

**THE MAKING OF SOUTH END COMMUNITY MUSEUM, PORT ELIZABETH
EASTERN CAPE.**

By

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Abstract

For it seems distressing to discuss the issue of land in South Africa as South Africa's historical past on colonialism and racism has been particularly traumatic. The postcolonial agenda of restoring land to the dispossessed does not only depend on relocation and further removals of the current occupants of particular land, but the fact of the matter in this paper is on how former communities choose to relive their past by contributing to the transformation of state governed museums and the establishment and ownership of community museums by the former displaced communities. This paper deals with how the dispossessed due to the apartheid laws like the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the Group Areas Act of 1950, South End in Port Elizabeth in particular; unearth a symbolic manner of restoring land in their minds and for future generations. There is an emblematical trend in translating nostalgia in form of community museums formed throughout South Africa by the former landowners in city centers, beachfronts and arable land in South Africa.

These communities are sparingly located in different areas of South Africa's cities. Whilst the mission of the apartheid government was to disintegrate these communities, spaces like the community museums are further claiming the responsibility of portraying the life that people lived as communities who lived and loved one another not for their skin colors but because of each person's responsibility towards life and human race. Oral testimonies and the selection of museum displays will remain a significant part in this paper.

Introduction

This paper looks into how memory is utilized to inform the representations and reconstructions of the past in community based museums in South Africa, with a focus on the South End Community museum, located in the Nelson Mandela Metropole in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Once declared a slum, South End became a 'whites only' suburb of Port Elizabeth in late 1960's. Today its key features are two mosques, Walmer Road that continue right up to the airport of Port Elizabeth and the museum... How memories have been appropriated in the reconstruction of the 'new' South African community through the medium of cultural heritage remains an extensive yet significant discourse in historical research. Community museums have been established to recreate the very same memory and appropriate recollections. This signifies cultural heritage instead of commercializing it. It is in these instances that cultural heritage forms a delicate part of cultural tours and where the authentic is measured on the satisfaction of the gaze of the onlooker.

The emphasis in this research is on how communities incorporate ways in which South Africans are being encouraged to narrate and imagine their past, and their own identities as individuals of that particular community. What this study plans to examine is the process of memory and imagination as expressed in interviews of former residents from the book *South End (As We Knew It)*¹, interviews with former residents residing in New Brighton Township and interaction and interviews with the museum visitors and staff. Its task is to look at the making of memory of a geographic space – South End - and the construction of a broader South African memory based on Group Areas Act and the entire phase of removals. My area of interest is on how memories are used as an agent to reconstruct 'people's' past. What memories do former residents have of life prior the Group Areas Act of 1950 in South End, how do people choose to remember South End and what role does the newly established museum play in constituting that memory by accommodating former residents to become both recipients and participants in the making of the museum?

One major aim of this paper is to examine how the Group Areas Act of 1950 shaped the ways in which memory is made in the museum and by former residents that are interviewed for research purposes. How this legislation was entrenched and how it remade memories for South Africa in general and South End in particular remains the core matter in directing this discussion. It is also noteworthy to explain how the museum came into being, the nature of its displays and collections about the history of South End and how the museum is selecting, defining and collecting memories of South End by highlighting certain experiences from other museums and the broader community of Port Elizabeth.

¹ A book written by former residents of South End, Yusuf Agherdien, Ambrose George and Shahied Hendricks. This book has attempted restore the attributes of 'old South End', to relive memories and provides a space for former residents to narrate to their children the value of life in South End as compared to the racially derma catered areas they grew up in.

This paper furthermore revisits the question of South African identities by examining the texts, memoirs and visuals that specifically deal with the South End locality in the museum and interviews. This paper then proposes a few thoughts on how the museum mediates between the uses of these political and geographic identities.

According to Nick Sepherd, “our heritage. ...helps us to define our cultural identity and therefore was at the heart of our spiritual well-being and has the power to build our nation ...it celebrates our achievement and contributes to redressing past inequities. It educatesit facilitates healing and material, symbolic restitution.” However this is a very superficial notion of heritage as conceptualizations of heritage differ from place to place and from person to person. Turnbridge explains heritage, as incorporation into culture because of the artistic productivity of the past is included alongside modern artistic creativity. For Turnbridge, culture, in a broad manner is defined as the ‘mentifacts’ as well as artifacts of a social group. It is also viewed as heritage in the sense that it is regarded as suitable for assembly, preservation and transmission to future generations as inheritance.² In Port Elizabeth, in the former South End area, the process of restoring is in form of a living museum, the heritage and dignity of what was called South End, “a bustling, brimming with activity, and populated by a very cosmopolitan community”³ was accentuated with the opening of the South End Community museum. It is worth noting that the establishment of the museum was a consolidation of a variety of efforts by former residents in the post apartheid South Africa through land claims and restitution.

