in poster production. Contextualized readings cry out for an exploration of the posters' receptions, which I hope to explore further through memory work in future interviews.

In some ways, posters interrupted the “fictions of the normal,” as Carolyn Steedman describes, as a form of resistance that sought to persuade those who would disagree over to their side. But in other ways posters were very status quo. Posters were produced within particular landscapes of social relations the makers were engaged in trying to change. This implies a certain level of self conscious and strategic positioning vis a vis one's intended audience. Attention to emotions felt, expressed, and remembered provide clues about the process of meaning-making at multiple registers. An examination of both their form and content offers insight into people’s values and belief systems.

There is a rich patchiness-- both documentarily and conceptually-- to childhood. What does an exploration of political posters offer? Posters provide visual evidence of the institutional infrastructure that sought to address, treat, represent, memorialize, and analyze the children with whom I am concerned and thus contributed in important ways to the (very partial) public history of childhood in South Africa. Shared and contending knowledges of childhood are found in a wide range of fields and materials, and posters play an important role.

### **Production process**

The 1980's was a decade of incredible repression by the state, but also of mass mobilization, protest, and defiance of the people. Political posters and other media were crucial tools in the struggle and as a result producing, distributing, or owning them was highly risky. As an instrument of the people and for the people, political posters provided the viewing public with powerful messages serving multiple functions. Material

conditions of production were far from ideal and ever hampered by the limitations of equipment, materials, skills, time, experience, and working under conditions of secrecy. Fortunately posters can be mass produced relatively affordably, and producers were resourceful in their efforts to procure supplies. While it is important to recognize the artistic and aesthetic contributions of South African political posters, one must also remember the very real limitations on artistic expression and development. For example, postermakers did not always have the luxury of choosing something as basic as ink color. The most common technique in the early years was silkscreening, which could be done for relatively little money, and enabled postermakers to do short runs for publicizing local events. [expand]

### **General context**

What was the social and political context which these posters reflected and were produced within? What was life like for children and youth during the years of apartheid rule in South Africa? As described in the Official Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC),<sup>13</sup> “the South African social fabric was shaped by apartheid laws and structures that exposed the majority of South Africa’s children to oppression,

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<sup>13</sup>I use the TRC report and testimony from its Special Hearing on Children and Youth with an awareness that as an institution, the TRC defined an official and selective structure for managing the history of trauma, complicity, and reconciliation. It was engaged in particular kinds of memory-making as part of a “production of history” (David William Cohen, *The Combing of History*, 1994). The cases that were investigated and documented by the TRC provide an important beginning for thinking about a broader range of experiences during apartheid, and for my purposes here a helpful compendium of knowledge, experiences, and expertise to draw upon in my attempts to explore childhood in apartheid South Africa.



exploitation, deprivation and humiliation.”<sup>14</sup> Racially discriminatory laws ensured that black people had limited access to employment opportunities, healthcare, adequate living conditions, and substandard education systems. Unable to even travel freely, many black South Africans could not create safe or stable lives for themselves or their families. They often faced a multitude of problems associated with homelessness, pervasive crime in their communities, and the disruption and breakdown of kin and social networks.

The brutality of the apartheid legal structures may have focused most explicitly on oppressing black adults, but the children of these adults lived with the many consequences of the structural violence of the state. In addition, adults and youth were directly targeted by the state through overt and covert tactics designed to intimidate, punish, and harm. Under the apartheid regime in South Africa, especially during the state of emergency years beginning in 1984, young people were frequently subjected to murder, torture, bannings, detentions, abductions, and sexual assaults. They were also deeply impacted by their witnessing of these events involving other people.

Children were deeply affected by not only the violence they experienced directly, but also the violence they felt responsible for inflicting on others. Another pressure on young activists was the danger that they put their family members in as a result of their political involvements. State agents frequently harassed and abused the family members of their specific targets. Additionally, vigilantism forced many young people to flee their home areas. Typical places of safety and refuge for children such as schools, churches, and most importantly, the home, could not provide protection from agents of the

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<sup>14</sup> TRC official report, 251.

apartheid state or other political parties. Such displacement from family homes and communities strained and eroded kin and social networks.

Children were often exposed to danger, harm, and abuse as a result of the structural and interpersonal violence of the apartheid system. Laws limiting mobility, employment, educational opportunities, and access to adequate healthcare kept most black South Africans isolated from the superior services and living conditions available to whites. The oppressive urban housing and Bantustan policies relegated black people to the least desirable, most unhealthy, and unsustainable parts of the country and directly contributed to the widespread poor health found in black communities.

### **The Representational Range of Children in Political Posters**

What are the dominant images of childhood in South African political posters? Children appear in five main interrelated and at times overlapping registers: as an extensions of women, as victims, as an envisioned future, as a social and political issue, and as agents. These standardized uses provide clues for exploring the ways in which social conventions of childhood were reflected in popular and institutionalized understandings. The South African poster child is a polyvalent figure, full of contradictions, complexities, and tensions. In what follows I will briefly explore each of these themes to survey the iconography of childhood and trace the historical shifts in their representative range through the 1980's and early 90's.

... and Baby makes Woman

The single most common image of young children in South African political posters of the 1980's is that of a tiny infant, shrouded in a blanket and secured firmly to a mother's back. The administrative and political pairing of babies with women came with many political and practical implications for both parties, and was read by many child advocates in the 1980's as an indication of a breakdown in the family unit orchestrated in many ways and from many directions by the apartheid state (i.e. migrant labor system, Urban Areas Act, Group Areas Act, tot system, etc.).<sup>15</sup> The ubiquitous image of a mother with her baby bundle perseveres through the period under examination, but with some interesting historical shifts and representative variation.

