

## **Chapter 4: The Establishment, Growth, Fragmentation, and Disunity of South Africa's Gay Liberation Movement During the 1980s.**

### **Introduction**

This chapter looks at South Africa's gay liberation movement in the 1980s: how it originated because of the efforts of GASA, how it expanded, but yet how it ultimately failed to unite or achieve success. This therefore relates directly to the other dimension of the thesis, namely the reactions of gay liberation from the 1960s to 2000. GASA, with its "moderate, non-confrontational and accommodationist strategy,"<sup>1</sup> was careful to appease the NP government in order to retain its white privilege and black, gay organisations could achieve little in the context of apartheid South Africa. Furthermore most of these gay organisations were unsuccessful in that they were short-lived. Also, constant bickering over ideological differences was an insurmountable hindrance. The alliances of race, sexuality, and civil rights in the South African context made it impossible for these ideological differences to be avoided. Black, gay men with limited civil rights were in a very different predicament to white, gay men who were privileged by race. These widely differing contexts initiated a complexity of ideology, which adversely affected the potential for unity.

Briefly this chapter also includes a further gender dynamic: a comparison between South Africa's gay liberation movement and the rise and difficulties experienced by the women's movement, predominantly black women, during apartheid, as well as the British and American gay liberation movements. The comparison of the women's movement to the gay liberation movement highlights the similarities these movements experienced, primarily because gay men were considered effeminate, or more precisely, because much of the NP government saw gay men as women. The comparison between British and American gay liberation and that in South Africa aimed to show the infancy of the latter and the difficulties it was still to experience, although the South African context also produced many differences to that of gay liberation overseas.

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<sup>1</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 51.

Political changes initiated by Botha in the 1980s meant he had to create a better-organised and better-equipped repressive machine.<sup>2</sup> Botha's reforms introduced two central changes: black trade unions were given space to exert some authority which strengthened black resistance and some restrictions on the black, middle-class were relaxed allowing a degree of social mobility. This intensified black determination to remove remaining barriers.<sup>3</sup> There was the hope that the black educated, middle-class would be appeased by Botha's influx control reforms and black anger would be controlled, but it did the opposite. The ANC escalated its armed actions, which strengthened the belief of much of the white populace that the NP government was vulnerable.<sup>4</sup> In 1985 the ANC called on black South Africa to make the country ungovernable and resistance spread. Because the ANC was exiled this was orchestrated by the United Democratic Front (UDF).<sup>5</sup> Consequently in July 1985 a limited State of Emergency was declared. In addition, there was tension within the NP and its polled support declined.<sup>6</sup> The Rubicon speech caused further unrest because Botha was expected to announce major reforms, which he did not, angering the international community. In an attempt at damage control Botha promised to negotiate with black leaders. Consequently new NP MPs began to challenge Botha on the release of Mandela and talks with the ANC. Such shifts in power bases and the status quo gave the gay community a little more space to begin to establish a gay liberation movement.

Because of shifts in power and challenges to the racist regime South Africa was violent and unstable throughout the 1980s. It lost international allies, faced the worst economic crisis in its history, and there was growing international call for sanctions. There was repression and military occupation of the townships. Violence led to an unparalleled crackdown,<sup>7</sup> including censorship, the detention of twenty-six thousand people, and death squads.<sup>8</sup> By the end of 1986 the SADF had re-established physical control of the

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<sup>2</sup> O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p 322.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p 323.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p 324.

<sup>5</sup> This was the name the ANC assumed while banned and its leaders were in exile. (Interview with Peter Mohlahedi, 16 March 2004, Johannesburg, 7:00pm).

<sup>6</sup> O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p 326.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p 345.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p 346.

townships and there was stability but the black uprisings of 1984-86 and the failure of Total Strategy had made it clear that white privilege still rested on racial discrimination and repression.<sup>9</sup>

After the 1986 State of Emergency some of the white population were not sure of Botha's direction.<sup>10</sup> Post-1986, state funds were spent on the military (9% of the GDP). South Africa's economy was extremely vulnerable. Investment was at the same level as that of 1973 and the gold price was not high enough to sustain state spending.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, civil strife moved from the streets to the factories where numerous strikes were dealt with.

There was a short-lived upswing in 1988 and it was a relatively good year for the economy, but in the long run it compounded South Africa's financial problems because it caused more spending, and sanctions were looming.<sup>12</sup> The NP government, however, refused to acknowledge that change was necessary.<sup>13</sup> By 1988 Botha had run out of ideas, lost the respect of much of his party, and resented the obvious battle to replace him.<sup>14</sup> In 1989 he had his second mild stroke and subsequently separated his leadership of the NP and state presidency. De Klerk took over as leader of the NP.

It seems the uneasy political climate in the early 1980s allowed for the emergence of resistance, including that by gay men. Gay men were afforded greater opportunity to meet because the NP government and therefore the SAP were concentrating on black resistance. As a result homosexual behaviour became more visible. Once more this created a heightened awareness by the authorities of the existence of homosexuality. Consequently, by 1985, there was a renewed interest in the clamp down of this version of masculinity because it had once again become more obvious. Apartheid necessitated control and that included gay men. Considering the real experience of hegemony and the NP government's reliance on reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity, homosexuality

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p 368.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p 349.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p 355.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p 356.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p 365.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

therefore challenged the power of white, heterosexual men and the worth of their masculinity.<sup>15</sup>

The gay liberation movement grew in the 1980s but by 1987 it had lost momentum owing to rapid development which resulted in it being too thinly spread. Although most progressive organisations, for example the ANC and the UDF, did not enhance the gay cause, the publicity of Tseko Simon Nkoli,<sup>16</sup> a black, gay activist and Ivan Toms, a conscientious objector and co-founder of Lesbians and Gays Against Oppression (LAGO), created a new awareness and in the late 1980. Gay and lesbian politics, both black and white, became more vocal.

It is necessary to point out that many of the sources for this chapter<sup>17</sup> are primary sources of correspondence between various gay activists and minutes from gay organisations' meetings. Having gone through these detailed accounts I tend to question some of Gevisser's statements and analyses, even though his and Cameron's book, Defiant Desire, is a respected gay resource.<sup>18</sup> According to Gevisser, white, urban, gay men contributed to the gay liberation movement after consolidating their sub-culture in the 1970s and taking a political stand from 1982.<sup>19</sup> This is disputable. Firstly, to state that white, gay men consolidated in the 1970s is questionable. All attempts at gay organisation had failed. Hillbrow's sub-culture might have consolidated but that is the only area. During the 1980s white homosexuality did move outdoors. This might be what Gevisser refers to as consolidating.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, and ironically, the gay community perhaps looked as if it had consolidated but it was more the police's ineptitude that created this perception. Then-advocate, Edwin Cameron, admitted that white, gay men had been indulged and were dependent on the goodwill of the police, their blindness, lack

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<sup>15</sup> Connell, Gender and Power, p 234.

<sup>16</sup> Simon's surname is actually spelt Nkodi but due to pronunciation he became nationally and internationally recognised as Simon Nkoli. See B. Luirink, Moffies, for personal insight on Nkoli. Luirink was a close friend of Nkoli's.

<sup>17</sup> And chapter 5.

<sup>18</sup> When I spoke to Gevisser about our differences of opinion he advised that I bear in mind that Defiant Desire is now "quite outdated." (Informal conversation with Gevisser, Sept. 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 48.

<sup>20</sup> For example the Kyalami Jamboree in October 1982 was attended by 3 000 people.

of knowledge, and inefficiency.<sup>21</sup> I think the SAP chose to ignore many white, gay social venues because there were other more serious political issues to attend to, especially in the early 1980s.<sup>22</sup> Thirdly, not only is it questionable whether white, gay men consolidated, it is also debatable whether they took a political stand from 1982. The only viable organisation available to gay men was GASA, which was not prepared to challenge the NP government.<sup>23</sup> This is political, but I would describe it accommodating, rather than taking a stand.

A further consideration regarding the gay sub-culture taking a stand was that GASA's existence was contradictory. GASA insisted it was against apartheid yet in practice it supported white hegemonic masculinity. "The gay movement was at best equivocal in opposing apartheid, and at worst complicit in supporting it."<sup>24</sup> Gay rights were sacrificed for white privilege. I questioned Gevisser regarding this. He said there was consolidation and politicisation of white, gay men in the 1970s in the sense that a gay organisation could never be apolitical because "just by being 'out' in a homophobic society it is articulating a politics of liberation."<sup>25</sup> I agree with Gevisser in this regard but must point out I think there is a difference between taking a political stand, which has the nuance of being offensive, and being politicised. GASA was politicised although it insisted it was apolitical, but I question if the organisation took a political stand; it simply fell in line with majority, white political thinking. I battle to conceptualise such inactivity as being political. One might call GASA apolitical within a South African context because it did not engage with the broader struggles of South Africa.

Another problem concerning the gay sub-culture consolidating and taking a political stand was that there was never any gay unity. One can argue that there was never a basis for gay unity in South Africa anyway, especially when one considers that race and class cannot be divorced from gender. The only premise for unity would have been that gay men wanted to construct and define the gay masculinity. Ironically, this assumption

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<sup>21</sup> E. Cameron in Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 61.

<sup>22</sup> See p 148.

<sup>23</sup> 'Position Paper' prepared by RGO and GASA for discussion with the Executive of the UDF, p 4.

<sup>24</sup> M. Jara, S. Lapinsky, 'Forging a Representative Gay Liberation Movement in South Africa', p 1

supports hegemony and is essentialist, the very things many gay men were fighting against. That is, such unity aimed to establish a recognisable male, gay definition, a hegemony in itself, which could be classified as such. This was in order to challenge the traditional heterosexist hegemonic masculinity. It therefore makes more sense to accept that gay men would not unify as not all gay men had the same belief systems. The ideological battle between gay essentialism and being gay in the broader struggle plagued the movement.

It was also difficult for the gay community to organise or gain recognition because HIV/AIDS created even more homophobia.<sup>26</sup> Gay men were still victims of violent abuse, police harassment, and discriminatory legislation, which denied them their freedom and basic human rights.<sup>27</sup> In order to stem this a united front was necessary. It was exactly because there was no united front, that is, very little unity as a movement with numerous, sometimes ineffective individual organisations, that I assert the gay liberation failed.



### **South Africa's Fledgling Gay Movement in Comparison to American and British Gay Liberation.**

The precedent for gay liberation was set by what had occurred in New York in 1969. The Stonewall riots are regarded as the birth-date of modern gay liberation:<sup>28</sup> “a spontaneous episode of faggot fury marked the birth of a political movement.”<sup>29</sup> Homosexual identities became about human rights not gay rights. The gay movement spread and the struggle became collective and international.<sup>30</sup> But the Stonewall riots had a history. There had been a climate of racial injustice in the 1960s in America, instigating social

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<sup>25</sup> E-mail from M. Gevisser, 'Re: PhD Questions for 1980s', 24 Oct. 2003.

<sup>26</sup> See L. Gründlingh, 'HIV/AIDS in South Africa: A Case of Failed Responses Because of Stigmatization, Discrimination and Morality: 1983-1994' in New Contree, no 46, Nov. 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from WGM to CPD, (12 May 1987), (CPD, D) Correspondence, E) Press, AM 2626, GALA) and WGM 'Gay men for Peaceful Protest', (n.d), (Alfred Machela Collection, D. South African Organizations, D9. AM 2622, GALA).

<sup>28</sup> Stein, The Mismeasurement of Desire, p 9.

<sup>29</sup> M. Mason, 'Out of the Closets on to the Streets', p 98.

<sup>30</sup> Wits Gay Movement, Stonewall, (n.d).

unrest.<sup>31</sup> The Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was established and the phrase ‘coming out’ was coined.

Law and politics became prevalent topics regarding the sexual citizen in the 1980s in Britain and America. This encouraged queer political discourse because it was no longer enough for gay men to be included in discourses on sex and socialising only. Legality and morality needed to be separated<sup>32</sup> so that gay men were recognised as citizens with legal and human rights. Lesbian and gay politics hit national headlines in England.<sup>33</sup>

In Britain, encouraged by Stonewall, homosexual men took advantage of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which tolerated homosex in private. This resulted in gay liberation and the politics of coming out.<sup>34</sup> The closest South Africa got to a Stonewall in the 1960s was the 1966 Forest Town Party and the resultant 1968 Select Committee challenged by the LRM. The white, gay community saw the 1969 Immorality Amendment Act as a success and this laid the foundation for a potential gay liberation movement. However, gay liberation is the movement of men trying to dismantle hegemonic, heterosexual masculinity, which is a collective interest. Therefore widespread mobilisation was unlikely.<sup>35</sup> Also, gay politics wants to be accommodated by the state therefore “gay liberation increasingly was at risk of losing the base it had created.”<sup>36</sup>

In the United States and Britain there was an increase in the visibility of homosexuality due to urbanisation. The city is a sexualised space that enables particular kinds of sexualities to materialise.<sup>37</sup> “The city is *the* home of the homosexual.”<sup>38</sup> According to queer theory this increased urbanisation created more space for sexualities. Cities were more anonymous and cosmopolitan which provided spaces for more expression of same-

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<sup>31</sup> S. Maddison, *Fags, Hags and Queer Sisters*, (Macmillan Press Ltd, London, 2000), p 28.

<sup>32</sup> Bell and Binnie, *The Sexual Citizen*, p 12.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p 38.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>35</sup> Connell, *Gender and Power*, p 276.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p 275.