Remembering South End

In land restitution meetings that I have attended in Port Elizabeth, former residents of South End continuously insert guilt and pain by identifying certain characteristics about this area and continue to emphasize its strengths. One of them is the notion of a ‘cosmopolitan community’, which is institutionalized as most recollections in interviews that I have conducted in the past two years in the museum and in the homes of the former residents refer to that. The other characteristic is that of nurtured childhood experiences as points of departure in most interviews and interactions with former residents. Residents of former South End community concentrate on these two features and by this, South End is infantilized and stagnated. Adams in her conceptualization of ‘infantalization’ by former removed residents of District Six, argues that the construction of childhood memories perhaps allows the narrators some form of ‘return’ to District Six.⁴ This cannot easily be said when referring to South End as physical return is practically impossible. The whole geographical area is an up market suburb with a variety of townhouses designs. Like Cape Town, Port Elizabeth is constructed in apartheid’s spatial practices.

² Turnbridge, J.E. & Ashworth, G.J. (1996) *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past As A Resource In Conflict*. Chichester, New York. Pg12

³ Agherdien, Y., George, A.C. & Hendricks S. (1997) *South End – As We Knew It* ed. Roy H. Du Pre. Rahod Publishing Services. East London. (Introduction)

⁴ Adams, Z. (2002) “Memory, Imagination and Renewal: Remembering and Forgetting District Six.” MA Mini Thesis, University of the Western Cape. P18

Adams, in her inquiry on the selective use of memory, argues that memory, trauma, and identity share a complex relationship. They evolve around the parameters that are as different as their contexts. If the apartheid past is figured as a traumatic past, and individual experience is primarily one of suffering, then how does the individual remember his or her life before a particular traumatic event?⁵ Former residents, in their individual recollection insinuate a form of 'utopia' when referring to life and living prior the entrenchment of apartheid. However there is a dissimilar scrutiny when former residents recall the Group Areas Act of 1950 and the irony of establishing a museum to remember the very same removals and life prior to removals. Turnbridge expresses that aspects of human unpleasantness can become and be deliberately used as a source of entertainment rather than embarrassment or humiliation.⁶ It is in such instances that a massacre site and even concentration camps can become the object of a recreational trip and be promoted as a tourism attraction⁷. In this argument what comes into play is that, the elapse of time may not only alleviate the events themselves but also alter the responses of visitors who are no longer personally involved in the events being viewed. It is the same visitors who market the places, memorial sites and monuments with either a feeling of anguish or a reconciliatory mode.

South End, like District Six and Sophiatown, is often termed as a forerunner of South Africa's "Rainbow Nation" where a variety of communities and nationalities such as Indians, Malays, English, Portuguese, Greeks, Chinese, St Helenians, Khoi Khoi, Xhosas and Fingoes lived in harmony from the 20th century with one another respecting one another's language and way of life.⁸ This particular lifestyle of inclusiveness is emphasized by former residents of South End as opposed to the isolation and exclusivity inserted by apartheid amongst the above-mentioned nationalities.

South End, in this particular instance emerges as a geographic space whose residents prefer to refer to South End in the pre-apartheid era as 'harmonious'. In the same vigor some community members exclude the historical ills of political raids of 'doom pass'⁹ for people who were classified as "Bantu" under the Population Registration Act, the cultural ills of the restriction of beer brewing, the social ills, of gangsters, robberies, gambling and prostitution, which occurred and caused disorder in this community. Anthony Starr writes about historical memory that "men easily forget; and tend to forget unpleasant happenings more quickly than pleasant ones."¹⁰ This was also evident in my own experience of the paper I wrote for

⁵ Adams, Z.(2002) "Memory, Imagination and Renewal: Remembering and Forgetting District Six. MA Mini Thesis, University of the Western Cape.