The attached baby is presented as an extension of the woman herself, almost like an extra appendage. The emphasis in these images is not on the baby but the mother whose womanhood is visually established through its presence. An interesting example of this was relayed to me in by graphic designer and poster producer John Berndt,<sup>16</sup> who informed me that the COSATU logo originally featured three adult figures: two men and one woman. The problem was that viewers didn't recognize the woman as female, so a baby was added to her back to make her identifiable. Thus the baby on the back is not just central to a woman's identity but actually constitutes it, at the very least in a visual sense.

The Poster “Women Unite” illustrates this constitutive relationship in terms of

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<sup>15</sup> Pamela Reynolds and Sandra Burman, ed. *Growing Up in a Divided Society: The Contexts of Childhood in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986.

composition. In the foreground of the poster sits a larger-than-life toddler, dominating the visual field. With mouth open and beseeching eyes, he seems to be pleading for something. Graphically nestled under his chin is the much smaller superimposed image of a mother and baby. The two of them are unhappy and suffering- with furrowed brow, she appears anxious and tired as she clutches her crying baby. The viewer is not left to wonder or speculate about the reason for this suffering-- the shack/house structure beside them represents the poverty and horrid living conditions that define and destroy their lives in apartheid South Africa. A hopeful red sun is rising, however, toward the inspiring injunction “Women Unite!” As the text informs us, “The need for unity is the need for People's Power. It is the power against starvation, removals, resettlement, and disease. Forward to Year of Women!” It is noteworthy that in a poster about the Year of Women, a child dominates the visual frame and is duplicated while the woman only appears once and as almost a detail.

Children were cast visually, legally, and through social practice and living conditions as the responsibility of women. As such, children shared the same dangers their mothers were subjected to. This pairing resulted in risks to both when women found themselves in perilous circumstances, as we can see in the striking and simple poster, “There Shall be Peace and Friendship.” The stark single black ink evocatively renders a barricade with angry masses, fire, and a member of the security forces or police aiming a gun at a fleeing mother and baby. The disjuncture between the images suggestive of familiar township scenes, and the yet unrealized final demand of the Freedom Charter is

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<sup>16</sup>Interview with John Berndt, Cape Town, August 2005.

intended to jar and unsettle the viewer. This simple but powerful poster replicates images made familiar through documentary photography.<sup>17</sup>

A baby is usually sufficient prop for female figures, while men typically hold a tool to identify them as particular kinds of laborers (“What May Day Means”).<sup>18</sup> A survey of UDF posters reveals a marked historical shift in terms of visual representation. It is not until the mid 1980's that child(ren) are inserted into the familiar ranks of strong adult laborers below the UDF banner. Perhaps inspired by Socialist iconography, these figures are meant to convey a sense of strength, commitment, dignity, and inclusivity. The insertion of the child coincides with increasing authoritarianism of the regime in regard to bannings, restrictions, and the use of force, and a strengthening discourse around children's rights.

It is noteworthy that it is almost always the woman who touches the child, and almost always in the same way.<sup>19</sup> One arm curves around the young person's shoulder in a protective embrace, connecting the adult woman with her child. Here the child is an extension of the woman figure, but in a more autonomous way than the small baby-lumps or faces that peer out of blankets from their mothers' backs. The infant is almost always physically connected to the mother, echoing the umbilical dependency originating in the womb.

While the male workers (miner and labourer) gaze upwards and outwards (into a

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<sup>17</sup>Such images were most frequently captured by documentary photographers. The connection between documentary photography and poster production is one I hope to explore further in the future.

<sup>18</sup>An exception to this trend can be found in the series of COSATU calendar pages featuring paintings of women with their babies and agricultural tools. (I'm still trying to track these down and identify them more specifically.)

future of freedom?), the woman's line of vision seems perpetually snagged on the child next to and below her. The men's arms are also raised up and extend out from themselves: the miner on the left raises his fist in the familiar clenched fist salute while his comrade mans the helm of their procession holding the UDF banner, tilted forward, waving above their heads. Upon close inspection, one can see that the woman's free arm is also raised as she points (as if instructing her little one) forward. In this image, the woman is always cast in reference to her charge. Her stance, future, and very personhood is mediated by a child.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of composition and line, the three figures' arms, tilting of heads, and gaze fill the composition with outward extending lines that radiate upward. It is only the mother who looks down. She is also the only figure to be composed of softer lines, as can be seen in the curve of her neck, the crook of her embracing arm, and the waves of her head scarf. But through instruction, she has performed her maternal duty well. The young girl has already learned and even mastered the forward looking angular gaze, stance, and raised fist salute of the men who frame her.

In the late 80's and especially early 90's, a shift occurred in poster representations of women in terms of both image and text. Visual depictions became more inclusive of other aspects of womanhood and in some instances the woman was able to shed the baby off her back. This corresponded with increasing emphasis on realizing the goals outlined in the Women's Charter (drafted originally in 1954) and higher visibility of the

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<sup>19</sup>STP for UDF, Johannesburg, 1986

<sup>20</sup>There are rare examples of UDF posters in which a man also looks down at a child, but he is not physically linked to her.

achievements of women vis-a-vis political posters celebrating Women's Day and female activists. Also indicative of these shifts in discourse, and the heightening anticipation and expectation of freedom on the more immediate horizon is the insertion of specific women's issues into debates around the political struggle for universal human rights. "Maternity Rights for All!"<sup>21</sup> depicts the standard woman with blanketed baby on back extension, but here the infant does not solely define her as a person or her status. The representational range of her identity has been extended, ever so slightly to include another facet of her personhood: that as paid labourer. She is busy hanging clothes, presumably in her capacity as a domestic worker. COSATU's Living Wage campaign in the late 80's included agitating for 6 months of paid maternity leave. Initiatives like these put women on the political map of struggle and negotiation in more concrete ways than they had typically experienced prior to this period.