<sup>37</sup> Gevisser, ‘A Different Fight for Freedom’, p 84.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 81.

sex desire.<sup>39</sup> This could be seen in Hillbrow in South Africa. There was increased urbanisation in 1985 when the NP government had to admit the Bantustans had failed. Consequently the influx control system was scrapped which resulted in a flood of ‘squatters’ to the cities, and black homeland citizens living in South Africa became South African citizens.<sup>40</sup>

South Africa also opened up regarding gay pubs, clubs, publications, and gay districts specifically Hillbrow, which became recognised as a gay neighbourhood in the 1970s. Gay men could keep their anonymity in Hillbrow because of the high-density gay population.<sup>41</sup> The authorities treated Hillbrow differently to other communities because it was considered an international zone and influx control was consequently not enforced.<sup>42</sup> There was also a “new level of tolerance from the other inhabitants.”<sup>43</sup> This was probably because anyone willing to live in Hillbrow with gay men would have been a little more accepting of alternative lifestyles.<sup>44</sup> Hence there was far more visible homosexuality in Hillbrow than in any other South African community.

There was greater visibility concerning literature both in South Africa and internationally. Overseas writers and producers came out and this gave gay liberation recognition, which engendered affirmation, collectivity,<sup>45</sup> and further discourse on homosexuality and gay identities. There was marginal literature on sexuality in South Africa but questions tended to be asked through essentialist frameworks.<sup>46</sup> Most of the discourse was by white, gay men. Black, gay voices were marginalised. This created a schism in discourse between supposed situational homosexuality (which is now challenged) and gay, male identities.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Epprecht, ‘What an Abomination, a Rottenness of Culture’, p 1092.

<sup>40</sup> O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, p 327.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Evert Knoesen. The NP’s 1990s referendum picked up the gay vote in Hillbrow which later also contributed to gay men and gay clubs not being targeted in this area.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Evert Knoesen.

<sup>43</sup> Gevisser, ‘A Different Fight for Freedom’, p 39.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Evert Knoesen.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

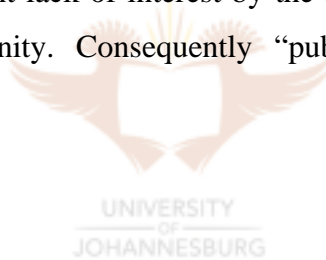
<sup>46</sup> Elder ‘Of Moffies, Kaffirs, and Perverts’.

<sup>47</sup> See p 53.



In 1972 there was an attempt at a gay rights movement at the University of Natal in, Durban, but it was very short-lived. It was at this meeting that for the first time the word liberation was associated with homosexuality and the first time South African gay rights were considered human rights. According to the authorities sodomy was still an offence and the Gay Liberation Movement was breaking the law because it was inciting people to commit such acts. Even though the anti-sodomy laws were seldom used, the police utilised them when necessary.”<sup>48</sup> As a result, three weeks later the Movement no longer existed. However, it was here that the idea of a South African gay liberation movement was formed.

During the mid-1970s more successful attempts at gay organisation were made.<sup>49</sup> This was possibly instigated by the fact that white, homosexual men lived in relative peace. As long as organisations did not talk of rights they were no threat to the government.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps because of the apparent lack of interest by the authorities there was heightened activity within the gay community. Consequently “public censure of homosexual men seemed to increase.”<sup>51</sup>



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<sup>48</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 43. Gevisser discusses how the authorities paid little attention to homosexuality during the 1970s. However this is disputed by statistics of arrest and prosecution and the fact that from the 1970s to the 1990s prosecutions for homosexual activity increased. From 1971 to 1980 there were 3071 sodomy prosecutions and 1929 convictions. On average there was 341 prosecutions a year, and 214 convictions. There were 717 indecent assault prosecutions and 448 convictions. Indecent assault included statutory rape, exhibition in public, and police entrapment. (Annual Reports of Criminal Offences, 1982). A huge discrepancy regarding South African statistics emerges because an Australian Publication, Outrage, says from 1971 to 1981 charges were laid against only 750 people and of these 448 were convicted. (G. Wotherspoon and C. Faro, 'Against the Odds', Outrage, (Aug. 1989), (The Papers of OLGA, LAGO, Box 5: The OLGA Papers, File 2: Press Clippings, AM 2801, GALA). This is not exactly a problem: 4.4 people were convicted per year over the 10 year period. I believe these statistics are not as worthwhile as the South African researched ones. Therefore even though the police believed they had little power of arrest there was still successful persecution of homosexual men and the numbers had gradually increased. This shows the courts' and the SAP's determination to retain the status quo. In correspondence with Gevisser, although he was not sure, he presumed the numbers of arrests and prosecutions probably increased in response to the heightened openness of the gay movement during the 1970s and 80s. (E-mail from M. Gevisser, 'Re: PhD Questions for 1980s', 24 Oct. 2003).

<sup>49</sup> In 1976 Gay Aid Identification Development and Enrichment (GAIDE) was founded. It was not a political organisation, but rather a support structure for gay men.

<sup>50</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom' p 43.

<sup>51</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 46. In July 1979 four students were expelled from the Potchefstroom Teachers' Training College for homosexual activity. (The Star, 21 July 1979).

Most alarming to the gay community, however, was the fact that, after a decade of hassle-free existence, gay night-clubs were being targeted and raided; the authorities' pact to leave gay clubs in peace, made in 1969, seemed to collapse; probably because of the incredible popularity of clubs ... and the rampant and defiant sexuality these clubs celebrated.<sup>52</sup>

South African white gay identities became obvious and blatant.<sup>53</sup> The police raided clubs on the premise of curbing drugs and liquor and to search for minors. But it was clear that the real reason for the raids was to prevent this new, open, gay sexuality.<sup>54</sup> White, homosexual men were a threat to the conservative, Christian NP government and its hegemonic masculinity. The NP government was once more reminded of the existence of the gay community. Consequently there was increased censure of homosexuality and after a police raid at New Mandy's in 1979 homosexual men began talking about rights again. Another potential Stonewall had arrived, but it was not to be.

Gay liberation is the movement of men trying to dismantle hegemonic masculinity, which is a collective interest,<sup>55</sup> although it is questionable whether this was attainable in the South African context and time. I do not think GASA wanted this because white, gay men would be challenging their own privileged status and GASA did not want the status quo for white men, regardless of sexual orientation, altered because it aligned itself with the conservative NP. Rob Connell says liberation movements do not have the social power to initiate transformation. They concentrate more on survival and internal evolution.<sup>56</sup> Moderate tolerance of homosexuality is gained through an alliance with liberals in an establishment, not by means of mass mobilisation of homosexual men. The South African gay liberation movement failed in the latter.

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<sup>52</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 47.

<sup>53</sup> W.J. Beaumont, 'Thoughts on Gay Pop Culture in South Africa', (unpublished paper, 1992), in Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 47.

<sup>54</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 47.

<sup>55</sup> Connell, Gender and Power, p 276.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p 279.

### **Parallels Between the Women's Movement and the Gay Movement in South Africa.**

International gay liberation is indebted to the women's movement.<sup>57</sup> The politics of sexuality was neither generated nor popularised by the gay liberation movement, but by the women's movement from the 1970s<sup>58</sup> when the notion of gender-as-conformity was no longer appreciated by feminists.<sup>59</sup> Only once "women started to be angry (could) faggots could be proud."<sup>60</sup>

From the late 1970s shifts in international feminist movements and theory began to question the idea of woman as a unitary category, the basis of much feminist thinking until that point. Until then, much gender and feminist discourse had devolved from the concerns of first world, white, middle-class women, rather than black, third world, working-class women.<sup>61</sup> Western feminist discourse posed black women as passive and white feminism as their salvation.<sup>62</sup> This can be seen in some South African feminist literature, where black women were cast as an underclass, a topic of discourse for white feminist theorists. According to Desiree Lewis, until white feminist theorists acknowledge their own assumptions of superiority and move away from a normative view of feminism, a distinctly South African feminism will find it difficult to emerge.<sup>63</sup>

Lewis' view about the need to move away from unitary view of feminist politics has a parallel in the gay liberation movement. The white, gay organisation, GASA, defined gay oppression, which was not the same for all gay men owing to race and class. Such feminist and gay literature feeds racist, classist, and patriarchal assumptions<sup>64</sup> in that it presumes such oppression is the same for all and therefore contributes to traditional thinking, reinforcing discourse based on these assumptions. Hence class and race have to

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<sup>57</sup> Maddison, Fags, Hags and Queer Sisters, p 64.

<sup>58</sup> Healey and Mason, Stonewall 25, p 8 and Mason, 'Out of the Closets on to the Streets', p 100.

<sup>59</sup> Connell, The Men and the Boys, p 7.

<sup>60</sup> Healey and Mason, Stonewall 25, p 8.

<sup>61</sup> D. Lewis, 'Feminisms in South Africa', Women's Studies International Forum, vol. 16, no.5, 1993, p 536.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p 537.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p 538.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

be considered, with the understanding that women had different experiences of oppression. Women in South Africa in the 1980s were not unified so was a women's movement, representative of all South African women, possible? "There was little consensus among women activists about the necessity of or the most appropriate organizational form for gender-based activism."<sup>65</sup> The numerous gay organisations<sup>66</sup> portrayed the same lack of consensus within the gay liberation movement. Gay men's class and race position tempered the gay experience. Therefore is it plausible that if gay men were not unified, a gay liberation movement, which represented the needs of all gay men, was really possible?

During the 1980s South Africa's unique context was a feature of local feminist theory. Feminist theory could not grow because it ignored issues of race.<sup>67</sup> Black women, entering the male domain potentially entrenched, not challenged, patriarchy.<sup>68</sup> Anti-apartheid politics was constructed predominantly by black men, and women in South African politics were limited to male-defined boundaries.<sup>69</sup> Therefore was it advantageous for women to be integrated into the broader struggle because even though "national liberation struggles facilitated and legitimized women's politicization"<sup>70</sup> it did not do the same for gender equality? By the same token, what about gay men? Was it more advantageous for them to be part of the broader struggle or to remain outside of it?<sup>71</sup>

There was a resurgence of women's activism in the 1980s,<sup>72</sup> but "since the early 1980s there ha(d) been considerable debate amongst women political activists in South Africa involved in the political struggle against apartheid about their positioning in relation to

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<sup>65</sup> S. Hassim, 'Feminism, Nationalism and the Politics of the Women's Movement in South Africa', in 'Identities, Interests and Constituencies: The Politics of the Women's Movement in South Africa, 1980-1999', (PhD, York University, 2002), n.p.

<sup>66</sup> For example GASA, the RGO, the CPD, OLGGA, SOJGO, and GLOW.

<sup>67</sup> D. Lewis, 'Feminisms in South Africa', p 536.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p 539.

<sup>69</sup> M. Edwards in Hassim, 'Feminism, Nationalism and the Politics of the Women's Movement in South Africa', n.p.

<sup>70</sup> Hassim, 'Feminism, nationalism and the Politics of the Women's Movement in South Africa', n.p.

<sup>71</sup> See introduction for discussion on essentialism.

<sup>72</sup> Hassim, 'Feminism, nationalism and the Politics of the Women's Movement in South Africa', n.p.

feminism.”<sup>73</sup> It was questioned how should women organise as women.<sup>74</sup> “The ideological framework within (which) women were mobilized was generated by nationalism rather than feminism.”<sup>75</sup> But the definition of nationalism was created by men and therefore restricted the discourse of feminism.<sup>76</sup> “Women’s perceptions of themselves were always overshadowed by their dominant identification with the priorities of the national liberation struggles.”<sup>77</sup>

“For the success of the national project...it was crucial that women be drawn into the process.”<sup>78</sup> The objective of South African women’s movements “was to mobilize women for the general struggle against apartheid, whilst also introducing a women’s perspective into that struggle.”<sup>79</sup> For many leaders of women’s organisations the struggles for national liberation and women’s liberation were inseparable.<sup>80</sup> It was the same premise for many gay organisations.

But was the structure of political opportunity conducive to women’s collective action? Shereen Hassim says it was. There was a shift in opportunity in the late 1970s and early 1980s in which women’s community participation against apartheid encouraged the expansion of grassroots level resistance. Therefore space for African feminist activists was created.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s there were black women’s organisations<sup>81</sup> affiliated to the UDF. But discussions on feminism were not encouraged by the organisation because it was considered divisive. “The discourse of ‘national struggle’

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<sup>73</sup> S. Meintjes, ‘Gender, Nationalism and Transformation. Difference and Commonality in South Africa’s Past and Present’, in R. Wilford, R. Miller, Feminism, Ethnicity and Nationalism, (Routledge, London, 1998), p 63.

<sup>74</sup> Meintjes, ‘Gender, Nationalism and Transformation’, p 74.

<sup>75</sup> Hassim, ‘Feminism, nationalism and the Politics of the Women’s Movement in South Africa’, n.p.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> C. Walker in Hassim, ‘Feminism, nationalism and the Politics of the Women’s Movement in South Africa’, n.p.

<sup>78</sup> Meintjes, ‘Gender, Nationalism and Transformation’, p 69.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p 75.

<sup>80</sup> Hassim, ‘Feminism, nationalism and the Politics of the Women’s Movement in South Africa’, n.p.