⁶ Turnbridge, J.E. & Ashworth, G.J.(1996) *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past As A Resource In Conflict*. Chichester, New York. Pg14.

⁷ Turnbridge, J.E. & Ashworth, G.J.(1996) *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past As A Resource In Conflict*. Chichester, New York. Pg14.

⁸ Agherdien, Y, George. A.C. & Hendricks S. (1997) *South End – As We Knew It* ed. Roy H. Du Pre. Rahod Publishing Services. East London. (Introduction)

⁹ Compulsory, 24 hours identity books, which were to be carried by Black people in South Africa under the apartheid regime.

¹⁰ Starr, A (1972/1991) 155. *Human Destructiveness: The Roots of Genocide and Human Cruelty*. New York. London: Routledge.

the *Mapping Alternatives Conference* at the University of Cape Town. In this paper I reflected on the ‘neglected’ events and activities ranging from police raids, gangsters, dice playing in street corners and prostitution in the area. The response of the South End museum trust was that the paper is “too academic and condemning South End”¹¹

The destruction of South End to most former residents refers to the general loss of stable childhood amongst South End community residents. Adams suggests that there is a link between memories of happy childhoods and the ‘triumph over adversity narrative’ is contained in tales of lost innocence¹². In most interviews, former residents constantly refer to their childhood memories. This response portrays how the museum still form part of the remembering process as Agherdien, a former resident indicated that, “as youngsters, we used to climb the fig tree¹³ to view the ships arriving and we would walk along the beachfront and town was ten minutes walk away from our home. What becomes a center of discussion in this statement and influences the remembering process are the differences experienced during the relocation process in racially classified areas. Given the geographical arrangement of townships, they are in the outskirts of the city center, the beach is very far and inaccessible and there is hardly space to plant trees and grow beautiful gardens. It is in this instance that South End is remembered as a locality, but not necessarily a racially classified or class structured space. According to Adams, the story of forced removals does not so much rely on ‘narratives of pain and torture’, but on stories of loss: of place, home, tradition and the way things were and the way we were¹⁴.

In interviews that I conducted with ex-residents of South End there is a particular bias towards the notion of a harmonious life, multiracialism and multiculturalism. The only times of despair that former residents refer to are those of the implementation of Group Areas Act, eviction and resettlement in racially categorized areas. Mr S.H. (Sinky) AH, a former resident, when asked about the Group Areas, he responded,

“I had my own business. I moved out of South End in 1974 due to the Group Areas Act. They said it was a slum area and we had to move. There were no facilities for Chinese. They only had this (Kabega Park) residential area up here. We had to close up. We laid idle for a year with no work. I struggled here for a whole year. Then thereafter I managed to strike a job with United Dairies.¹⁵

¹¹ Abrahams.C, 2001; 4 – A contribution on museum and heritage practices for the Mapping Alternatives conference held in UCT, 25 and 26 September 2001.

¹² Adams, Z.(2002) “Memory, Imagination and Renewal: Remembering and Forgetting District Six.MA Mini Thesis, University of the Western Cape. Pg16.

¹³ A Fig Tree across the museum and opposite the Port Elizabeth harbour. Described by a former resident, Yusuf Argherdien in an interview in Port Elizabeth, walking tour of South End on the 4th July 2001.

¹⁴ Adams, Z.(2002) “Memory, Imagination and Renewal: Remembering and Forgetting District Six.MA Mini Thesis, University of the Western Cape. Pg16.

¹⁵ Interview with Mr S.H. (Sinky) AH WHY, 14 Opal Road, Kabega Park, Port Elizabeth, 18 May 1997 conducted for the book *South End As We Knew It*.

There is a partial description of life prior to removals, but the apartheid legislation of the Group Areas Act remains the core point of discussion in the reflections. The memory of Group Areas Act is portrayed and narrated as a traumatic event and is explicitly outlined in the narrations as the primary feature of the socio – economic inequalities and the housing problem in South Africa.

In an interview with Mr L. Williams he says “This (referring to the Group Areas Act and removals) had a devastating effect on these people particularly from the family point of view because the people who lived in South End worked in the center of town, they worked on the harbour and their children went to school in the same vicinity. They were lorry drivers and of course the railway absorbed a big number of them. They were suddenly removed miles away from their places of employment and that must have devastated families.”¹⁶ It is interesting how the respondent uses the word “they” and not “we”. The respondent’s distinction clearly expresses how the past is foreign and detached by choice from the present. According to many former resident’s accounts of apartheid, to them it did not only remove communities, it also had an upper hand on destroying what were termed family values and principles.