As the figure of the woman is represented in a broader range of jobs, the baby on her back appears also as a burden, weighing her down as she labors. Thus the prevailing theme of children as extensions of women morphs with the notion of children as a (gendered) social issue. The ambiguity of women's positions in society is apparent in two posters that depict them as victims of multiple forms of oppression. In the COSATU-sponsored South African Domestic Workers' Union poster, six arms is not enough to manage the overwhelming workload of the woman. Interestingly, it is the child that winds up neglected as she doesn't have a free hand for him. In an early 1990's ANC election poster, the uniqueness of women's social position is revealed by the itemized list

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<sup>21</sup>1988, Gardens Media Group/CAP for COSATU, Johannesburg

of burdens she must bear, and ultimately (by voting for the ANC!) free herself from: women's (in)equality, lobola, rape, wife abuse, childcare, low wages, less education, housework, and tradition. This poster presents a striking break from the standard narrative of women's roles in society by exposing child care as a burden that effectively holds women back and keeps them unequal.<sup>22</sup>

### Child as victim

Still coupled with mothers, children appear as the primary victims of apartheid. South African posters feature both concrete images of SADF soldiers and policemen (or the after effects of children's suffering at their hands), but also an abstract enemy-- the apartheid state as manifested in structural violence of poverty. When people are represented visually as victims, they appeal to the viewer to feel and to help. Victimhood is marked by visible signs of suffering. For children these most often appear in the form of tears, expressions of physical pain, and a graphic positioning within poverty and squalor.

As the editors of *Social Suffering* write in the introduction to their volume, “what we represent and how we represent it prefigure what we will, or will not, do to intervene. What is not pictured is not real. Much of routinized misery is invisible.”<sup>23</sup> In the international context, the conditions of everyday life of South Africans were spectacular,

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<sup>22</sup>Another way in which black women were identified through their relationship to children may be seen in the figure of the domestic worker, who was typically forced to leave her own children in order to care for those of her white employer. The domestic worker's identity is once again conferred through her relationship (premised on subservience) to a child. She is typically conceived of and treated as a “girl” even as she takes on a significant portion of the “madam's” child rearing responsibilities.



and more so because of their typicality. Children occupy a central, powerful place in the international imaginary and their suffering provides compelling evidence of the inhumanity and brutality of the apartheid regime. Women and children are presented as the main victims of apartheid, as part of a broader phenomenon of the visual feminization of poverty whose iconic image in South African political posters is of a group of women and children amidst the squalor of an informal settlement. In the world community/global village, their images of suffering function not only as evidence of wrongdoing but also a call to action, conveying a sense of immediacy predicated on the idea that children should not suffer. These images are repetitive and standardized, and appeal to a basic humanism that should need to translation (or so the argument goes).

International organizations devoted to addressing and alleviating the suffering of children (such as Save the Children and the Children's Alliance) took a special interest in South Africa in the 1980's and were major producers of these images in the international context. They would have had access to a great deal of financial resources, much more sophisticated production processes than those available in South Africa, and an institutionally established agenda that framed their messages and advocacy work within a broad global context.

It is important to note however that women are not only portrayed as victims in South African political posters. An important exception, which sometimes includes babies, may be found in depictions of women with AK-47s. The convention which placed it on the hands or on the backs of women soldiers may be traced back to other liberation

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<sup>23</sup>Das, et. al. *Social Suffering*. 1997

movements in neighboring Southern African countries, and the South in general (especially Nicaragua) where women freedom fighters were more common.<sup>24</sup>

Late ANC struggle posters, and those created by artists in international contexts tended to portray strong women, including combatants. “Posters that demonstrate the role of women combatants thus grant women political equality and are therefore the most threatening to conventional concepts of male dominance and female passivity. In posters there is frequently an attempt to mitigate this threat to tradition by showing a woman simultaneously holding a gun and a baby.”(Wells) Women with guns make a powerful visual argument (even though it might not be realized on the ground) about women's equality. But in South African posters produced in South Africa, it is usually men holding or carrying the guns, and they are typically the enemy. The most common representation of a gun is as an extension of a malevolent, if powerful force.

### Children as important social issue

In addition to appearing under the headings of maternity rights within the struggle for fair labor practice, children encapsulated critical issues of major significance on the political landscape of struggle, particularly concerning their education and detention.<sup>25</sup>

Adults and young people organized and agitated around critical policy issues affecting

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<sup>24</sup>As Miescher and others have shown, images of armed women, sometimes with a child, were very popular in Namibian political posters before independence. The AK-47 is itself a powerful symbol of resistance, socialism, and power worthy of deeper investigation than I have space for here.

children, and organized forums to debate and discuss children's issues. They also participated in events such as community days and children's festivals.

The premise of the apartheid system was the social stratification of South Africans along racial lines, and education was used by the government to promote its ideology. Minister of Native Affairs/Bantu Affairs of the National Party, H. F. Vorwoerd created the Bantu Education Act in 1953, transferring black education from missionary control to the Native Affairs Department. His intent was to limit not only Africans' prospects for employment but also their life opportunities and ambition for advancement. As he declared, "Natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with Europeans is not for them." Vorwoerd's system of Bantu education was designed to "train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life," which for Africans meant serving their own people in the homelands or working in manual labor position under whites.