<sup>81</sup> Such as the United Women’s Organisation (UWO), the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW), and the Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW, established in the 1950s).

overrode all other forms of debate.”<sup>82</sup> The UDF saw centralised decision-making as the key to successfully changing the apartheid state. The ANC saw feminist ideology as homogenous.<sup>83</sup> Black politics did not embrace feminism or the independence of the women’s movement. Hence nationalism did not advance feminism because national identity, as it was constructed, serves patriarchy, especially as the particular definition of nation was presupposed on the gendered hegemonic hierarchy of male-dominated power.<sup>84</sup> Women therefore only managed to be part of the nationalist elite on a small scale. “An increasingly large body of scholarship suggests that feminism and nationalism are at their core antagonistic projects.”<sup>85</sup> Neither did African nationalism advance gay rights because in the 1980s neither the ANC nor the UDF embraced the gay liberation movement.

Although there are arguments for and against it, women being part of the greater struggle did achieve a degree of female liberation. One reason women were part of the national struggle was that there was a perceived contract between women and the national liberation movement: if women supported the movement they would secure their liberation. Thus the overthrow of apartheid also implied the overthrow of patriarchy.<sup>86</sup> But to be truly liberated means to reject assimilationist, homogenising tendencies.<sup>87</sup> That is, to remain outside of the national struggle defined by men. By being assimilated into the patriarchally constructed broader struggle under the guise of equality, women were not necessarily recognised as different to men. This meant continued inequality and therefore continued oppression. Equality was also defined in male terms, which meant women would be recognised in male terms.<sup>88</sup> Sheila Meintjes writes in the 1980s women’s organisations participated equally with other organisations in the UDF.<sup>89</sup> But I think with such assimilation there was little recognition of women’s rights, especially as

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<sup>82</sup> Meintjes, ‘Gender, Nationalism and Transformation’, p 75.

<sup>83</sup> Hassim, ‘Feminism, nationalism and the Politics of the Women’s Movement in South Africa’, n.p.

<sup>84</sup> Meintjes, ‘Gender, Nationalism and Transformation’, p 75.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> S. Hassim, ‘Gender, Social Location and Feminist Politics in South Africa’, in Transformation, (1991), p 68.

<sup>87</sup> J. Cock, A. Bernstein, ‘Diversity and Disadvantage: Feminist Perspectives from the USA and South Africa’, Politikon, 1998, 25(2), p 22.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p 24.

<sup>89</sup> Meintjes, ‘Gender, Nationalism and Transformation’, p 75.

the UDF discouraged all divisive politics. The same potential existed for gay men entering the broader struggle at the sacrifice of gay rights. Assimilation and homogenisation also tainted equal gay rights politics.

If assimilation is not beneficial it could be differences that should be concentrated on and for women to therefore remain outside the broader struggle. But the notions of difference also have their problems. Women had to consider who they were equal to and from what were they different.<sup>90</sup> In patriarchy these comparative measures are men. Differences are used to justify hierarchies, inequalities, and dominance.<sup>91</sup> Because of the universalisation of masculinity, differences denote inferiority.<sup>92</sup> Difference is constructed by those in power therefore arguments for difference, because they are constructed and created by men in power, do not challenge the relations of dominance and subordination.<sup>93</sup> If women were respected, supported, and recognised as a separate entity in the struggle, by men, it gave men the ability to hide their dominance and yet maintain gender inequality.<sup>94</sup> This is exactly what happened to GASA. By remaining separate to the national struggle for equal rights thereby asserting the hegemonic masculinity, they were still subordinate to the dominance of heterosexual men during these years.

If neither assimilation nor differences were compatible with women's rights, perhaps recognising diversity was the best option. Diversity presupposes inclusion, negotiation, compromise, and participation.<sup>95</sup> Diversity is also inclusive of the differences between women and their experiences of oppression. If diversity was recognised there was greater chance of social transformation<sup>96</sup> with a redistribution of power and resources.<sup>97</sup> But like differences, if men defined diversity the status quo would be maintained.

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<sup>90</sup> Cock, Bernstein, 'Diversity and Disadvantage', p 24.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p 23.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p 24.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p 26.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p 27.

### **GASA's Dilemmas and Activities in the 1980s**

In order to understand GASA, and its activities, as part of the gay liberation movement, one needs to recognise that although GASA was adamant it was apolitical and refused to challenge the NP government, it was still political in the sense that it exercised power on a public level. It had an influence and impact on some members of the public.<sup>98</sup> GASA was also political in that it supported the NP government because many white, gay men wanted to retain the privileges of their race, regardless of their sexual orientation. Therefore GASA's rhetoric and practice were at odds. The organisation denounced the oppression of gay men yet did little to challenge this. GASA had "internal political contradictions."<sup>99</sup>

GASA said it was formed to unite all gay men (even though it was almost entirely white), to create a gay identity, to "create safe social spaces," and to foster confidence, self-respect among gay men because gay men had no rights and homosexuality was criminalised.<sup>100</sup> GASA aimed to change the prejudiced public image of gay men. GASA was essentialist, as were "all gay organizations that claim homosexuality is intrinsic and therefore homosexuals should not be discriminated against."<sup>101</sup> GASA realised it could not influence legislation so instead social attitudes would have to change to achieve acceptance of white, gay men. The organisation therefore "embarked on a strategy of making sure that people knew there were gay men 'out there'."<sup>102</sup> By setting a positive example for the authorities and the straight society GASA later hoped to initiate law reform.<sup>103</sup> I think idealistically GASA wanted law reform, but if it meant challenging the NP government and risking the privilege white, gay men were enjoying within the white order it was not worth agitating for such change. Therefore although white, gay men, in part, challenged the hegemonic masculinity, it was not challenging its entirety or the whole experience of hegemony therefore they were tolerated to degree.

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<sup>98</sup> E-mail from Gevisser, 24 Oct. 2003.

<sup>99</sup> Jara, Lapinsky, 'Forging a Representative Gay Liberation Movement in South Africa', p 3.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Knoesen.

<sup>101</sup> E-mail from Gevisser, 24 Oct. 2003.

<sup>102</sup> E-mail from Malan.

<sup>103</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 51 and interview with Knoesen.



There is a difference between supporting gay men (and lesbians) and actively fighting for their rights,<sup>104</sup> which I do not think GASA, did. It was impossible for GASA to work against the homophobic NP and simultaneously maintain its status. GASA's main focus therefore was not national politics, that is, fighting apartheid. However, neither, it seems, was it fighting homophobia. There was little overt challenge by GASA of the government's heterosexism because apparently white, gay men were benefiting from this hegemonic masculinity. GASA believed it grew quickly precisely because it stayed out of politics.<sup>105</sup> I think it must be realised that this was not necessarily isolated to race politics only. Such political apathy or avoidance also included the lack of initiation in fighting anti-gay sentiment.

Considering the resources at GALA, there is no evidence to suggest that GASA in any way or at any time challenged the NP government on its apartheid policies. GASA said it did not support apartheid but in practice it did because it did not challenge the NP government on this issue. There would be too much at stake in doing so, therefore, in effect, GASA supported the NP government by not challenging apartheid. Supporting heterosexuality was a key tenet of the NP government, so it could be presumed that any organisation opposing this was opposing the government. Not so with GASA. GASA may not have been supporting heterosexuality *per se* but it did support heterosexism and hegemony, which, I feel were enough to keep it out of trouble and tolerated by the NP government. Albeit that the NP government oppressed gay men, I think GASA realised it had more to lose by challenging the NP government. Anything regarding non-whites, even gay, non-whites, was political territory. Working towards benefits for white, gay men partially fitted in with apartheid policies in the sense that it advantaged white men only. White, gay men could identify with the culturally dominant masculinity, which made them simultaneously part, yet not part of privileged male society.<sup>106</sup> They belonged to the power-holding class, sex, and race therefore they were never totally oppressed. Most of the members of GASA constituted a masculinity that shared features with the

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<sup>104</sup> B. Luirink, *Moffies*, p 99.

<sup>105</sup> Henk Botha in Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 50.

hegemonic masculinity but were socially de-authorised. GASA members could still enjoy the benefits of white patriarchy but were excluded from benefits of hegemonic masculinity.<sup>107</sup> Hence they did not “seek to undermine or challenge the background white, heterosexual norm, but rather (wished) merely not be discriminated against.”<sup>108</sup> If GASA was banned it would not be able to provide vital services such as ‘socials’ which were its draw-card.<sup>109</sup> More to the point if GASA were banned white, gay men would lose their privileged status as members of hegemonic masculinity. I think men joined GASA because the organisation supported the status quo and privileged position of white men. But GASA’s self-defined, apolitical stance became a catch-22: this was the very reason it collapsed.

Peter Mohlahedi, prominent member of the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) and anti-apartheid and gay rights activist, says GASA was “lily-white and that’s how they socially and politically addressed issues.”<sup>110</sup> Gevisser says given GASA’s membership, “of course it was racist. Divisions in organisations reflect divisions in broader society. And if you keep away from politics to remain in favour with a racist government, doesn’t that make you racist?”<sup>111</sup> It also makes you political. Ironically, for an organisation that was perceived as racist by other gay organisations, GASA was concerned that it had insignificant black membership.<sup>112</sup> GASA even advertised for black members.<sup>113</sup> GASA’s commitment to black, gay liberation, however, is suspect, especially considering it was working to sustain white privilege. There were members who said they were not racist but the organisation, it seems, was.

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<sup>106</sup> L. Bersani, ‘Loving Men’, in Berger et al, *Constructing Masculinity*, p 117.

<sup>107</sup> D. Conway, ‘Masculinity, Citizenship and Political Objection to Compulsory Military Service in the South African Defence Force’, p 2.

<sup>108</sup> C. Stychin, ‘Constituting Sexuality: The Struggle for Sexual Orientation in the South African Bill of Rights’, in *Journal of Law and Society*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1996), p 466.

<sup>109</sup> Ann Smith in Gevisser, ‘A Different Fight for Freedom’, p 52.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Mohlahedi, (16 March 2004).

<sup>111</sup> E-mail from Gevisser, 24 Oct. 2003.

<sup>112</sup> Letter from J. Zipp (GASA Rand) to Saturday Group (20 Jan. 1985), (C 1a) GASA Rand, AM 2623, GALA).

<sup>113</sup> ‘Gay Liberation on the Move’, (n.d), (no publication – but more than likely *Exit*), (C1.C) South African Organizations, GASA, SG, Simon Nkoli/Roy Shepherd, AM 2623, GALA), n.p.

GASA kept a low profile to avoid persecution but it seems this standpoint became convenient and highlights its heterosexism. In November 1982 a “lesbian scandal” occurred in the South African Railways Police, which put GASA in an awkward political position.<sup>114</sup> Two lesbians were caught kissing on a platform. The Railways Police Commissioner clearly stated that gay men and lesbians were not welcome in the force. A five-month investigation culminated in the dismissal of four women and nine men. Consequently sixty officers voluntarily resigned to avoid disclosure.<sup>115</sup> Other women went on strike in protest and they too were fired. GASA’s mission statement said it would challenge “distorted, prejudiced and uninformed action,”<sup>116</sup> but in this case it did not respond; they did not want to cause animosity towards GASA.<sup>117</sup> Hence the contradiction in their policy and action. GASA had apparently also said: “those dykes asked for it, didn’t they?”<sup>118</sup> This suggests GASA’s heterosexism and contributes to the explanation as to why it did not challenge the NP government: GASA reinforced the heterosexist, white NP government stance.

Albeit that one of GASA dilemmas was its reinforcement of white hegemony, it made a move to accommodate black, gay men by way of the Saturday Group (SG), a black affiliate. Nkoli, a black GASA member was, debatably, the most important representative of South Africa’s gay liberation movement in the 1980s. In the latter 1980s he was the driving force behind black, gay politics, replacing Alfred Machela of the Rand Gay Organisation (RGO). In 1983 Nkoli realised GASA lacked black members and he created the SG. The SG was socially inclined, mainly a gay discussion group concentrating on black, gay men in Soweto. Its aim was to establish a better understanding among all gay people of all races and to reach closeted people.<sup>119</sup>

Two issues become evident through the formation of the SG. Firstly, GASA’s perceived white credibility and pro-NP government stance came to be constantly questioned and

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<sup>114</sup> Gevisser, ‘A Different Fight for Freedom’, p 51.

<sup>115</sup> The Star, 4 April 1983, in Gevisser, ‘A Different Fight for Freedom’, p 51.

<sup>116</sup> Gevisser, ‘A Different Fight for Freedom’, p 51.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, p 51.

<sup>118</sup> Luirink, Moffies, p 21.

<sup>119</sup> Saturday Group Newsletter, (3 May 1984), (C.1.c. South African Organizations, GASA, SG, Simon

insulted by many South African gay organisations such as the RGO and the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OLGA) and international gay organisations, as well as the international gay press.<sup>120</sup> Yet GASA advertised in its own newspaper for black, gay men to join the SG. However, this point becomes moot because it seems that GASA did not work at keeping its black members. The fact that the SG advertised in the GASA newspaper is not enough to substantiate GASA's proclaimed anti-apartheid stance. Secondly, the SG was considered interracial by international gay organisations yet it specifically targeted black, gay men. The SG was allowed to concentrate on black members without being labelled racist but GASA was not allowed to do the same for white members. Because of the privileged political position of white, gay men there was little GASA would be recognised for unless it became politically active within the anti-apartheid movement.

In 1983 GASA applied for International Gay Association (IGA)<sup>121</sup> membership. Full membership was initially denied because GASA's membership was almost exclusively white. Isaacs and McKendrick explain GASA did not have full membership because of sanctions against South Africa.<sup>122</sup> I think this euphemistically tends to blame the international community for GASA's partial membership and not GASA's policy of avoiding apartheid. In 1984 GASA finally became a full member of the ILGA, although it was to become a thorn in the side of international gay liberation.