In District Six there are two autobiographies of childhood memories of growing up in District Six, published in the 1990’s. However, these autobiographies are not necessarily “tales about trials and narratives of pain and torture”¹⁷ but recollect ‘happy memories’ of tranquil childhoods under apartheid. In *Sala Kahle District Six: An African Women’s Perspective*, Nomvuyo Ngcelwane speaks about living in “perfect harmony and tolerance”¹⁸ and Noor Ebrahim in *Noor’s Story: My Life in District Six* remembers “games (cricket) weddings and funerals.”¹⁹ These childhood memoirs create a notion of endurance and accomplishment over adversity. In most cases I refer to atrocities, which Turnbridge describes as cruelty and ruthlessness deliberately, perpetrated by people

against people.... These would include colonialism, racism in which members of one country or race are victims or perpetrators even inheriting the status of victim or perpetrators from events that occurred many generations earlier.²⁰ These two writer’s reflections are in every respect about childhood narratives and tend to shy away from atrocities of apartheid.

People’s properties were demolished and many former residents explain this process as a very emotional and destructive phase in their lives. A 68 year old female who stood outside the trim, freshly painted South End home, said,

¹⁶ Williams, L. A former South End teacher at St Monica’s Primary School in South End and a resident in an interview at 27 Cassia Gardens, Sundridge Park, 20th March 1997. Agherdien for the book *South End As We Knew It*

¹⁷ Lalu, P. and B.Harris, ‘Journeys From The Horizons of History’, *Current Writing* 8 (2) 1996.

¹⁸ Ngcelwane, N. *Sala Kahle District Six: An African Women’s Perspective*, Cape Town, Kwela Books, 1998, p15.

¹⁹ Ebrahim, N. *Noor’s Story: My Life in District Six*, Cape Town, District Six Museum, 1999.

²⁰ Turnbridge, J.E. & Ashworth, G.J. (1996) *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past As A Resource In Conflict*. Chichester, New York. Pg 97.

“For 17 years I have taken in washing to help pay for this home. My late husband and my children invested all their savings in it and now we have to give it up and be forced to move to a ‘coloured’ area.”²¹

There are two factors that come to play in this statement. Firstly, the removal from an established household to a different area. Secondly, there is the forceful settlement to a ‘coloured’ township. In this account the overall concern is on the loss of the alleged South End identity and locality. The relocation would therefore mean the loss of what is depicted as ‘warm and multicultural neighborhood’, community networks and closeness.

When asked whether he (Mr Abraham) would like to go back to South End, he replied by saying,

“No never. One can relive the past, but can never go back to the past. You always go down memory lane with old friends....What is there at South End to go to? Even our children, if they can be there they wont go back. Things will never be the same.”²²

What emotions did you experience at having to leave, I asked him?

“My dad came to South End and opened his shop there around 1901 and died in 1948. When I locked our home for the last time it was like locking the door of the jail, in this case you were not locked in, you were locked out. You thought of all the moments of joy and suffering, the friends you made before the guillotine dropped whether it’s going to be worse or good was to be seen.”²³

According to former resident’s accounts the moving from South End had a devastating effect on the older folks because they reached the end of their lives; they died virtually broken hearted because they would not see their children enjoy those things that they had worked hard for. How did it affect your children’s education, I asked? “I went to Dower Primary School, a mixed school in terms of teacher, we quite a number of whites, among them was a Jewish teacher, we had a coloured²⁴ teachers, a Muslim²⁵ teacher

²¹ Eastern Province Herald, 27 March 1982.

²² Abrahams, A. A former resident of South End at 84 Liebenberg Road, Gelvandale, Port Elizabeth Northern Areas on 3rd May 1997.

²³ Pillay, S. A former community leader and businessman of South End in an interview at 2 Rochleas Street, Malabar 26 March 1997.

²⁴ The term ‘Coloured’ was a creation of the Population Registration Act of 1950 and used in reference to all South Africans not classified as ‘European’ (white) or ‘Native’ (African). Prior to 1950 many of the people so classified had been variously referred to as ‘Mixed’, ‘coloured’, ‘St Helenian’, ‘Malay’, ‘Griqua’ etc. At the time the Chinese and Indians were also classified as ‘coloureds’. The former were allowed to reclassify to white and the latter were later placed in the ‘Asiatic’ Population group.