In the post-Soweto context of continuing Bantu education and pervasive school boycotts, education was a contentious and difficult issue. Many community-based informal alternatives cropped up to fill the gaps of the collapsing Bantu Education system. Children's images often featured in posters advocating the boycott ("End to Gutter Education!"), protesting the presence of troops in schools, and fundraisers for daycare centres (Daycare fundraiser).

One of the most painful aspects of the apartheid state's treatment of black children for their parents was the increasing practice of detaining them in jails, often without trial.

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<sup>25</sup> And there is a vast literature on education and apartheid, including: [list]

Images (both artistic and photographic) of children and youth were seized upon by international advocates who reproduced them in posters and other kinds of anti-apartheid literature as indicting evidence of the criminality of a human rights-violating regime. The apartheid government utilized the extensive institutional network of the state to punish and control the children and youth it claimed were threatening national security.<sup>26</sup> Under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act, the state had the power to detain anyone indefinitely without trial. The judicial system was thus complicit in the detaining of perceived “troublemakers,” most of whom never received due process under law.

Apartheid laws offered little to no protection for children, even in regard to their detention in jails. The common law age cutoff stipulated that only children younger than seven could not be held responsible for their criminal conduct. In 1960, the Children’s Act, No. 33 reinforced the legality of incarcerating children when it included a police cell in its definition of “a place of safety.” Child prisoners could either be unconvicted or sentence, transferred from a reformatory, or accompanying their mothers. Children could be held in the more numerous and readily available police cells in addition to adult penal facilities, and in both places there was little difference between the treatment of adults and children. Solitary confinement, meal deprivation, and excessive use of corporal punishment were used against detained children and allowed by law in cases involving

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<sup>26</sup>As Max Coleman noted in his submission to the TRC’s Special Hearing on Children and Youth, “The major weapon was detention without trial and we estimate that at least 80,000 detentions have occurred from 1960 right up until 1990.” Children made up a significant percentage of the prison population: “At times, during the years of greatest conflict, children under the age of eighteen years of age represented between 26 per cent and 45 per cent of all those in detention. All the available figures indicate that the largest number of children and youth was detained between 1985 and 1989, during the two states of emergency. Of 80,000 detentions, 48,000 were detainees under the age of twenty-five.”

viciousness or cruelty.<sup>27</sup> The emotional, physical, and mental harm suffered by children detained in prisons and police cells was extensive.<sup>28</sup>

Images of pitiable young detainees featured in both the national and international visual landscape, and organizations lobbied extensively on their behalf. Some of the graphics employed include an abstract drawing of children with hollow eyes from the Detainees Support Committee (DESCOM), squeezed behind bars like animals looking scared but still thinking of freedom (“Release all Detainees with photo of boys behind bars), an injured and gaunt looking mother with her young baby (Detentions Won't stop us!), or the range of scared, sad, frustrated, and freedom craving children of Molo Songololo's children's drawing. Posters were designed to increase public awareness by informing them of the hidden suffering of incarcerated children and their families. Textual language was typically limited as posters relied on the power of the visual to demand empathy, and a compassionate response that would lead to action. The assumption was that viewers, regardless of their identity would share a sense that jailing children was unacceptable.

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<sup>27</sup> “Children in Prison” Fiona McLachlan, Burman and Reynolds, 357.

<sup>28</sup> Even babies were not immune from the affects of incarceration. As Max Coleman testified in the TRC, pregnant women were detained and some gave birth in detention. Nursing mothers were not always allowed to bring their babies with them and some mothers were separated from their young babies. It must also be remembered that some detentions ended in death. One outcome of political sentencing was execution, which also applied to youth between 16 and 25 years of age. The state consistently covered up deaths by listing them as suicide, so it is impossible to know exact figures for the rates of death in detention. Between 1963 and October 1985 eighty-three people were publicly listed as having died in detention. The systematic use of torture in South African jails and police stations during apartheid was extensive. Children and youth were most frequently targeted by security forces while in detention. Youth were frequently placed in jail cells with criminal inmates who were encouraged by security forces and police offers to assault them. The proliferation of gangs in the prison world often held dangerous consequences for the young in particular. Many youth suffered assaults, theft, stabbings, and rape while held in criminal cells. TRC proceedings and final report, in particular, Special Hearing on Children and Youth, Prisons, and Human Rights Violations hearings.

Conditions of incarceration have long served as an international measurement of human rights abuses within international discourse on human rights. The abuse and incarceration of children at the hands of a network of state-sponsored institutions provided strong political and even policy grounds on which to force governments abroad to oppose or intervene in South Africa. But there was also a groundswell of organization around the issue of child detention by concerned and affected family members and advocates, for instance the Soweto-based Parents of Detainees Support Group who not only lobbied against the state but, along with other organizations such as the Black Sash, actively documented its abuses.

#### Children as the future

It has become quite trite to repeat the bromide that children are the future, but this was a powerful conceptual metaphor in the 1980's and 90's and appeared as a recurring theme in South African political posters. When depicted in happy families or groups, children often appear as a normalizing presence that conveys the hope for an ideal but unrealized future. In posters advertising festivals, community days, and other social events, their visual presence is used to show inclusivity of all. Another common trope is that of the family scene. Often rendered by children themselves through drawings, happy families were meant to inspire hope and renew commitment to an ideal future of happiness, security, and safety. Sanguine images almost always represented an unrealized future since politically there was little to celebrate under the apartheid regime.