Considering GASA did not want the status quo changed it would not have been worthwhile to ever attempt to fight for gay rights, as there was still blatant homophobia within some of the white population of South Africa. The 1984 Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) study on homosexuality showed South Africa's conservatism and intolerance.<sup>123</sup> Over 70% of the white populace thought that homosexuality between consenting adults should not be legalised.<sup>124</sup>

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Nkoli/Roy Shepherd, AM 2623, GALA), n.p.

<sup>120</sup> For example Capital Gay and Outrage.

<sup>121</sup> The IGA later became the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA).

<sup>122</sup> Isaacs and McKendrick, Male Homosexuality in South Africa, p 140.

<sup>123</sup> 'Is This You ... Or Someone You Love?', Pamphlet by NLRF Committee of GASA, Dbn, (Alfred Machela Collection, F. Magazines, Newspapers, Publications, Pamphlets, Programmes, International

GASA reached the gay community through its newsletter Link/Skakel. In 1985 Link/Skakel was replaced by Exit, “South Africa’s only regular gay publication.”<sup>125</sup> Exit “was probably the most successful South African gay publication to date ... Emphasis (was) upon highlighting the ‘gay scene’ in South Africa, publicizing gay resources, and reporting homophobic attitudes in the country.”<sup>126</sup> Exit became very important to GASA’s members because it was a means of communication, a symbol of community, and a vehicle for expression.<sup>127</sup> Exit was the “only way in which a certain amount of gay consciousness could be created ... to create greater acceptance of gay men.”<sup>128</sup> White, gay men that is. Exit glorified white, gay masculinity. However, not all gay men in South Africa approved of Exit. “Some criticism levelled at Exit has included its sexist and homoerotic flavour, a seemingly biased sense of reporting when political issues are at stake, and a failure to address homosexuality from a leftist perspective.”<sup>129</sup> Also, Link/Skakel had convincingly made GASA sound like a white, pro-apartheid organisation and Exit was doing the same.<sup>130</sup>

Exit avoided discussing race and apartheid for the same reasons GASA said it avoided politics. According to Exit many other newspapers fought the race issue but no one fought the gay issue. By staying away from race politics there was less chance of encouraging the NP government to use emergency powers to shut Exit down. However, Exit did comment that “gay men have little to fear from the liberation movement – especially if gay men as a group are prepared, in turn, to acknowledge and defend the

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and South African, AM 2622, GALA). The study was disputed by many gay men as its population sample was not representative of the entire gay population: it only considered white, gay men.

<sup>124</sup> Isaacs and McKendrick, Male Homosexuality in South Africa, p 141. I consulted with the HSRC library, the Parliament Library, the State Archives, and the National Library regarding this report – all to no avail. It seems the report was never published and was therefore inaccessible. Anthony Manion says he has heard of this report but has never seen it or been able to locate a copy of it for GALA.

<sup>125</sup> Wotherspoon and Faro, ‘Against the Odds’, p 38. Exit was set up and funded by David Moolman and is still in print today.

<sup>126</sup> Isaacs and McKendrick, Male Homosexuality in South Africa, p 157.

<sup>127</sup> Simon Nkoli was also appreciative of the copies of Exit he received while in prison.

<sup>128</sup> E-mail from Malan.

<sup>129</sup> Isaacs and McKendrick, Male Homosexuality in South Africa, p 157.

<sup>130</sup> According to the IGA. This obviously did not bother the twenty-eight Members of Parliament who subscribed to Exit. (Wotherspoon and Faro, ‘Against the Odds’, p 38).

rights of other oppressed groups.”<sup>131</sup> This was the editorial comment of the same newspaper that many said was trivial and NP government-aligned. Exit supported the ANC’s policy that gay men were not to be seen as a separate entity with separate policies; their rights would be covered by the holistic ANC policy of human rights and equality for all.<sup>132</sup> If one considered the concerns of the women’s movement this support by Exit was potentially unhelpful to the gay liberation movement because assimilation did not necessarily mean equality.

GASA was faced with a major challenge in 1985 when P.W. Botha repealed Section 16 of the Immorality Amendment Act as part of his reform programme, allowing heterosexual, interracial sex. Therefore it was only the racial connotation that was removed not the combating of immorality which would be left unchanged.<sup>133</sup> Botha’s repeal, however, had repercussions for GASA because the Immorality Amendment Act also included clauses specifically pertaining to homosex. Members of the public and various interest groups feared Botha would repeal these clauses too, decriminalising homosexual behaviour. GASA had to react to this homophobia. But Botha did not repeal the clauses concerning homosexuality because ideologically they were different and there was also no social consensus, pressure, or public support for the repealing of such clauses.<sup>134</sup> In effect, different groups try to impose their own definition of masculinity, to reinforce their social position,<sup>135</sup> and this is what Botha was doing to maintain the hegemonic masculinity.

Fearful that more of the Act would be repealed, the SAP, the Department of Justice, the NG Kerk, the Association of Law Societies, and the Baptist Union of South Africa called for harsher laws regarding homosexuality, or at the very least, confirmation of the status quo.<sup>136</sup> These groups were intolerant of their power being challenged. Consequently

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<sup>131</sup> Beaumont, ‘Gay OK, Says ANC’.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Dept of Justice, ‘Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the President’s Council on the Immorality Act (Act 23 of 1957)’, 1985, (State Library, SANB, OP(S)14/12, Dobis Kopie Nr: 148142), p 2.

<sup>134</sup> Informal interview with Evert Knoesen, (3 Sept. 2002, Johannesburg, 10:00am).

<sup>135</sup> Haywood, Mac an Ghaill, ‘Schooling Masculinities’, p 58.

<sup>136</sup> Dept of Justice, ‘Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the President’s Council on the Immorality Act’, p 38. Ironically in the same year Archbishop Desmond Tutu assigned a special chaplain to the gay

Botha asked the President's Council to investigate the remainder of the Immorality Amendment Act.<sup>137</sup> The President's Council felt the issue of white homosexuality still needed to be dealt with<sup>138</sup> so it set up a commission to investigate homosexuality, which submitted its recommendations to the President's Council in August 1985. The President's Council further investigated homosexuality<sup>139</sup> and in fact proposed stricter legislation against gay men might be necessary: "the Committee is of the opinion that the penal provisions in the Immorality Act, 1957, are totally inadequate and provision should be made for higher maximum penalties for subsequent contraventions."<sup>140</sup>

The first of the four issues queried by the President's Council's commission was whether criminal prohibitions on gay activity should include lesbians? Secondly, if laws concerning homosexual acts were repealed, to what extent would these acts still be considered immoral by society and how should society express its abhorrence to homosexuality? Thirdly, what was the state's role regarding rehabilitation or punishment if society did not want the law repealed? And fourthly, was there proof that the tolerance of homosexuality caused the decline of civilisations?<sup>141</sup> These were similar concerns of the 1968 Select Committee. Moreover, the fourth concern had been thrashed out in 1968 when the Select Committee had been told over and over that there was no such proof that homosexuality caused the decline of civilisations.

I want to note that Gevisser failed to point out this fourth concern. He specified there were only three areas under investigation. I make mention of Gevisser's omission

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community.

<sup>137</sup> The President's Council was a nominated mixed-race upper house of Parliament that had replaced the white-only Senate in 1983.

<sup>138</sup> 'Is This You ... Or Someone You Love?' and 'The Law and Reform', pamphlet by NLR of GASA, Dbn, (Alfred Machela Collection, F. Magazines, Newspapers, Publications, Pamphlets, Programmes, International and South African, AM 2622, GALA). South Africa was very much behind the times as in 1973 the American Bar Association had passed a resolution calling for the repeal of all laws criminalising consenting, adult homosexuality.

<sup>139</sup> Dept of Justice, 'Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the President's Council on the Immorality Act', p 54.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, p 3.

<sup>141</sup> Dept of Justice, 'Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the President's Council on the Immorality Act', p 54 and The Star, 14 August 1985, in M. Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom: A History of South African Lesbian and Gay Organization from the 1950s to 1990s' p 60 and 'Is This You ... Or Someone You Love?'



because it is this fourth point, especially, that I think proves the NP government had not substantially changed its attitude towards gay men since 1968. I consider the concern of the destruction of ‘civilisations’ as the weakest argument for extended penalties of the Immorality Amendment Act, and the most homophobic. This fourth concern is really based on religion and immorality more than the destruction of ‘civilisations’, but the President’s Council needed something tangible to potentially justify its homophobic recommendations. Possibly, there had been no push for harsher legislation concerning gay men since 1968 because white, gay men (GASA) had not yet challenged the NP government. Also, the white hegemonic masculinity defined by the NP government had remained intact partly because the NP government had maintained the status quo. That is, it did not draw attention to the threat of another masculinity by either encouraging harsher legislation or repealing the clauses of the Immorality Amendment Act pertaining to gay men.

Because the threat of new legislation specifically targeted white, gay men GASA finally rose to the occasion and the National Law Reform Fund (NLRF) was set up. Like the LRM of 1968, the NLRF made submissions to the President’s Council in an attempt to convince the authorities that white, gay men were respectable, law-abiding, worthy members of the community.<sup>142</sup> The NLRF worked to influence public opinion to accept the gay lifestyle. Again GASA seemed to be appeasing the NP government, not challenging it: it was “reactionary gay and lesbian politics.”<sup>143</sup> Therefore the victory of the 1968 LRM had not been far-reaching enough – homosexuality was still illegal, it was still being investigated, and white, gay men had probably only survived the 1970s and early 1980s because the authorities elected to ignore homosexuality.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Gevisser, ‘A Different Fight for Freedom’, p 60 and ‘Out of the Closet Into a Cell?’, Pamphlet issued by NLRF Committee of GASA, Dbn. (Alfred Machela Collection, F. Magazines, Newspapers, Publications, Pamphlets, Programmes, International and South African, AM 2622, GALA). The Committee also received other memoranda against the criminal sanctions for homosexuality: from the Gay Advice Bureau, the Gay Christian Movement, The Gay Christian Communities of Jhb and Pretoria, M.E. Emmanuel, Dr T. van Hove, the Dept of Health and Welfare, M. Miller, A.M. Roche, and Dr. L.R. Woolfson. (Dept of Justice, ‘Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the President’s Council on the Immorality Act’, p 38.)

<sup>143</sup> R. Louw, ‘Gay and Lesbian Rights: Rulings of the Constitutional Court’, *Indicator*, vol. 16, Issue 1, Autumn 1999, p 87.

<sup>144</sup> Gevisser, ‘A Different Fight for Freedom’, p 61.



To a certain degree HIV/AIDS benefited the President's Council's commission and there was the fear that this disease might "be used to justify new anti-gay moves."<sup>145</sup> GASA's legal team monitored the President's Council's every move and tried to garner support to prevent new legislation.<sup>146</sup> By this time the SAP, the Baptist Church, and the Afrikaans Calvinist churches had all testified before the President's Council's committee that *all* homosexual activity should be criminalised, including lesbian activity.<sup>147</sup>

In the end the Committee for Social Affairs of the President's Council was of the opinion that the already existing anti-gay legislation was sufficient and therefore it was unnecessary to amend the Immorality Amendment Act. Nevertheless it issued a report, the 'Youth of South Africa' which classified homosexuality as an acquired social deviation, irreconcilable with normal marriage and stated that it was potentially destroying the lives of thousands of young South Africans. The council felt there were many young, promising people who were falling prey to the 'evils of homosexuality'.

The NP government's interest in homosexuality also fizzled out because political unrest took precedence.<sup>148</sup> "Unlike 1968, however, there was not the same government focus: P.W. Botha's campaign to smash anti-apartheid resistance took over all else and the gay issue was forgotten."<sup>149</sup> There was a greater threat to the white, hegemonic masculinity than white homosexuality. Consequently the penalties of the Immorality Amendment Act were not increased even though the President's Council advised it. The NLRF had raised R50 000 by January 1987 but had nothing to spend it on.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> 'South Africa: Treason Trial Begins', *Outrage*, no. 35, (April 1986), (AM 2623, G2 GASA, GALA).

<sup>146</sup> A. Smith and J. Williams, 'GASA Denies Deal with South African Police', (no name of publication, 1986), (Alfred Machela Collection, G2 Miscellaneous, AM 2622, GALA).

<sup>147</sup> IGA Newsletter, (n.d.), (Alfred Machela Collection, G2 Miscellaneous, AM 2622, GALA).

Surprisingly, the most relevant information on the President's Council comes from the ILGA.

<sup>148</sup> I asked Gevisser why nothing had come of this 1985 investigation into homosexuality. He said he had no idea. (E-mail from Gevisser, 24 Oct. 200).

<sup>149</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 61.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

In the latter part of the 1980s all was not well with GASA.<sup>151</sup> Its membership decreased drastically in 1987.<sup>152</sup> GASA's ten branches and central administration had all collapsed. In effect GASA no longer existed.<sup>153</sup> Machela believed GASA had collapsed because it "had lost all credibility among gay men."<sup>154</sup> According to Gevisser, GASA had disintegrated due to financial mismanagement and opposition to its apolitical stance.<sup>155</sup> I think basically, in 1987 GASA was no longer a credible gay organisation because it benefited white privilege and white hegemonic masculinity rather than gay men. Hence GASA had to do something.

A meeting of 'Concerned Gay Persons' was held, initiated by Moolman, Exit's editor. It was so named because Moolman believed people would not attend if it was called by GASA. Between twenty-five and thirty-seven men attended the meeting. It was recognised that homophobia and discrimination would increase if they were not challenged.