²⁵ The term ‘Muslim’ used by the apartheid government to classify a ‘non white person or a native’. The Population registration Act no 30. of 1950 divided South Africa into four distinct categories. The coloured group was further subdivided into ‘Cape Malay’ others ‘coloureds’, ‘Khoisan’, ‘Bastard’. In the Western Cape most placed into the Cape

Mr Salie. We grew up with broader respect for one another; we had Africans²⁶ at school we played together. This kind of education gave me a firm grounding for later life.” The restrictions that apartheid brought are held solely responsible by former residence for all what they had and was not to be found in the racially classified areas of resettlement.

In most oral testimonies one finds that the issue of race is only mentioned when referring to nationalities from Europe like the Greeks and Portuguese. In this juncture, South End is conceptualized as only a ‘geographic space’ of exploration. In most interviews and illustrations, notions of geographic identity rather than that of race tend to supersede the philosophy behind the race issue in South End. In an interview, Mr Pillay when asked about the effect of relocation on his life, he expressed that, we were very settled in South End. We lived very contentedly, the people were not very wealthy....When I locked our home for the last time it was like locking the door of a jail, in this case you were not locked in, you were locked out.²⁷

The Museum

The South End museum was ceremoniously opened on the 21st March - Human Rights Day of the year 2000. The attendees were predominantly former South End residents, residents from neighboring areas, politicians and municipal officials. This was the beginning of a path for recollection and redress. During the opening there were activities and singing and dancing took the center stage. The former residents that were present were also encouraged to further donate artifacts for the museum’s displays.

The South End Community museum is based in the Seaman’s Institute Building, a space opposite the harbor site, the freeway runs right next to it and a beachfront is on the far right and on the far left is the city center. The museum depicts the tragedy and sorrow that resulted from forced removals, the Group Areas Act and apartheid legislation. It also visually portrays life and living in South End prior to the removals such as one of busy streets, schools, social and sports clubs.

There are three established phases in the museum. Phase one constitutes an overall plan, which includes the main conference hall or *Hall of Shame* with a large mural onto the back of the stage which depicts children playing with a soccer ball in Rudolf Street. A giant map on the floor traces the original street names, churches and sports grounds. On the walls surrounding the map are blown up photographs of life in old South End. This street map is a very symbolic design as one observed former residents (adults) kneeling down seeking ‘their’ playgrounds, houses and famous shops. In this process of exploring

Malay category and the term remained employable by those who trekked to other part like Kimberly, Port Elizabeth , Johannesburg etc.

²⁶ The term ‘African’ used by the residents refers to those South Africans who were labeled as and described as “blacks”, “natives”, indigenous people etc.

²⁷ Interview with Shun Pillay, 2 Rochlea Street, Malabar, 26 March 1997.

the map they express both delight and sadness. Their children, grandchildren and friends are told stories immediately, therefore filling the gap of the absence of a guide.

In District Six Museum the map is used for retracing the original street names and the grid of District Six – a means for ex residents to reclaim their addresses by writing their names onto the map. The map is a fitting memorial, since, in an attempt to erase District Six from the map of local history, many of the street names, even the grid itself, were changed to make way for the white Suburb of Zonnebloem and the development of the Technikon.²⁸ On the sidewalls of the South End Museum one finds enlarged portraits of social clubs and former residents describe them as “gangsters that were neat and minded their own business”²⁹, public transport, weekend activities and families relaxing in their veranda.

Other renovated rooms include a *Hall of Fame*, which has a large map depicting the dispersal of the various communities, photographs of schools, churches, sports teams, social life and newspaper cuttings of past life in South End plastered neatly on the wall. The third phase illustrates examples of ordinary *Home Life*, with donated and leased furniture available as used in homes during the 1950’s. In an attempt to visualize the past, on the museum walls there are portraits of individuals, families, sports groups and gangs of South End. Some former residents even identify the characters by names and street address others unfortunately have passed away. Most visitors find their own way in the museum, as there are no organized tours conducted. However, the museum staff do take tours with school groups and international groups. In an interview with Mr Collin Abrahams, museum coordinator, he indicated that in 2003 they have hosted a number of international groups and schools from Port Elizabeth as some schools incorporated South End in their syllabus for history and social sciences.³⁰