After being released from prison in 1990, Nelson Mandela, himself a powerful

icon of the future in the 1980's and 90's often appeared in posters with children. As the father of the nation he is known for his love of children. It is, of course, common for politicians to do fair amount of baby kissing, especially in campaign years, but children are part of his identity past and present in a deeper way. He institutionalized the connection by forming the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund and after his term as president focusing his legacy on children as the future.

### Child as agent

In many of the posters, particularly those produced by CAP, children appear as agents of various forms: producers, observers, witnesses, and target audience members. As artists they produced drawings that were frequently featured in posters, books, and exhibitions, serving a role as cultural workers and agents of change and effectively articulating their hopes, fears, and desires through visual language. Children were also addressed directly as viewers in posters advertising children's festivals, community days, concerts, and workshops. Increasingly through the late 1980's and early 90's, as discussions around children's autonomy and rights took hold, children's issues were featured in posters depicting the Declaration on the Rights of the Child and other topics pertaining to child welfare. As Lionel Davis recalled, within the climate of censorship, bannings, and heavy restrictions, issues and events around children's concerns provided a welcome opening for adults to organize and meet with one another.<sup>29</sup>

### **Images of Youthfulness: Examples from the ECC**

Appeals to the essential, universal, and fundamental qualities of childhood assert a rudimentary immutability and invariability that supposedly (or is supposed to) transcend specificity of circumstance. Discursively, these are the parts of childhood that are perceived as being beyond culture and beyond history. In late apartheid South Africa, the powerful concept of childhood gets stretched and shaped in complicated ways. Much of this derives from the fact that children and youth are often paired conceptually and practically. Although consensus is often presumed about what childhood is or should be, there is a plasticity of possibility that gets exercised by actors drawing upon the shifting and highly contested associative attributes of the overlapping and interrelated category of youth.

Images of white young people in locally produced political posters usually depict youth as opposed to children, who are almost always male and connected to the military. For decades both Afrikaner and English white youth had been socialized according to dominant ideas of social order premised on the notion of white supremacy. From a very early age, young white boys were militarized at holiday camp veld schools and through institutions such as the cadets and Voortrekkers. Through such organizations many acquired basic military training orientation. These activities were coupled with broad-

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<sup>29</sup>Interview with Lionel Davis, Cape Town, August 2005.



based indoctrination reinforced with racist state propaganda. As Reynolds testified in the TRC's Special Hearing on Children and Youth, "Fear of the 'other' was implanted in children under the guise of an imminent 'Communist' plot, articulated through slogans such as 'total onslaught'. All this contributed to a situation in which most white males concluded that it was their obligation to serve in the armed services."<sup>30</sup> He attributed the lack of white resistance among the youth to "the system of patriarchy, whereby the young were kept under control by their elders, their cultures, institutions and state systems."<sup>31</sup>

There were, however, a minority of white youth who joined the struggle against apartheid and formed their own resistance organizations, including the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) and the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). Some joined existing political organizations such as the ANC or UDF.<sup>32</sup> In 1967, the state introduced compulsory military service for white males. Within South Africa, there was little organized opposition until 1983,<sup>33</sup> when the Black Sash civil liberties group called for the abolition of compulsory conscription. The ECC was formed that year as a coalition of various student, religious, women's and human rights groups who organized an extensive ongoing public relations campaign that utilized posters, mass meetings, press conferences, festivals, and concerts.

Many of the white youth were traumatized by their involvement in defence force activities, and those who resisted faced social ostracism. Many were condemned as

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<sup>30</sup> TRC Special Hearing on Children and Youth, pg. 257.

<sup>31</sup> TRC Special Hearing on Children and Youth, pg. 257.

<sup>32</sup> They too were targeted by the state, forced underground, and into exile with devastating consequences.

<sup>33</sup> But South African refugees living in London established the Committee on South African War Resistance (COSAWR) in 1978. (Berat, L. 1989. "Conscientious Objection in South Africa, Governmental

traitors to the nation and faced criminal charges of six years' imprisonment if they did not leave their country. At the forefront of this resistance and documenting its efforts with a powerful and illustrative poster campaign was the ECC. Unlike most anti-apartheid organizations, the ECC primarily targeted a white South African audience using a two-pronged approach: to educate and empower white youth about alternatives to conscription, and more frequently, to evoke fear and/or sympathy in white viewers regarding the damaging consequences of military involvement.

The ECC's collection represents the bulk of visual images of white children and youth that I encountered in my exploration of political posters. What is most interesting for my purposes here is the ECC's repetitive emphasis of the youthfulness of the white conscripts it features. As Sandra Burman argued in 1988, "childhood and its related words have meant very different things at different times... They carry with them a range of hidden connotations and assumptions, and ... they are categories which are manipulated in South Africa for administrative and political purposes."<sup>34</sup> In "Another Young One," two human figures are represented without any physical indication of their age. The plump pink hand seems distorted as its fingers curl unnaturally and unevenly to grip or tap the young man on the back, selecting/sentencing him to unknown horrors. The starkly contrasting colors of black, white, and pink are lurid and unsettling.<sup>35</sup>

The stark and simple "Conscription is everyone's issue" calendar focuses on one

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Paranoia and the Law of Conscription," *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, vol 22, number 1.)

<sup>34</sup>*South African Keywords: The Uses & Abuses of Political Concepts*. Edited by Emile Boonzaier and John Sharp. Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, 1988, 167.