The meeting did minute that political oppression of black, gay men had to be taken into account and white, gay men could not dictate to black, gay groups. It was also realised that gay rights could never work if at the same time racist and sexist statements were made.<sup>156</sup> This meant GASA would have to rethink its heterosexist, white hegemonic stance, which I do not think it was honestly prepared to do. The changes being suggested

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<sup>151</sup> 'Congress of Pink Democrats – What Now?', (no date), (AM 2626, CPD. F. Papers, G. Stationary, GALA), p 1.

<sup>152</sup> It only had 1 200 members, 125 of them black. (A. Machela in J. Dublin, 'Black and Gay in South Africa', Capital Gay, 24 July 1987, AM 2623, F. Magazines, Newspapers, Publications, Pamphlets, Programmes, International and South Africa, GALA).

<sup>153</sup> LAGO Newsletter, (28 Aug, 1987), (C3) South African Organizations, LAGO, OLGA, AM 2623, GALA). GASA Rand, the largest regional base of GASA, was bankrupt and defunct and the other regions were not any better off. GASA Natal had one member and GASA East London no longer existed. GASA Bloemfontein offered the occasional party and GASA Pretoria had changed its name to the Gay Association of the Northern Transvaal. GASA Welkom did nothing apart from the odd drag party. The only visible group was GASA Cape Town with a membership of 200, a counselling service, HIV/AIDS support, public education, a small community centre, and a library. However, it altered its name to show it was no longer a branch of GASA.

<sup>154</sup> P. Tatchell, 'Black, Gay and Angry', Outrage, no. 53, (1987), (Peter Tatchell Collection, AM 2715, GALA), p. 17.

<sup>155</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom'.

<sup>156</sup> Minutes of Meeting of Concerned Gay Persons, (25 July 1987), (AM 2623, D. South African Organizations, GALA).

were too extreme for GASA, unless, which is more likely, it continued its old practices but yet contradicted this in its official minutes.

At the meeting an alliance of all the gay groups in South Africa was proposed and a new gay organisation was formed: the Gay Alliance of Southern Africa. One needs to be aware that the adoption of this name maintained the GASA acronym. GASA *per se* was now defunct. Instead nine task forces<sup>157</sup> were established to “sever the umbilical cords that bound gay men to outdated systems or their own prejudices.”<sup>158</sup> Basically it seems as though GASA was just reshuffling its paperwork – a new structure with the same ideology as little changed with regard to the workings of the Gay Alliance when compared to that of GASA. I found no further reference to these nine task forces or the work they carried out. The Gay Alliance “was merely GASA with the furniture rearranged.”<sup>159</sup>

### **Divisions Within the Gay Liberation Movement: New Gay Organisations and Failed Attempts at Gay Unity.**

A greater insistence on unity can cause even more fragmentation. Sometimes acknowledgement of and acceptance of fragmentation results in coalitions instead because unity is undesired. According to Rudi Bleys the gay identity is not flexible enough to incorporate all gay men.<sup>160</sup> This applied to the South African context where race and privilege must be borne in mind. It was not possible to have one unified, gay identity in that most white, gay men wanted to retain their privileged position within society. This meant the retention of traditional hegemony, whereas most black, gay men wanted to define their masculinity first and foremost before they challenged for recognition of any black, gay masculinity.

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<sup>157</sup> These task forces were: legal reform, community care services (including HIV/AIDS counselling and a library), HIV/AIDS, sport and recreation, politics, fundraising, secretariat, public relations and communication and information, and religion.

<sup>158</sup> Foreword of Agenda of the Gay Alliance, (12 Sept. 1987), (AM 2623, D. South African Organizations, GALA). p 4.

<sup>159</sup> CPD Minutes, (9-11 Oct. 1987), (AM 2626, CPD. B. Conference, 1987, C. Convention 1988, GALA), p 2.

<sup>160</sup> Bleys, The Geography of Perversion, p 7

Such disruptions (as opposed to unified identity) create politics.<sup>161</sup> Politics in the sense that there was activism regarding the rights and recognition of people, even if it meant the retention of the status quo, which GASA wanted, and not necessarily advocating change, which was desired by black, gay men. Hence there was no unity of the gay liberation movement but there was definitely the creation of politics in the 1980s.<sup>162</sup>

### **GASA and the RGO**

There was greater recognition of black homosexuality in South Africa by the black communities and black, gay men themselves in the early 1980s. From the 1976 Soweto youth revolt against apartheid there was an increase in the visibility of black, gay men in the townships, who became more confident, but township sexuality in the Western sense did not exist.<sup>163</sup> There was a network of boys in Soweto who dressed as girls.<sup>164</sup> Much of the township gay, male culture involved cross-dressing and sexual role-playing. There was also the perception that although gay men might not be women they were something close, a third sex. “No one, including gay men, seemed to be quite sure of what gay meant – were gay men really women? Men? or something in between?...”<sup>165</sup> People in black townships found it easier to understand gay boys or men as girls, who were biologically mixed. Residents of townships thought these gay men were hermaphrodites.<sup>166</sup> Regarding apartheid and male sexuality, Donald Donham tells of Linda, a black, gay man, who did not consider himself gay, according to the Eurocentric definition of gay identity. For Linda, considering himself female made more sense than concerning himself with his sexuality. Jabu, another black, gay man, saw himself in a similar light: he considered himself female and was concerned with adolescent girls his age began to develop breasts and he did not.<sup>167</sup> “In apartheid-era urban black culture,

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<sup>161</sup> D. Woodhead, ‘Surveillant Gays’ in Bell, Valentine, *Mapping Desire*, p 237.

<sup>162</sup> South Africa’s gay activism lacked the unity found in North America and Britain. (Stychin, ‘Constituting Sexuality’, p 459).

<sup>163</sup> D. Donham, ‘Freeing South Africa: the ‘Modernization’, p 7.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, p 9.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, p 7.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, p 9.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, p 8.

gender apparently overrode biological sex to a degree that it is difficult, and perhaps inappropriate, to maintain the distinction between these two analytical concepts...”<sup>168</sup>

The black, township youth took up the cause of national liberation and traditional, black generational hierarchies were challenged. In the black power movement in America during the 1960s masculinist and heterosexist ideology were celebrated but this did not occur in South Africa. However, transnationalism did affect the national struggle. The ANC was banned but being located outside South Africa it had international support which encouraged human rights, which included gay men. This “probably dampened any tendency to contest local racial domination by strengthening local gender and sexuality hierarchies. Any such move would certainly have alienated anti-apartheid groups.”<sup>169</sup> These hierarchies were already challenged as gay relations were recognised in the all-male hostels in Soweto. “A new sense of gay identity, strongly influenced by the politics of gay liberation emerged.”<sup>170</sup> I would contend that it was more international gay liberation and anti-apartheid politics that produced this liberation.<sup>171</sup> The gay liberation movement would remain politically divided because of differing ideologies.<sup>172</sup> This was also the main issue of contention between GASA and the RGO – human rights versus gay rights.

GASA propagated gay essentialism and it was such essentialist policy that prevented the gay movement from harnessing official backing for gay rights from the anti-apartheid movement, specifically the ANC and the UDF.<sup>173</sup> A new organisation that was anti-essentialism was the RGO, founded by Dr Alfred Machela in 1986. The RGO aimed to cater for the black, gay community contributing to the anti-apartheid movement. Therefore the RGO was always more about gay men in politics, not politics for gay men.

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid, p 7.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, p 13.

<sup>170</sup> G. Reid, ‘‘It is Just a Fashion!’ Linking Homosexuality and Modernity in South Africa’, (IASSCS Sex and Secrecy Conference 2003), p 4.

<sup>171</sup> See chapter 5.

<sup>172</sup> E-mail from Malan.

<sup>173</sup> P. Tatchell, ‘Black, Gay and Angry. South African Gays Fight Back’, *Gay Times*, (Sept. 1987), (Alfred Machela Collection, F. Magazines, Newspapers, Publications, Pamphlets, Programmes, International and South African, AM 2622, GALA), p 14 and letter from S. Lapinsky to A. Machela, (25 July 1987), (Alfred Machela Collection, A4 Position Papers, Talks, Statements, AM 2622, GALA), p 1.

Tracey Skelton says if black men were given the choice between fighting for gay rights or black rights they would choose the latter.<sup>174</sup> Unlike GASA, the RGO was not formed in response to a need of the gay community. Machela wanted to consolidate African gay and lesbian people who were in the liberation struggle. He did not aim to pull gay men into the struggle but rather use those who were already contributing to it.<sup>175</sup> If they were consolidated they would be more effective and GASA was not working to achieve this.

Theoretically GASA and the RGO disagreed and much energy was poured into communication between the two. GASA continued to insist it was fighting for human rights and Machela refused to accept this: “all they can say is ‘we are against apartheid’, now my question is what have they done to prove what they say is true and sincere?”<sup>176</sup> Conversely, there was the perception that the RGO was “an ideal platform for Machela to build an anti-white political presence.”<sup>177</sup> GASA objected to RGO comments that it was predominantly white and racist.<sup>178</sup> On the other hand, according to Machela, GASA labelled the RGO as a terrorist group and as troublemakers.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, GASA claimed that the RGO’s politicisation jeopardised the entire movement<sup>180</sup> and Machela was “too politically controversial.”<sup>181</sup> More to the point, I think, was that the RGO/GASA feud was a fight between masculinities, which also encompassed race. GASA was attempting to balance recognition for white, gay men while tentatively continuing their privileged white status within the hegemonic masculinity and the RGO was struggling for recognition of black masculinity and second to that, the black, gay masculinity. That is, the NP government did not recognise the black masculinity within its hegemony. Black men had no recognisable citizenship or rights. Both the RGO and GASA were trying to define their masculinity within the racial context of apartheid and hence they could not find common ground.

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<sup>174</sup> T. Skelton, ‘Boom, Bye, Bye’ in Bell, Valentine, *Mapping Desire*, p 279.

<sup>175</sup> Interview with Knoesen.

<sup>176</sup> Letter from. A. Machela (RGO) to I. Christie (Scotland), (12 Feb. 1987), (AM 2622, Alfred Machela Collection, A2. International, A3. Correspondence, GALA), p 3.

<sup>177</sup> E-mail from Malan.

<sup>178</sup> Letter from Machela to Christie, p 5.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, p 2.

<sup>180</sup> Dibblin, ‘Black and Gay in South Africa’, n.p.

<sup>181</sup> Letter to P. Tatchell (London) from J. Nicol, (n.d), (The Papers of LAGO and OLGA, Box 5: The OLGA Papers, File 1:Correspondence O-Z, AM 2801, GALA), p 2.

Among other aims, the RGO was dedicated to fighting discrimination against all gay men in all areas.<sup>182</sup> It aimed to cater for the political needs of gay men where other gay organisations had failed. The RGO believed the solution to the black/white gay problem was for black, gay men to organise themselves and have a voice as powerful as that of white, gay men.<sup>183</sup> Like GASA, the RGO claimed to be multi-racial, but it was a Soweto-based organisation made up exclusively of black members, with functions held in the townships.<sup>184</sup> Machela felt there was a need for a non-racial organisation. This was unlikely and highlights the contradiction between the RGO's ideology and its practice, like GASA.

The RGO stated it was not a political organisation, but Machela did admit the RGO could not claim to be apolitical because “nothing in this country can be apolitical”<sup>185</sup> especially as black men had no political rights.<sup>186</sup> For the first time in South African history a gay organisation began talking to a political organisation, the UDF. There were apparently many gay people in the UDF, but they did not represent any gay organisation.<sup>187</sup> Racial politics was more important than sexual orientation politics.

When the RGO first organised it swore it was not a rival to GASA.<sup>188</sup> But in practice it was GASA's opposition considering what Machela had to say about GASA's pro-NP government activities.<sup>189</sup> Initially Machela had said GASA would stand a better chance of opposing the system because it had already gained respect from some NP government

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<sup>182</sup> RGO letter, (n.d), (Alfred Machela Collection, A4 Position Papers, Talks, and Statements, AM 2622, GALA).

<sup>183</sup> RGO Speech, p 2.

<sup>184</sup> Sunday Times in Letter to RGO Committee Members from Kevan Botha (GASA), (29 June 1986), (The Alfred Machela Collection, D. South African Organisations, D8 GASA, AM 2622, GALA), p 1.

<sup>185</sup> Statement by Machela, (A. Machela Collection, A4 Position Papers, Talks, Statements, AM 2622, GALA, n.d), p 3.

<sup>186</sup> Letter from Alfred Machela (RGO) to Kevan Botha (GASA), (1986), (A3.1. RGO Local Correspondence, A3. 1c. Others).

<sup>187</sup> Position Paper prepared by RGO and GASA for discussion with the Executive of the UDF, (26 Nov. 1986), (A. Machela Collection, A4 Position Papers, Talks, Statements, AM 2622, GALA, n.d), p 7. Nkoli was a member of the UDF.

<sup>188</sup> RGO speech, p 3 and Letter from Machela to Botha, (1986), (AM 2622, A. Machela Collection, A3.1. RGO Local Correspondence, A3.1c. Others, GALA), p 6.