According to Gordon, writing about one’s own work has rarely been a part of the culture in either industrial or non-industrial societies.³¹ He further stipulates that, “artifacts can enrich our understanding of the interaction between people and technology by revealing information that cannot be or was not recorded in documents.”³² In the museum one finds a variety of artifacts that were donated by former residents. They portray a particular spectacle or representation on the life and culture of South End, which to many, was a culture of integration and tolerance. Without much text on the illustration they portray an imaginary sense of feel about households and life in general during the years of South End’s existence. Some of the visuals portray sports like fishing which to others were forms of work. There is a picture of Mr A. (Manie) Abrahams standing on the break wall with the famous game fish, Katonkel, also known as

²⁸ Prosalendis S, Marot, J, Soudien C, & Nagia, A. in Rassool C & Prosalendis S, (2001) *Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating the District Six Museum*. Published by District Six Museum, Cape Town.

²⁹ A former resident’s expression whilst visiting the museum in July 12, 2001.

³⁰ Interview with Abrahams, C. The museum administrator and coordinator. August 7th, 2003.

³¹ Gordon, R, Lubar, S & Kingery, W. (1993) *The Interpretation of Artifacts in the History of Technology: History From Things – Essays On Material Culture*. Smithsonian Institute Press. London. Pg 91.

³² Gordon, R, Lubar, S & Kingery, W. (1993) *The Interpretation of Artifacts in the History of Technology: History From Things – Essays On Material Culture*. Smithsonian Institute Press. London. Pg 91.

Baracuda. Many people earned a living by catching fish off the wall and by selling it at the Fish Hooks at the corner of Walmer Road and South Union Street.³³ Agherdien reveals that, even on the break wall racial discrimination was practiced. Three quarters of the wall was for whites only and the rest, further back, was for non-whites.³⁴ In South End museum, there are predominantly visual samples of cultural diversity, economic activities and visual traces of apartheid's expropriation in the enormous black and white visuals that hang in the "Hall of Shame"³⁵ A walking tour has been recently introduced to further enhance the visit by providing an on site depiction of the removals and the remaining traces of what was South End. Further up Walmer road towards the airport of Port Elizabeth, there is also a graveyard of South End residents.

The likes of District Six museum and South End Museum are also forging an integral past in the tourism routes. They have become according to Barbara Kirshenblatt – Gimblett a "Destination Culture" where "the most ordinary in the context of destination becomes a source of fascination for the visitor."³⁶ These places according to Dondolo are the integrated part of the tourism industry, providing places of attraction and destinations to imbibe culture and history. The role of these museums amongst the former residents is not necessary a tourist destination but perceived as the long awaited homecoming. It matters to know why people visit museums for all known reason most people visit museums for social bonding, reminisces, relaxation etc. In the case of community museums the above reasons form part of the intentions to visit, museums, however another level of a burgeoning body of visitors are based on their need and desire to revisit the unjust South African past.

These visits contain different levels of sadness, nostalgia and hopes of reliving the harmonious lives. Utilizing and assessing these desires, "museums are learning to work with and not against, that which people need, want, and do."³⁷ The representation also signifies the very existence of former residents who were able to witness both the destruction of their communities and the establishment of a living museum to portray their own pasts.

There is a deliberate move from the side of the museum trust not to repeat the segregationists' tendencies of the past. There is also a deliberate intention on the part of the museum to omit any utterances or traces of identifying former commuters according to race. Whilst apartheid removed communities and placed them on racially designated areas or townships, former residences choose to remember South End as a geographic space. In this instance, notions of geographic identity override those of racial designation and relocation. In the post apartheid scenario, the South End museum does not wish to represent race. The

³³ Agherdien, Y., George, A.C. & Hendricks S. (1997) *South End – As We Knew It* ed. Roy H. Du Pre. Rahod Publishing Services. East London. pg 59

³⁴ *Ibid.* pg 59.

³⁵ A section in the museum which depicts the removals and relocation map

³⁶ Kirshenblatt – Gimblett, B. 1988, 132.

³⁷ Silverman, L.H. (2002) *The therapeutic potential of museums as pathways to inclusion.* p69

only traces that can be found about race, emerges only when former residents refer to their white counterparts as the 'English or the Europeans' which included, Greeks and Portuguese.