<sup>35</sup>Might these fingers suggest another image? Possibly of the Grim Reaper, who also comes faceless and shrouded in black at the moment before one's death. Thanks to Farzanah Badsha for her insightful and

kind of person to underscore a larger argument about conscription (and arguably, the apartheid military in general): a child. Suggesting the dangers of children's exposure and potential internalization of violence witnessed in townships at the hands of the SADF, the ECC reiterates a familiar argument about the tragedy of lost childhoods. Under the brutal circumstances of apartheid even children's play takes on a violent tenor. Interesting to note here is also the use of child art to convey simple truths. This poster reproduces themes explored in other ECC posters: the SADF is the enemy, and the victim is a male child/youth (which in turn causes larger familial and social suffering as well).

In the 1987 “Botha's ek Gatvol” (I've had enough), a young man has been reduced to child-like status as a result of ostensible despair. He has abandoned his beret beside him in a sense of defeat and hangs his head abjectly. The soldier here is rendered in a way that emphasizes his slight frame, as he bends into an almost fetal-like position, invoking a return to infancy. Inverting the usual military dogma of turning boys into men, the ECC implies that the SADF takes young people and breaks them down into children. ECC posters directly counter other core positions of the state (17 year olds are fit to be soldiers, conscription is a duty, the military provides opportunities for training, discipline, comradeship, etc.) by appealing to romantic ideals about the innocence of youth.

Extending this counter image, ECC political posters interrupt the nationalistic narrative in another powerful way. In ECC posters, people holding guns are typically rendered as victims. Rather than appearing as symbols of strength, power, or virility, in the hands of children and youth, guns seem to enervate them spiritually, emotionally, and

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humorous suggestion that this depiction could be a reference to P.W. Botha and his wagging finger!

A large part of the envictimization process involves emphasizing the childish qualities of the victim so as to heighten viewers' sympathetic or empathetic response. The ECC sponsored “Art for Peace” exhibition poster features a young male toddler sitting in sand, but the otherwise sanguine image of childhood play and innocence has been marred by the insertion of an airborne hand grenade and the triple striped military insignia of a soldier's uniform onto the composition. Once again, the color choices are striking and unnerving. The boy's image has been washed in red portending a possible bloody demise in battle, and the sand is an eerie greenish-blue.

In the 1980’s, under the Internal Security Act and state of emergency regulations, the apartheid government banned all political organizations, including the many student and youth organizations often based in schools. Possessing or distributing their literature (including posters) was also declared illegal. As black youth became increasingly politicized in the late 1970’s and 80’s, schools served as centers of resistance to apartheid and were consequently targeted by the state. Schools were the sites of mobilization, intimidation, political influence, and harassment as police occupied schools. As reported in the final report of the TRC, “In large-scale and often arbitrary police action, thousands of children, some as young as seven years old, were arrested and detained in terms of South Africa’s sweeping security and criminal legislation. Sometimes, entire schools were arrested en masse.”<sup>36</sup>

State propaganda and militarism are illustrated in the visual fulfillment of P.W. Botha's injunction that “Our educational systems must train people for war” by a young

boy decked out in helmet, raincoat, and gun. His bodily stance conveys a sense of enthusiasm and readiness that seems to bely his facial expression. “Soldiers out of the Schools,”<sup>37</sup> condemning the presence of the SADF in schools, uses an actual drawing by 13 year old Victor<sup>38</sup> who acts as witness to the victimization of a child in the hands of a soldier.

### **Hector Pieterse and June 16th**

Another useful space to examine the strategic range and multiple uses of the child/youth relationship may be found in the reproduced images and ramifications of the quintessential South African poster child: Hector Pieterse.<sup>39</sup> The Soweto Uprising<sup>40</sup> was the defining moment of youth involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle. On June 16, 1976, more than 20,000 students gathered to protest a proposed education policy change

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<sup>36</sup> TRC official report, 260.

<sup>37</sup> 1986, ECC

<sup>38</sup> Originally published in 1986 by Ravan Press for The Open School in Johannesburg in a collection of child drawings and writings entitled *Two Dogs and Freedom: Children of the Townships Speak Out*. This book is the result of a project of The Open School, a cultural education program that ran a variety of workshops for young people.

<sup>39</sup> The hidden histories surrounding Hector Pieterse and the consequential capturing of his famous photograph by Sam Nzima on June 16<sup>th</sup> are deep and multiple. To start, the story of his name is part of a broader family engagement with the apartheid regime's racial classification apparatus and its many painful consequences. Originally the Pitso family, the Pieterse's changed their surname in an attempt to pass as coloured. When the photograph was disseminated across the country and the world, it was known by what the family insists is an incorrect spelling: Petersen. (Lucille Davie, “Hector: the Famous Child whose Face is Unknown,” City of Johannesburg Official Website, June 14, 2002. [http://www.joburg.org.za/june\\_2002/hector.stm](http://www.joburg.org.za/june_2002/hector.stm))

<sup>40</sup> A lot has been written on the Soweto Uprising, and many ideological claims and battles have been waged through the telling of these events. I do not wish to engage with that dimension at this juncture, however, and am certainly not trying to lay claim to any particular version of that day or the

setting fire to government buildings, Putco buses, municipal beerhalls and bottle shops, and white business vehicles. The massacre and the days of violence that followed left at least 566 dead, 104 of them children under the age of sixteen, many of them shot in the back.<sup>42</sup> One of the first students slain was 13-year old Hector Pieterse,<sup>43</sup> who was photographed by World newspaper photographer Sam Nzima<sup>44</sup> in the arms of 18-year old Mbuyisa Makhubu as his horrified sister Antoinette ran alongside him. Nzima drove the three young people to Naledi Clinic, where Hector was declared dead on arrival.