<sup>189</sup> Letter from Machela to Botha.



departments.<sup>190</sup> Ironically it was this same commendation that Machela used to prove GASA's racist stance even though, by Machela's own admission, GASA had gained recognition from respected leaders of the black and coloured communities, such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Allen Boesak, (a leader of the UDF), and Mangosuthu Buthelezi.<sup>191</sup> Although Machela had said this, the chances are this was not really the case.<sup>192</sup> Kraak agrees.<sup>193</sup> Tutu was not involved in gay rights issues until Ivan Toms brought it to his attention in the early 1990s and the UDF was intolerant of gay rights issues.<sup>194</sup> There seems to have been political manoeuvring and diplomacy at work here by Machela: he wanted support and funding for the RGO and possibly saw the best way to get this was by fostering a good relationship with GASA. If the two organisations were not at odds, the RGO might be able to exploit GASA's experience and knowledge regarding gay rights. Hence Machela might have been pacifying GASA and that would explain his compliment of GASA's recognition by non-white activists.

The situation between the RGO and GASA continued to worsen. Initially the RGO had supported GASA's NLRP because if the President's Council succeeded the police could be given greater power of arrest.<sup>195</sup> But the RGO changed its mind because of GASA's lack of commitment to the anti-apartheid movement. "When one looks at your (GASA's) activities during your Law Reform Campaign it is very clear that you were ready for any action taken against you, yet you (never) mentioned the struggle of other oppressed people in South African history."<sup>196</sup> This led to Machela voicing this opinion at ILGA conferences. Machela accused GASA of being insensitive about apartheid and aligning itself with the NP government.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Anthony Manion, (25 Feb. 2004, Johannesburg, 3:00pm).

<sup>193</sup> Interview with Kraak.

<sup>194</sup> See p 246.

<sup>195</sup> RGO speech, p 4.

<sup>196</sup> 'Position Paper' prepared by A. Machela on behalf on the RGO, (4 Feb. 1987), (Alfred Machela Collection, A4 Position Papers, Talks, Statements, AM 2622, GALA), p 2.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.



The RGO, although hastily formed and fraught with mismanagement, according to Kevan Botha of GASA, became a force to be reckoned with in the gay liberation movement.<sup>198</sup> However, it is more likely that it was Machela himself who was the driving force behind black, gay politics. According to overseas journalists, his role in South African gay politics in the mid-1980s was considerable.<sup>199</sup> Yet in a chapter sub-titled 'The 1980s Gay Rights and Gay Politics' Gevisser dedicated only five lines to the RGO which, I do not think, does the history of the gay movement justice. Gevisser states: "in August 1986, the RGO was admitted to the International Lesbian and Gay Association. It was never heard of again, and Machela now lives in Stockholm."<sup>200</sup> Even if Gevisser is intimating that the RGO as an organisation achieved little, which is plausible, it is necessary to include Machela's contributions to the gay movement during the 1980s, be they questionable and sometimes considered undesirable. I asked Gevisser why he had written so little on the RGO. He said: "don't know, but as far as I remember I saw RGO as really the same as GLOW."<sup>201</sup> Taking what we know of both Machela and Nkoli into account, I do not believe this is the case. Gevisser is not the only South African who gives Machela and the RGO little credit. Kraak knows nothing about the RGO and or Machela.<sup>202</sup> Mohlahedi, too, knows nothing about the RGO other than admitting that the organisation could have been Machela only because there was a power struggle between gay leaders in the late 1980s.<sup>203</sup>

Supposedly both Kevan Botha and Machela had had enough of the constant fighting within the gay liberation movement by the mid-1980s and were tired of the black/white polarisation in gay politics. Machela stated: "one thing is sure ... we simply cannot afford the luxury of personality clashes, bickering and sustained ego trips. These have done grave harm to the gay community. They must end."<sup>204</sup> Botha considered GASA to

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<sup>198</sup> Letter to RGO Committee Members from Kevan Botha (GASA), (29 June 1986), (The Alfred Machela Collection, D. South African Organisations, D8 GASA, AM 2622, GALA).

<sup>199</sup> Peter Tatchell felt Machela was the "leading black gay activist." (P. Tatchell, 'Black, Gay and Angry. South African Gays Fight Back', p 12. However, I do not think his contribution was as great as Nkoli's.

<sup>200</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 57.

<sup>201</sup> E-mail from Gevisser, 24 Oct. 2003.

<sup>202</sup> Interview with Kraak.

<sup>203</sup> Interview with Peter Mohlahedi, (16 March 2004, Johannesburg, 7:00pm).

<sup>204</sup> Letter from RGO to RGO members, 'The RGO Committee Call for Solidarity in the Gay Community',

be pursuing a positive relationship with the RGO<sup>205</sup> and he was apparently even thinking of an amalgamation of the two organisations.<sup>206</sup> But one “must be very careful of Kevan Botha.”<sup>207</sup> Knoesen says Botha often made radical comments and said smart things because he is a smart man. “He was pandering to both sides, he wanted the image of the good, white man in Africa” therefore he said what was necessary, either to GASA or the RGO.<sup>208</sup> Machela was doing the same thing. The bickering did not stop.

One gets the impression GASA did not want to be left behind by the new up-and-coming RGO. GASA realised the gay liberation movement was failing owing to lethargy, gay organisations being too thinly spread, and bickering.<sup>209</sup> Change was necessary. So GASA revised its constitution and changed its structure<sup>210</sup> because it was fragmented due to “outdated structural hindrances.”<sup>211</sup> GASA also appealed to all gay organisations to look at their attitudes towards sexism and male chauvinism because this did not help the gay movement.<sup>212</sup> Again there was the contradiction of theory and practice. GASA might have considered looking at itself and the editorials in Exit first. The RGO felt otherwise: the gay movement had fragmented because GASA was essentialist and not part of the wider struggle.<sup>213</sup>

At its twelfth National Committee meeting in September 1986 GASA reaffirmed its anti-apartheid stance.<sup>214</sup> It did not come to much because GASA still preferred white

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(1987), Alfred Machela Collection (AM 2622), p 1.

<sup>205</sup> Letter from K. Botha to N. Warner, (21 Oct. 1986), (AM 2623, D. South African Organizations, D8 GASA, GALA).

<sup>206</sup> Letter from K. Botha to S. Nkodi, (25 Nov. no year), (C1.6 GASA-IGA, AM 2623, GALA).

<sup>207</sup> Interview with Knoesen.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> GASA Press Statement. (20-21 Sept. 1986), (Alfred Machela Collection, D. South African Organizations, D8 GASA. AM 2622, GALA), p 3.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. According to the new GASA constitution GASA regions would be autonomous, with national membership falling away. These independent regions would function as regional support services, thereby retaining GASA’s apolitical mandate. GASA national would just be a secretariat for motivation.

<sup>211</sup> Letter from Kevan Botha (GASA) to Alfred Machela (RGO), (2 Nov. 1986), (The Alfred Machela Collection, G2 GASA, AM 2622, GALA), p 1.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, p 4.

<sup>213</sup> Letter from A. Machela to GASA. (Alfred Machela Collection, A3.1, RGO Local Correspondence, A3.1c Others, AM 2622, GALA).

<sup>214</sup> Letter from Botha to Warner, p 4.

privilege to gay rights, even if this meant the hegemonic masculinity remained as is. A member of GASA admitted: “racially-wise (sic) they are not very willing to do anything. At the most they can be called neutral.”<sup>215</sup> GASA continued to tread the thin line of appearing to be against apartheid in an attempt to gain support in the gay world. Yet at the same time, and in practice, did not challenge the NP government and its racial policy in order to retain the privileged position of its white members.

Initially most of the RGO members were from the Rand area, but as it grew it claimed to cover the whole of Gauteng, other provinces,<sup>216</sup> and other countries.<sup>217</sup> The RGO said its membership quickly increased, by 1987, to seven hundred members including men from Lesotho, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe.<sup>218</sup> There was, however, an historical trend for South African gay organisations to misrepresent their numbers because to get foreign funding they needed to appear substantial. Numbers were also misrepresented because gay organisations wanted to show that there was a mass movement.<sup>219</sup>

In the latter part of the 1980s the RGO was still politically active: it corresponded with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the Johannesburg Democratic Association Committee (JODAC), Archbishop Tutu, Murphy Morobe (a leader of the UDF), and the African Council of Churches (ACC). All welcomed the involvement of lesbians and gay men in the fight against apartheid but more, considering resources, as individuals, as opposed to unconditional support of the RGO by their organisations. This was especially in the case with the UDF. The UDF resisted gay organisations<sup>220</sup> and did not debate the issue of homosexuality because black communities’ acceptance of

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<sup>215</sup> Letter from N. van den Hoek to RGO, (6 May 1986), (AM 2623, G2. GASA, GALA), p 2.

<sup>216</sup> Durban, Port Elizabeth, and Welkom. (RGO speech, 1986, AM 2622, A. Machela Collection, A4 Position Papers, Talks, Statements, AM 2622, GALA), p 3.

<sup>217</sup> Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland. (RGO speech, 1986), p 3.

<sup>218</sup> Letter from RGO (4 May 1987), (Alfred Machela Collection, A2 International, A3 Correspondence, AM 2622, GALA), p 1. An Australian publication, *Outrage*, said the RGO was the largest gay organisation in South Africa with 750 members, 60% of which were black. (P. Tatchell, ‘Black, Gay and Angry’, 1987). To the international gay community these statistics suggested the RGO was therefore 40% white. This was not the case. The remaining 40% was made up of Coloured and Indian, as well as white members.

<sup>219</sup> Interview with Knoesen.

<sup>220</sup> Interview with Kraak.

homosexuality was minimal.<sup>221</sup> Besides, says Mohlahedi: there were not enough black, gay men out of the closet to warrant such discussion, and if there were they were not accepted anyway. Homosexuality was not on the UDF's agenda owing to the potential negative response of the community regarding the issue.<sup>222</sup>

One of the greatest strains between the RGO and GASA was GASA's 1987 involvement with the HSRC, an NP government-funded institution. One of the HSRC's research projects was homosexuality in South Africa. The participation of GASA in the project raised issues within the broader arena of gay politics about GASA's credibility. The RGO did not believe that the NP government could be serious when it came to granting funds to undertake a scientific gay research project and at the same time consider criminalising all homosexuality.<sup>223</sup> Kraak says GASA worked with the NP government on this because it was an "attitudinal thing:" GASA hoped it could influence the study.<sup>224</sup> I think there was the very real possibility that the HRSC was simply another 1968 Select Committee. Potentially the NP government was not interested in a fair, impartial study into homosexuality but wanted to use this research to reassert its power and hegemonic masculinity.

GASA's collaboration with the HSRC also caused problems within the ILGA because everyone knew the Botha regime was not going to repeal laws that criminalised homosexuality.<sup>225</sup> "If GASA is actually collaborating with the racist-government, and the homophobic-government (sic) ... then it could be to embarrassing (sic) to keep them as members within the ILGA."<sup>226</sup> "What the hell are they doing?"<sup>227</sup>

A further division between the RGO and GASA arose because of the issue of HIV/AIDS. Typical of the South African context education regarding HIV/AIDS became a

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<sup>221</sup> Interview with Mohlehedhi

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Letter from the RGO (1987), p 2.

<sup>224</sup> Interview with Kraak.

<sup>225</sup> Tatchell, 'Black, Gay and Angry', *Outrage*, p. 17.

<sup>226</sup> Letter from J. Voss (Sweden) to A. Machela, (12 Feb. 1987), (Alfred Machela Collection, A2 International, A3 Correspondence, AM 2622, GALA), p 2.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid, p 1.

black/white issue. The RGO was involved in HIV/AIDS education work because GASA's AIDS Action Group (AAG) had neglected the black community. The RGO translated safe sex pamphlets into Zulu and Sotho and gave them to the AAG for printing, but nothing was done.<sup>228</sup> There was black support of the AAG's fundraising drives but little of this money was transferred to the black community. GASA did nothing to help because this would threaten its comfort within the white hegemonic masculinity. Consequently the RGO asked the ILGA to withdraw its promised financial support to GASA because of GASA's collaboration with the HSRC. \$20 000 had been earmarked for advertising HIV/AIDS is not a gay disease and there is nothing wrong with homosexuality. So instead the Township AIDS Project (TAP) was set up by the RGO and financed by the Swedish gay and lesbian movement.

The Swedish gay and lesbian movement also paid for Machela to go to the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual ILGA conference in Sweden, which he used as a platform – “only then would the gay conferences be told of the true happenings in the South African gay community.”<sup>229</sup> He admitted to the conference that the South African gay community was divided by much finger pointing and backbiting which meant little was being done to build the gay liberation movement.<sup>230</sup> However considering the letters of correspondence from Machela to various gay leaders and to the IGLA, housed at GALA, Machela was also guilty of doing this.

Machela furthermore pointed out to the conference that there was a misconception that all South African, gay men had the same problems. White, gay South Africans' only problem was that they could not publicly show love to someone of the same sex without breaking the law. Therefore some white, gay men only wanted to challenge the NP government for their “bed rights.”<sup>231</sup> On the other hand, he said, black, gay men

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<sup>228</sup> RGO Newsletter, (n.d), (Alfred Machela Collection, C. AIDS/HIV, AM 2622, GALA).

<sup>229</sup> Address by A. Machela at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the ILGA, (1987), (AM 2623, B.4.2. 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference ILGA Conference, 1987, GALA), p 1.

<sup>230</sup> Speech made by A. Machela at International Gay Conference (1987), (Alfred Machela Collection, AM 2622, G1 Miscellaneous, GALA), p 1.

<sup>231</sup> Address by A. Machela at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the ILGA, p 5.

supported all movements committed to the liberation of *all* South Africans.<sup>232</sup> Machela warned the conference that white, gay groups would claim they were not the oppressors and were against apartheid but their actions proved otherwise. Machela said GASA was no better than the Botha regime<sup>233</sup> and their almost non-existent black membership proved this.<sup>234</sup> Considering white hegemonic masculine privilege it was obvious GASA could not encourage a large black membership if it wanted the retention of this privilege. GASA also had to consider the administration that would be necessary in order to secure a black membership. There were widely differing cultural aspects to the two race groups, as well as the consideration of the apartheid context in which black and white people could not socialise with each other.