There is an extensive history and background as to why community museums and former dispossessed communities prefer to rather identify their former spaces in geographic terms than racial ones. This trend can be traced in the likes of District Six as well as Sophiatown. In the past museums reflected the ideas of the society dominant at the time. Euro centric and often racist interpretation of history in museums continued into the apartheid era. Denver Webb explains that South African museums depict the triumph and progress of 'white civilization' over the 'forces of barbarism'³⁸. Webb accurately points to the fact that black history was avoided by museums. Black culture was dealt with only in ethnographic or anthropology museums.³⁹ Levitz further says that primitive aspects of African history at the expense of their urban history were displayed, thereby reinforcing racial stereotypes both implicitly and explicitly.⁴⁰

Many of the artifacts displayed in the South End museum have been exhibited in such a way that they suggest their association with popular political movements. However the tendency is for them to be severed of a such associations and to service, instead, as vehicles for the nostalgic remembrance of sentimentalized pasts."⁴¹ What emerges from this debate is the very aptitude of artifacts to trigger memories of one's past be it aspects of a particular period in the South African struggle for liberation or reform years. Portraits of the likes of Clemence Kadalie⁴², Goven Mbeki⁴³, Dennis Brutus⁴⁴, Nceba Faku⁴⁵ and many other leaders in the struggle against apartheid who were not necessarily South end residents are hanging on the walls of the museum. There is no clear account as to why these portraits are part of the museum collection. However, there is a political connotation that the South End Museum wishes to be associated with a specific period of the South African struggle for democracy. Turnbridge's assessment of heritage as a political resource is based on a deliberate encouragement of support for particular political entities and the strengthening of the identification of individuals with specific state-supporting ideologies would seem to be quite different activities from the assembly and conservation of relict historical artifacts and the product of past cultures. The relationship between the concentration of the past and politics is however, strong, permanent, intimate and quite unavoidable, if less crude and simplistic than sometimes experienced⁴⁶ Abrahams, indicated that the museum is currently conducting a research on political leaders

³⁸ Webb, D.A. (1994) Winds of Change. Museum Journal, 4 20-24

³⁹ Ibid 23.

⁴⁰ Levitz, C. (1996) The Politics, Ideology and Social Practice of Science and technology museums in South Africa. Unpublished MA Thesis.

⁴¹ Bennet, T, " Museums And The People" p112.

⁴² Leader and founder of the Industrial Commercial Worker's Union (ICU) from the 1900's.

⁴³ Father of Thabo Mbeki, president of South Africa and a member of the South African Communist Party (SACP)traded in the Rivonia Trial with Nelson Mandela and others. Imprisoned at Robben Island.

⁴⁴ Vice Chairman of the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (CAD) and also imprisoned at Robben Island

⁴⁵ The current mayor of Port Elizabeth, born and bred in New Brighton, a township near Port Elizabeth and was one of the youngest prisoners in Robben Island

⁴⁶Turnbridge, J.E. & Ashworth,G.J (1996) Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past As A Resource In Conflict. Chichester, New York. pg 45.

and their focus in not only on South End and removals, “we want to further conduct research on communities and we are reserving the upstairs room for the section on sport in Port Elizabeth.”⁴⁷

On the above matter, one may differently argue that the museum might as well include an item about the SS Mendi ship, which was stuck and cut in half by SS Darro causing it to sink. According to Ransome, a total of 607 Black South African soldiers drowned in the disaster.⁴⁸ With the museum so close to the harbour this can have a significant location in the artifacts of the museum. It will also compliment the memorial plaque that is inserted at Mendi Road in New Brighton Township, Port Elizabeth. There is also a memorial in Avalon Graveyard, Soweto, Gauteng. The Ndamase family of Pondoland in the former Transkei was invited to England to commemorate the tragedy in June 22. This forms an appropriate segment of the history that is preserved in Port Elizabeth and the entire Eastern Cape.

There is a certain likeness between the Mendi Memorial and South End Community Museum. Adams interprets this argument by indicating that the cultural significance of monuments, memorials and museums is that they commemorate deaths, of individuals and communities.⁴⁹ In the S.S. Mendi lives were lost in the sea and in South End communities remember the sea amongst many other places in the area. This sea is remembered as a space for relaxation and pleasure whilst the loss of lives in the sea for the S.S. Mendi resembles sadness and the brutality of the sea towards those lives that were lost. Mr Abrahams indicated that though there is a close resemblance, they have no plans of incorporating displays about the S.S. Mendi.