Nzima's photo appeared all over the world in newspapers and on television

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surrounding events.

<sup>41</sup>There are many other reasons for June 16<sup>th</sup> besides language that I won't elaborate here but that is the dominant narrative frame and what gets picked up most prominently.

<sup>42</sup>It must be acknowledged that accurate statistics on this and other massacres are notoriously hard to come by. (Lucille Davie, "Hastings: June 16's Forgotten Hero," City of Johannesburg Official Website, August 11, 2003. [http://www.southafrica.info/ess\\_info/sa\\_glance/history/hastings-ndlovu-150605.htm](http://www.southafrica.info/ess_info/sa_glance/history/hastings-ndlovu-150605.htm))

<sup>43</sup>Another point regarding hidden histories: although Hector Pieterse was mourned as the first victim of Soweto, 15-year old Hastings Ndlovu is now believed to be the first child shot. *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup>The famous photograph was one in a series of six sequence shots and other photos from that day and as a result of the photos Nzima was harassed relentlessly by security forces. Within a year he fled Johannesburg and temporarily abandoned photography. It is also important to note that (Lucille Davie, "Hector Pieterse gets his Memorial," City of Johannesburg Official Website, October 24, 2001. <http://www.joburg.org.za/october/hector.stm>). Few or no American or British photographers or reporters were present in Soweto on June 16, and the African photographers who were (including Sam Nzima and Alf Khumalo) opened a window of opportunity for black reporters. Through their coverage and presence in townships, these photographers and reporters "transformed their status within the townships. Journalism began to be perceived by young Africans as a possible avenue for resistance." (James Sanders. *South Africa and the International Media 1972-1979: A Struggle for Representation*. London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000; 175- 177).

screens, solidifying opposition to the brutal apartheid system both at home and abroad. The photo came to symbolize the struggle against apartheid itself, and of the youth especially.<sup>45</sup> The image was reproduced on banners, posters, fliers, and t-shirts more than any other for the duration of apartheid. Hector was appropriated by all sorts of causes connected to liberation over the next fifteen to twenty years.<sup>46</sup> He became the preferred vehicle of looking back to look forward. As the recurring face and figure of the struggle, Why did Pieterse capture the international and national imaginaries so powerfully? Especially considering that although Hector Pieterse was mourned as the first victim of Soweto, 15-year old Hastings Ndlovu is now believed to be the first child shot.<sup>47</sup>

In many ways, his death gets remembered because there was someone there to record it. But before Nzima's photo was ever developed, word was circulating on the streets. As Ellen Kuzwayo recalled, "And suddenly on the lips of every child you met was Hector Pieterse, Hector Pieterse, Hector Pieterse! That young boy on that day, yes, he died. He was killed by the police. But overnight he became a hero and you had to ask: Who is Hector Pieterse [sic]?"<sup>48</sup> What is the power of Hector's firstness as a victim? Why did Hector's photo become so iconic? As James Sanders discusses in his book on

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<sup>45</sup>Compare to the more recent example of another "poster child," Elian Gonzalez, whose image came to symbolize the division between the United States and Cuba in June 2000 when he survived a disastrous attempt to flee Cuba on a small boat that capsized and killed 11 of the 14 passengers, including his mother. In this particular case, both sides (those advocating his return to Cuba and those lobbying for his resettlement in Miami) used his image to represent a broader struggle that encapsulated the aspirations, values, and hopes of a nation.

<sup>46</sup>Sam Nzima describes his lack of recognition, appreciation, and financial compensation for his famous photographs in the following brief interview: "History in a Snapshot," *Tr!bute*, June 2003, © Nothemba Media (PTY) Ltd., Rivonia, South Africa, 62-63.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup>Ellen Kuzwayo interview on "You Kill One, You Kill All!" *South Africa's Human Spirit: An Oral Memoir of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. "Slices of Life" production script. Johannesburg:

South Africa and international media, there were other photographs that were taken that day in Soweto, and distributed in much smaller circulation, including a photo of two black policemen firing into a crowd (also taken by Nzima) and a group of strong black youth toyi-toying in protest by Bernard Magubane. In Nzima's Hector images, the people are young and black and victims, which places them within a nexus of densely powerful signifiers imbued with considerable emotional currency in the global context.

The international coverage and ensuing public outcry (both at home and abroad) emphasized the young age and innocence of the victims and the unjustifiable actions of the police. But within the history and visual representation of suffering and victimization, a counter notion of children and youth emerges. For many South Africans across the country, the Soweto Uprising is remembered as an event which galvanized a generation of young people who committed themselves to fighting, by any means necessary, the oppression of apartheid. The story of youth struggle, is not only one of victimization and trauma, but also one of agency. Many young people left South Africa to train as freedom fighters in the armies of exiled political movements such as the armed wing of the African National Congress, Umkhonto weSizwe (MK), and the armed wing of the Pan African Congress, the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA). Soweto offered documented and irrefutable proof that violence was being witnessed by and inflicted on children and youth, and pushed many of them to carry out violence of their own against state targets.

June 16<sup>th</sup> reinvigorated the established political parties, including the African



National Congress, Pan African Congress, and Black Consciousness Movement, and also resulted in some government reforms. It not only changed the political climate within South Africa, but it deeply affected its political and economic position in the international community. The Soweto Uprising and subsequent protests around the country launched South African youth onto the world and domestic stage in an unprecedented way. The contradictory images of vulnerable, innocent children and their stone-throwing, grenade-wielding, and politically mobilizing counterimages point to larger questions about the role of memory, the production of history, and issues of meaning-making and narrativity.