Owing to Machela's address to the ILGA some international gay organisations suggested the ILGA distance itself from GASA. Others threatened to leave if GASA was not expelled.<sup>235</sup> Some refused to even join because GASA was a member.<sup>236</sup> In order to rectify the problem Scandinavian gay groups proposed the ILGA send a representative to South Africa to investigate GASA. Some organisations did not feel this delegation necessary because for them Machela had convincingly corroborated all the evidence against GASA. This proposal was not approved and GASA was not expelled. But the victory was short-lived.

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid, p 9.

<sup>234</sup> Address by A. Machela at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the ILGA, p 8 and Dibblin, 'Black and Gay in South Africa', n.p.

<sup>235</sup> Scotland, Australia, and Spain.

<sup>236</sup> Organizations in England and America. Ironically by the mid-1980s the UK had some of the most restrictive legislation on gay sexuality in Europe. In the late 1980s there was a big gap between the legal status of gay men in the UK and the Netherlands. The latter had greater official recognition of the gay lifestyle and gay and lesbian concerns were incorporated into mainstream politics. There was new anti-discriminatory legislation in place and moves towards registered partnerships. British legislation on the other hand was eroding gay and lesbian rights. Section 28 of the British Local Government Act of 1988 would not recognise homosexuality as a 'pretended family relationship'. Homosexuality was seen as the cause of the moral decay of a nation. Protest against Section 28 re-energised gay politics in Britain. In Amsterdam homosexuality was promoted but the campaign to attract international gay tourism to the country was withdrawn. There was public debate and worry over how Amsterdam would be represented to other countries. (J. Binnie. 'Trading Places' in Bell, Valentine, Mapping Desire).

The ILGA continued to be suspicious of GASA's political allegiances. The RGO accused GASA of collaborating with the military, the police, and the NP government in the general election in 1987 where there was a "phenomenon of gay men supporting candidates."<sup>237</sup> Exit urged Hillbrow's gay men to vote for the NP candidate because, like GASA, Exit wanted the status quo maintained. Allegedly Exit contributed to the NP's campaign by refusing to publish anti-NP government sentiment.<sup>238</sup> The NP member won the Hillbrow constituency and this could have been "directly attributed to the gay vote."<sup>239</sup> The ILGA took cognisance of this, as well as of GASA's lack of support for Nkoli during his political trial, which had commenced in 1984, and the fact that GASA held meetings in whites-only areas. Hence the contradiction of GASA's theoretical and literal practices were evident to the ILGA. GASA could not insist it was against apartheid but yet support the NP in elections. Finally in the same year the ILGA suspended GASA.

Gay unity continued to fail in South Africa. The RGO was not much better off than GASA. Machela was challenged by other gay organisations, most notably Benefit, a gay fundraising organisation, and individuals and the RGO was losing ground in the eyes of the gay liberation movement. There was controversy over the real membership figures of the RGO. Machela had claimed there were six hundred members but no one had ever met more than twenty. The last RGO meeting had been in 1986 and the RGO executive committee resigned<sup>240</sup> leaving Machela on his own as chairman. Therefore in essence the RGO was Alfred Machela only.

In 1987 Machela was accused of misusing the RGO to further his own political aims, instead of using the organisation to fight against gay discrimination.<sup>241</sup> The RGO was perceived as a political, gay organisation as opposed to a gay organisation involved in

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<sup>237</sup> Letter from CPD to WGM, (8 June 1987), (CPD, D) Correspondence, E) Press, AM 2626, GALA), p 1.

<sup>238</sup> ILGA Bulletin 4/87, 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Cologne, (1987), (AM 2623, B.4.2. 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference ILGA Conference, 1987, GALA), p 2.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> According to Robin Ah Chow of Benefit, Minutes from Benefit Executive Committee Meeting, (7 Sept. 1986).

<sup>241</sup> Ibid. This information came out in small claims court, 24 Feb. 1987, when legal action was taken against Machela by Everset Export Agency, which had given Machela a loan, he had not paid back.



politics.<sup>242</sup> Some gay activists felt the RGO had become more of a civil rights group than a gay organisation fighting apartheid.<sup>243</sup> Hence the complexities of race, sexuality, and civil rights. By 1987 the RGO still did not have a constitution although “a roughly drawn one seems to hint on (sic) the support of violence and assistance to other illegal organisations, with total opposition to the present form of Government.”<sup>244</sup> The latter assertion is correct. The RGO did not survive; it was a one-man show and collapsed by 1988.

### **GASA and Simon Nkoli**

The SG had suffered a considerable setback when Nkoli was arrested in 1984 during rent boycott demonstrations in Sebokeng, where he lived.<sup>245</sup> He was arrested with 21 co-accused who became known as the Delmas 22 Treason Trialists or the Vaal 22. They were eventually charged with murder, terrorism, subversion, and high treason (furthering the aims of the banned ANC) all based on circumstantial evidence.<sup>246</sup> If found guilty, they would be executed.<sup>247</sup> Nkoli was held in detention for four years and then he and nine Delmas Trial defendants were finally acquitted of all charges in 1988. It was the longest political trial in South African history.

Initially Nkoli felt the sting of his fellow-accused’s homophobia when they found out he was gay, some even asked for separate trials<sup>248</sup> and refused to accept overseas financial

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<sup>242</sup> Interview with Knoesen.

<sup>243</sup> Letter from R. Ah Chow to A. Machela, (3 Aug. 1987), (AM 2622, Alfred Machela Collection, A3.1. RGO Local Correspondence, A3.1.c Others, GALA), p 1.

<sup>244</sup> R. Dingwell, ‘Legal Action’, (no date), (AM 2622, Alfred Machela Collection, A4 Position Papers, Talks, Statements, GALA), p 14.

<sup>245</sup> The Vaal Civic Association, a UDF affiliate, organised a protest march in response to the government-imposed rent increase. For the most part, the march was peaceful, but a few marchers started trouble and the police dispersed the protesters. The police started shooting and a friend of Nkoli’s was killed. Nkoli was arrested in the churchyard at his friend’s funeral where he was charged with attending the rent boycott demonstrations, which was an illegal meeting.

<sup>246</sup> P. Tatchell, ‘Out Against Apartheid’, Rouge, (Winter 1989/90), (Peter Tatchell Collection, AM 2715, GALA).

<sup>247</sup> The state prosecution alleged that Nkoli had incited people against the government community councillors in the townships. He had apparently done this in a speech at the Vaal Civic Association’s inaugural meeting. Five councillors were consequently murdered. Nkoli allegedly attended the rent boycott demonstrations knowing the five councillors were going to be murdered. However, Nkoli had not even attended the Vaal Civic Association’s inauguration.

<sup>248</sup> K. Lotter, ‘Back in Africa’, Exit no 40, (Nov. 1989), (The Papers of OLGA, LAGO, Box 5: The OLGA Papers, File 2: Press Clippings, AM 2801, GALA).



aid from lesbian and gay organisations.<sup>249</sup> They said it was an embarrassment to have Nkoli on trial with them and asked him not to publicise his homosexuality.<sup>250</sup> George Bizos, the Delmas lawyer, gave Nkoli's fellow prisoners a choice – accept Nkoli's homosexuality or find a different lawyer.<sup>251</sup> Nkoli tried to get his fellow trialists to understand the similarities between the struggle for dignity and equality in South Africa and the struggle for gay and lesbian rights.<sup>252</sup>

During his years in detention the homophobia of Nkoli's fellow accused did, however, dissipate. Popo Molefe, the General Secretary of the UDF, had originally thought gay men and lesbians were only interested in sex and not the struggle against apartheid. He later told Nkoli: ““since you have been with us in this trial, my eyes have been opened. I now understand that lesbians and gay men should be accepted and respected for what they are’.”<sup>253</sup> Patrick Lekota, Publicity Secretary of the UDF, told Nkoli that they were all proud of him and apologised for the way some of the Delmas 22 had treated him earlier in the trial.<sup>254</sup>

Because of Nkoli's arrest the SG collapsed. GASA felt the SG disintegrated because the committee members had differing opinions.<sup>255</sup> More importantly, though, I think, the collapse of the SG evidenced that gay organisations were fickle: plagued with inefficiency, they were too reliant on individual personalities to keep them afloat. Even Nkoli correctly presumed that the SG had died since his incarceration.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Simon had support from all over the world: the Simon Nkodi Anti-apartheid Committee in Canada, Gays and Lesbians of UBC (Canada), Gay Mot (against) Apartheid in Stockholm, the SHRG Scotland, and the CHE in England. (IGA newsletter, n.d. AM 2623, Peter Tatchell Collection, AM 2715, GALA).

<sup>250</sup> Video: 'Steps for the Future: Simon and I', (Directed by B. Ditsie, N. Newman).

<sup>251</sup> Luirink, *Moffies*, p 131.

<sup>252</sup> G. Hayward, 'History of the Equality Clause' in *Equality*, May 1996, p 2.

<sup>253</sup> P. Tatchell, 'Out Against Apartheid', *Him*, (Sept. 1989), (AM 2715, Peter Tatchell Collection, GALA), p 11.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>255</sup> Letter from J. Zipp to Trevor, (21 Oct. 1984), (C.1.a. GASA Rand, AM 2623) and Smith and Williams, 'GASA Denies Deal with South African Police', n.p..

<sup>256</sup> Letter from Simon to Roy (6 and 23 May 1985), (A) Correspondence. 1. Simon Nkoli to Roy Shepherd, 1985, File I, AM 2623, GALA).

The judge summing up Nkoli's case showed the discrimination that existed: "in an obvious reference to my homosexuality, the judge said he could not believe that I was a leader of the uprising in the townships'. 'Surely,' he said, 'accused number thirteen could never be a leader of men.'"<sup>257</sup> This portrays the hegemonic masculinity – that gay men did not constitute a definitive masculinity of their own. Through Nkoli's description of what he was subjected to in prison it becomes clear he was treated differently, because he was gay. Nkoli was the first to be arrested yet the last to give evidence, and he was on the stand the shortest time; he was the only defendant not allowed contact visits; and the only one to go to the psychiatric ward (for three months). "I suffered a lot and I never want to go through that again."<sup>258</sup> He was not considered purely a political activist like the other twenty-one defendants, although, ironically, and never publicised, Nkoli was not the only gay man in the Delmas Trial.<sup>259</sup> I presume these other men had not come out because firstly, they were leaders of the UDF, which frowned upon homosexuality, and secondly, racial politics was their first priority, not sexuality.

The international gay community challenged GASA throughout the 1980s. Overseas organisations wanted answers from GASA as to why it did not support Nkoli during his trial. A report from GASA's international secretary and chair of GASA Rand, Anne Smith, tried to answer these questions but only exacerbated the situation, especially when Jim Williams, a gay activist from Britain,<sup>260</sup> publicly rebuked Smith and her report. "Reading Anne Smith's 'report' from SA regarding Simon Nkodi makes me ill. It is one-sided, self-defending and as misleading as the South African propaganda machine."<sup>261</sup> Smith admitted "that she, personally, believe(d) 'we should be fighting discrimination in all its manifestations ... but GASA's membership thinks otherwise.'"<sup>262</sup> Mohlahedi agrees that there were some in GASA who wanted to support Nkoli but they

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<sup>257</sup> Tatchell, 'Out Against Apartheid', p 11.

<sup>258</sup> Letter from S. Nkoli to Peter, p 1.

<sup>259</sup> Letter from S. Nkoli to Peter, (2 May 1988), (Alfred Machela Collection, A2 International, A3 Correspondence, AM 2622, GALA), p 1. Nkoli did not name these men because they had not come out.

<sup>260</sup> Williams had been a guest lecturer at Soweto College of Education in 1983.

<sup>261</sup> A. Smith and J. Williams, 'GASA Denies Deal with South African Police', (no date, no publication), (AM 2623, G2 GASA, GALA), n.p.

<sup>262</sup> SHRG newsletter (20 June 1986), (Alfred Machela Collection, G2 Miscellaneous, AM 2622, GALA), p 2.

were the minority and this was an unpopular view to have, especially considering that the influential Kevan Botha did not give Nkoli his support.<sup>263</sup> According to Bart Luirink GASA considered Nkoli

the proverbial spanner in its apartheid-friendly works. Change your behaviour, play it straight, keep a low profile, do not give offence ... those were the guidelines the executive gave their members and supporters time and again. Then everything would work out in the end.<sup>264</sup>

The international gay community accused GASA of making a deal with the SAP and the government but GASA maintained it did not want to get involved in South African politics so that it would be allowed to continue to exist. Smith denied that any such deal existed.<sup>265</sup> Williams did not accept this denial: in South Africa if an organisation existed and had not been banned, the NP government accepted it.<sup>266</sup> Therefore GASA was working with the NP government because by not taking action GASA was supporting apartheid and condoning the racist actions of the NP government.<sup>267</sup> GASA neither wanted nor had the power to force the NP government to make changes.

Smith retaliated that GASA was committed to fighting discrimination but gay discrimination only. This was what GASA's Charter stated. If GASA went beyond this specific discrimination it was going beyond its Charter. In GASA's eyes arguing for black, gay rights would have been political. GASA was adhering to its 1985 objectives, which clearly stipulated that it would not do anything unless by lawful means,<sup>268</sup> which meant it would not challenge apartheid. This also reveals "how entrenched GASA was in the apartheid perception of extra-parliamentary activity as criminal activity only."<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Interview with Mohlahedi.