The South End Museum has also become involved in the development of a museum in Red Location. The first phase of Red Location project entails the erection of the freedom struggle museum and the restoration of a number of corrugated iron houses. Red location was chosen as the site for this project because it bears major political significance and has an interesting architectural legacy of corrugated iron houses dating from the turn of the century. This “model township was erected in 1903 and the original structures in the Red Location have not been altered since then.”⁵⁰ The Bayworld museum in Summerstrand - Port Elizabeth in 2001 constructed an exhibition of Red Location. This was a measure of publicizing the initiative and the area.

Neil Lagveld of the Department of Arts and Culture said that an oral history project would be a joint effort set up by the respective communities in Red Location and South End. The two museums will

⁴⁷ Abrahams, C. a former South End resident and a Museum Staff member. Interview conducted on 12 August 2003.

⁴⁸ Ransome, I. In Mendi Memorial Scholarship Fund, SA Legion at <http://www.sahistory.org.za>

⁴⁹ Adams, Z. (2002) “Memory, Imagination and Renewal: Remembering and Forgetting District Six.” MA Mini Thesis, University of the Western Cape. Pg9.

⁵⁰ “New Cultural Attraction on the cards for Port Elizabeth”, 11 April 2003, on <http://www.ibhayi.com/news>

exchange material and programs.⁵¹ This form of collaboration is seen by both museums as a great effort to combine perspectives and work directly with communities. Nonetheless, there are differences between the two as South End Museum is a depiction of space and period of removals based on the Group Areas Act of 1950 and yet Red Location seeks to build new memories that will not let us forget apartheid's atrocities on how the apartheid government used architecture and planning as tools of racism and division. Some of the African people from South End were also scattered and relocated in Red Location, where they were placed in one room corrugated iron semi attached 'houses'.

Another significant factor of the South End museum is the fact that the buildings and the artifacts are also imagined as belonging to the same essential and unique period of South End as a multicultural location. The displays constitute furniture and visuals which can be traced as far as the 1940's. In the glass display cabinets there are identity documents and marriage certificates donated by former residents. There is a constructed bedroom with enamel basins, an antique dressing table and bed. Most visuals represent different people of different colours continuing with their lives in town, streets.

As a former museum intern I have observed that women constitute a majority when it comes to visiting the museum, they come with their siblings and children and grandchildren. Yet, in the board of more than 12 committee members of South End museum, there is only one woman. This is a direct contrast when one considers the role that women play in both bringing in visitors in the museum and also narrating their childhood stories to the museum's visitors and their own children. Women are depicted as housekeepers and laborers. Most of them in those pictures are wearing work wear and aprons. This is evident in the enlarged visuals in museum walls. Their role is that of a support structure for those family men who owned businesses, as they were either wives to them or shop assistants. Some are displayed as teachers in classrooms with of course male counterparts and others posed in sports wear in female sports and the sports fields.

Recollecting the past is a complex task as it revolves around a particular context. Recollection of the past in most South African experiences constitutes identified periods, which are pre apartheid legislation entrenchment and apartheid indoctrination. Former residents and writers about South End portray the apartheid period in the post apartheid era predominantly as a time of trauma. The making of memory in post apartheid South Africa has been deeply influenced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings and the land restitution processes. These South Africans refer to the generalized suffering and loss of dignity stripped off by the removal of stable and furnished homes. According to Adams, South Africans have been encouraged to re-imagine themselves as victims. Forced removals from places like District Six have come to be remembered in the context

⁵¹ New Cultural Attraction on the cards for Port Elizabeth", 11 April 2003, on <http://www.ibhayi.com/news>

of loss.⁵² However it is should be appreciated that the same communities have been stripped off from their homes and managed to replace the sense of home that has been lost and transformed it into a place of return.⁵³

⁵² Adams, Z.(2002) “Memory, Imagination and Renewal: Remembering and Forgetting District Six.MA Mini Thesis, University of the Western Cape. Pg18.

⁵³ Adams, Z.(2002) “Memory, Imagination and Renewal: Remembering and Forgetting District Six.MA Mini Thesis, University of the Western Cape.pg20.

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