Hector Pieterse is used to iconographically place June 16<sup>th</sup> prominently within the historical narrative of the struggle, and June 16<sup>th</sup> becomes one of the major lynchpins of history. In the ensuing decades, Soweto would figure prominently in the history of the people's fight against apartheid, and Hector Pieterse was the visual embodiment of that fight. 1976 gets cast as the originary moment of youth involvement, even though there is a deeper history of both youth political activity and organized protests around language instruction in South African schools.<sup>49</sup> Youth appear in the center of struggle narratives and within visual chronologies depicted in political posters in new and important ways. On the one hand, for many reasons, as a (series of) event(s), June 16<sup>th</sup> complicates

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<sup>49</sup>The political tension between English and Afrikaner manifested itself in both spatial and social separation, and included separate education systems. Pieter le Roux describes, "One of the cornerstones of Christian National Education was a commitment to a political philosophy which laid great stress on separateness. In the early years the battle was one for separate Afrikaner schools... M.C. Botha had planned a school boycott by Afrikaans children in the 1940s in order to enforce their demand for separate Afrikaans schools rather than the parallel medium the United Party government favoured." Even in the 1940's, the connection between language and ideology produced anxieties about mixing: "the fear was that, if 50 per cent of all teaching was in English, the Afrikaners who gained a proficiency in a world language would be tempted to anglicize. (Growing Up an Afrikaner Pieter le Roux, Burman and Reynolds, 195).

notions of childhood , but it also strengthens their emotional force. As an 18 year old, Mbuyiso Makhubu would be unquestioningly considered an adult in many parts of the world but the images and discourse around them emphasize his youthfulness in ways that link him more with the world of children than adults.

As the line between children and youth blurs with Soweto, the line between young people and parents gets redrawn more firmly. June 16<sup>th</sup> shifts the conceptual grid of childhood and youth. As one student noted in 1976, writing to *The World* newspaper, “Our parents are prepared to suffer under the white man’s rule. They have been living for years under these laws and they have become immune to them. But we strongly refuse to swallow an education that is designed to make us slaves in the country of our birth.”<sup>50</sup> Following the Soweto Uprising, increasingly militant youth grew impatient with their parents’ perceived passivity. As Burman and Reynolds observed in 1986, active support for their demands in 1976 was not forthcoming from parents.

Except for isolated instances of support such as that from the Soweto Parents Association, the children were organizing their own struggle with their own leadership, irrespective of the wishes of their elders. The passivity of parents was seen by their offspring as ...[the] failure of parents to struggle with their children and to provide leadership [which] widened the generation gap. The more radical children almost lost confidence in their parents. They felt that their parents were prisoners of fear and death.<sup>51</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Veena Das and the other contributors to *Social Suffering* persuasively write that pain not only occurs within a broader social context that must be engaged, but that it

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<sup>50</sup> “June 16<sup>th</sup> Uprising,” <http://africanhistory.about.com/library/weekly/aa060801b.htm>.

“makes a claim asking for acknowledgment.”<sup>52</sup> There certainly is a great deal of pain documented visually in 1980's South African political posters depicting children and youth. But there is also hope, commemoration, and play. The use of posters to explore the frameworks that were and are frequently invoked to describe young people's experiences during the last decades of apartheid rule provides a fertile space for contextualizing and acknowledging not just suffering but also the promise of imagined futures, aesthetic expression, and collective action.

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<sup>51</sup> (340) (Burman and Reynolds)

<sup>52</sup> Das, Veena, et. al. Page ?

**Selected Timeline of posters and poster culture in SA**

1900s	posters used commercially and for political propaganda.
1950's	placards, banners and leaflets existed rather than posters
1960	suppression of PAC and ANC. Public mass protest declined
late 1960's	University campuses main source of poster production, like in US &
1970's	trade unions reemerged
late 1970's	unions used posters regularly
June 16 <sup>th</sup> , 1976	students- used lots of hand made placards and banners, not printed
1978	MEDU founded by exiled South African cultural workers in Gabarone, Botswana to provide multinational training to members of liberation movements. Their posters were banned in South Africa.
1979 workers	Joburg based Junction Avenue community of cultural
1980's and the	formation of Screen Training Project (STP) in Johannesburg, Community Arts Project (CAP) Media Project in Cape Town
July 1982 banned	Medu sponsored Culture and Resistance Festival in Gaborone. E
1982 workshop	Community Arts Project opened in Cape Town with a small
1983	CAP in full swing, producing many posters for UDF, etc.
1983 a	UDF organised 600 + grassroots and civic organisations into national anti-apartheid body The Front
1983 community	November- Screen Training Project was started to help organisations with silkscreening
1985	first State of Emergency. Many STP workers were detained, had to go
1985, June 14	SADF raid into Botswana targeted the MEDU Art Foundation several

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COMMENTS VERY WELCOME.**

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1986	Birth of People's Education	
1986-87	worker organisation assumed a leading role in political struggle	
1986 Dec.	Cape Town Arts Festival with theme "Towards a People's Culture". Banned the day before it was to open.	
1987	plans began to produce a book of political posters despite the State of	Em
Nov 1988	Johannesburg Art Gallery exhibit on The Neglected Tradition of black art	
1989	Defiance Campaign	
1990	after unbanning, STP reemerged as Media Training Workshop (MTW)	
Sept 11-13 1990	"Developing Media Education in the 1990's" conference held in	Dur
2004 Aug	..... <i>Images of Defiance</i> rereleased without revisions to celebrate ten years	