<sup>264</sup> Luirink, *Moffies*, p 21.

<sup>265</sup> Smith and Williams, 'GASA Denies Deal with South African Police'.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Letter from Gay men and Lesbians of UBC (Canada) to Bill Schiller, (25 Feb. 1986), (Alfred Machela Collection, G2 Miscellaneous, AM 2622, GALA).

<sup>268</sup> GASA's Objectives (1985/6), (Alfred Machela Collection, D. South African Organizations, D8 GASA, AM 2622, GALA).

<sup>269</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 56.

Williams did not accept GASA's reliance on its Charter: "we don't approve of their silly charter."<sup>270</sup>

GASA also felt the timing was wrong to support Nkoli because at that time the President's Council was still investigating the laws on homosexuality. "Given the current legislation regarding homosexuality in this country, our position is as yet somewhat tenuous. To risk being banned is to risk setting gay liberation back a great deal in SA."<sup>271</sup> Tactically, in order to maintain credibility in front of the President's Council, GASA could not be seen publicly supporting Nkoli. GASA failed to realise that they were liberated, although this was not gay liberation. Rather they were liberated because they were white, privileged men in a racially oppressed society. I don't believe GASA wanted the status quo changed anyway. It hid behind its Charter and the need to appease the NP government in order to enjoy white privilege.

GASA had pledged itself to the repeal of laws, which prohibited homosex between consenting adults and to assist gay men who was discriminated against. Nkoli had not been arrested because he was gay so GASA did not have to support him. "Nowhere in the charges is there even a faint hint of his homosexuality being known – let alone relevant to the issue."<sup>272</sup> Neither was Nkoli being charged under the Immorality Amendment Act therefore there was little role for GASA to play.<sup>273</sup>

Smith lashed out at the international gay community though, saying that it was ironic that GASA was oppressed in South Africa and was now being oppressed from the outside. Smith even went so far as to say: "in attacking the South African gay community, they (the IGLA) are aligning themselves with the oppressors."<sup>274</sup> Williams would not give an inch: "she asks us not to align with GASA's oppressors. I think we should be asking GASA not to align with black South Africa's oppressors."<sup>275</sup> Smith asked the ILGA not

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<sup>270</sup> Smith and Williams, 'GASA Denies Deal with South African Police', n.p.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

to expel GASA: it would be a blow to all gay men because GASA served both black and white gay men in South Africa.<sup>276</sup> Williams was aghast:

She states that expulsion from the IGA will deal a ‘devastating blow to black and white alike’. Who is she kidding? Does she really feel that GASA has support in the gay black community? This is an organization with its organ in English and Afrikaans (sic)? May we see some statistics on who exactly the membership of GASA includes.<sup>277</sup>

GASA’s support of Nkoli continued to be a bone of contention. Allegedly Kevan Botha had used Nkoli to remain in the ILGA and had only given Nkoli token support due to ILGA pressure.<sup>278</sup> Exit apparently quoted Botha cautioning the ILGA *against* automatically aligning itself with Nkoli because he was accused of five charges of murder. Supposedly Botha had hidden his intention until he had Nkoli’s endorsement that GASA should not be expelled.<sup>279</sup> According to Luirink, once the ILGA threatened GASA with expulsion Nkoli was invited to parties and everyone wanted photographs with him, which were sent to Europe to create the impression that GASA was multi-racial.<sup>280</sup> It was questioned that if this was Botha’s behaviour should GASA, which claimed to represent South African gay men, be allowed to remain a member of international gay forums? Some felt Botha’s “insular thinking” and “vicious pettiness” did gay liberation more harm than good.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Tatchell, ‘Black, Gay and Angry’, Outrage, p 17.

<sup>279</sup> Letter from Ms Caroline Heaton-Nicholls (Nkoli’s lawyer) to Kevan Botha, (9 Sept. 1986), (C1.6) GASA-IGA, AM 2623, GALA), p 2.

<sup>280</sup> Luirink, Moffies, p 22.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid, p 5.

**Other New Gay Organisations: Lesbians and Gays Against Oppression (LAGO)/OLGA, The Soweto/Johannesburg Gay and Lesbian Working Group (SOJGO)/GLOW, and the Congress of the Pink Democrats (CDP)**

In the mid-1980s GASA felt South Africa's foundation for a strong gay movement was growing and believed a unified movement could come from this.<sup>282</sup> GASA was wrong. A number of new gay organisations were formed in the latter part of the 1980s. This was testimony to GASA's inadequacy of catering for black, gay men, the RGO's lack of impact, and the need to be part of the greater struggle for human rights for all, which included gay and lesbian rights. There was little difference between earlier 1980s and later gay organisations, just more organisations. It is noteworthy that each new organisation catered for the specific requirements of its members; some were socially orientated, concentrating on advising people on coming out and giving them a platform to meet other gay men. Others were more politically overt with agendas for gay rights, although this was often more paperwork than practice.

The African Gay Association (AGA) was a social club for black lesbians and gay men in the Cape Town suburbs of Guguletu and Langa. The Gay Students' Society (GSS) was formed at the University of Natal, Durban campus, a social support system catering for gay men who were dissatisfied with existing organisations. Other university gay organisations were the Wits Gay Movement (WGM) and the Gay and Lesbian Association (GALA) of the University of Cape Town. These organisations were progressive, gay organisations committed to the greater struggle of political liberation. I think for them, the defensive stance taken by GASA was inadequate. In comparison to the political activism of LAGO/OLGA and the CPD and the large membership and influence of GLOW the AGA, GSS, WGM, and GALA made less of an impact. Also they were university-based which meant they were more socially inclined and small. Therefore I have paid less attention to them in comparison to the other gay organisations.

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<sup>282</sup> Letter from Kevan Botha (GASA) to Alfred Machela (RGO), (2 Nov. 1986), (The Alfred Machela Collection, G2 GASA, AM 2622, GALA), p 1 and SHRG newsletter (20 June 1986), (Alfred Machela

## LAGO/OLGA

LAGO was formed in 1986 in response to the State of Emergency by white, gay and lesbian, anti-apartheid activists in Cape Town. Compared to other gay organisations it was a very politicised organisation that constantly challenged GASA. Four members of LAGO had served on the committee of Cape Town GASA but had withdrawn due to frustration.<sup>283</sup> Sheila Lapinsky, for example, had been the chair of GASA in the Western Cape but resigned because of GASA's political alliance with the government, and its male-orientation. LAGO was perhaps a little too inaccessible for the majority of gay men. Considering LAGO correspondence, its meeting minutes, and its relationships with other gay organisations I think LAGO was quite radical, politicised, and academic. Its membership was mainly confined to white, middle-class intellectuals.<sup>284</sup> LAGO was, however, committed to fighting all forms of oppression,<sup>285</sup> did seem to have a greater understanding of the political situation in South Africa and how to exploit it.

Be that as it may, LAGO as an organisation did not manage to make its mark.<sup>286</sup> Its membership had never grown: there had always been between five and twelve members. It lasted fifteen months and dissolved because some members strongly believed in essentialism and others felt LAGO was an organisation inside the struggle for all human rights. LAGO was replaced by an interim group, the Progressive Gay and Lesbian Working Group (the PGLWG), that believed in the greater struggle for all meant gay rights. The PGLWG had the same presumption, as some of those in the women's movement who believed the end of apartheid would automatically mean the end of patriarchy and therefore heterosexism. The PGLWG never seemed to be happy or content with the workings of the gay liberation movement and seemed to recognise that the movement was failing.

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Collection, G2 Miscellaneous, AM 2622, GALA), p 2.

<sup>283</sup> Letter to Roy from LAGO, (1987), (C3) South African Organizations, LAGO, OLGA, AM 2623, GALA).

<sup>284</sup> Jara, Lapinsky, 'Forging a Representative Gay Liberation Movement in South Africa', p 4.

<sup>285</sup> Dr I. Toms in G. Wotherspoon and C. Faro, 'Against the Odds', *Outrage*, p 41.

<sup>286</sup> Even Nkoli did not know who Sheila Lapinsky, a prominent member of LAGO, was: "I do not know who is Sheila Lipstick or something." (Letter to R. Shepherd from S. Nkoli, 12 April 1987).



In 1987 the PGLGW realised that for lesbians and gay men to be recognised and given full rights when South Africa became a democracy, it was necessary to participate in the events that led up to that change and be part of the main struggle. Over the next two years PGLGW members, who later formed OLGA, made the greatest contributions to the gay liberation movement. OLGA became the gay watchdog: being an affiliate in the UDF made it harder for homophobic attitudes in the democratic movement to continue unchallenged. When OLGA had requested membership to the UDF there were giggles and disbelief.<sup>287</sup> Most of the UDF regional executive saw being gay as a white phenomenon. To OLGA's benefit Lapinsky and Toms had credibility.<sup>288</sup> The UDF accepted OLGA's application for two reasons: morally it could not refuse and strategically it needed as many members as possible. In 1989 OLGA took the lead role in lobbying the ANC for constitutional protection for gay men and lesbians. Partly because of these efforts the sexual orientation was secured in the equality clause in the Constitution.<sup>289</sup>

### **SOJGO/GLOW**

Once acquitted, Nkoli saw the need for a Soweto-based gay group because gay organisations in Johannesburg were still not catering for black, gay men. SOJGO came into being. Many RGO members possibly moved on to support the new organisation.<sup>290</sup>

SOJGO's first challenge came when OLGA asked SOJGO to support Ivan Toms' stand as a conscientious objector with the End Conscription Campaign (ECC). LAGO had accused GASA of tokenism: using Nkoli to gain international recognition.<sup>291</sup> Ironically, I think, LAGO used Toms as their token. Toms was, for want of a better description, the

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<sup>287</sup> Gevisser, 'A Different Fight for Freedom', p 75.

<sup>288</sup> Sheila Lapinsky, chair of LAGO/OLGA was an anti-apartheid activist, and a UDF member. Ivan Toms was recognised as an anti-apartheid activist because he had reluctantly entered the SADF, but realised the army was used to defend apartheid. P. Tatchell, 'Ivor (sic) Toms Walks Free', *Capital Gay*, (27 April 1990). Later Toms refused to go on a one-month camp. He received a 21-month gaol sentence in 1987.

<sup>289</sup> See chapter 5.

<sup>290</sup> Informal interview with Anthony Manion, (3 Sept. 2002).

<sup>291</sup> Letter to Roy from LAGO, (no date), (AM 2623, C.3. South African Organizations, OLGA, LAGO, GALA).

gay liberation movement's white Simon Nkoli. Once a draft resister he became recognised as a gay activist.<sup>292</sup>

SOJGO took an essentialist line regarding Toms: it supported Toms' cause, but in order to support him personally they wanted to know what he was doing for gay rights, while, as they said, he was posing as straight? In pamphlets, speeches, and newspaper articles on Toms there was no mention of his homosexuality. SOJGO's argument was that if Toms was not out he did nothing for the gay struggle.<sup>293</sup> Even though Toms was out, he did not publicise it; therefore I think the concern that he was aiding gay men's invisibility was valid. Owing to a comparison between Nkoli and Toms, SOJGO decided it could only support gay people who opened doors for the gay struggle. SOJGO's decision, however, was moot because the ineffective and badly organised organisation made no impact on gay politics. SOJGO lasted no more than a month.

Nkoli then formed the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW), a predominantly black organisation committed to non-racism, non-sexism, and non-heterosexism.<sup>294</sup> GLOW believed the struggle for gay and lesbian rights was part of the

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<sup>292</sup> Because of Toms' refusal to go back to the army, in the months prior to his trial he "was subjected to a horrifying 'dirty trick' campaign by the South African security services." (Tatchell, 'Ivor (sic) Toms Walks Free', *Capital Gay*, 27 April 1990). This anti-gay smear campaign had "allegedly been orchestrated by a government-sanctioned Special Propaganda Unit within the South African army." (Tatchell, 'Draft Refusenik Faces Jail in SA', *Capital Gay*, 26 Feb. 1988). This was verified when three soldiers were sentenced to eighteen months military detention because they threatened to publicly reveal details of this dirty tricks campaign to discredit Toms and the ECC. (Tatchell, 'Campaign of Dirty Tricks by Apartheid Regime', *The Pink Paper*, issue 20, 14 April 1988). In this smear campaign Toms' home was attacked and posters and graffiti condemning his homosexuality were blatant in Cape Town and on the adjoining freeways. Professionally printed smear posters stated 'Ivan Toms has AIDS', 'Ivan Toms is a Fairy', 'The ECC Does It From Behind', 'The ECC Believes in Fairy Tales, and 'Toms Fucks Young Boys'. (Tatchell, 'Draft Refusenik Faces Jail in SA'). Toms had a truckload of pig manure dumped on his doorstep and his car vandalised. He even put chicken wire on his bedroom window to stop petrol bombs. He also received death-threats, crude hate mail, and obscene and threatening phone calls, up to twenty-five a day. (Tatchell, 'Ivor (sic) Toms Walks Free'). While Toms' trial was being played out Major Vorster phoned Toms to inform him that his call-up had been withdrawn. The abusive phone-calls stopped immediately. "Obviously the callers (were) either the military intelligence or security branch" or a body that was informed by them. (Letter from I. Toms to LAGO, 1 July 1987). This smear campaign proved that the state would attack a person because he was gay and not because he was a conscientious objector. (Letter from J. Nicol to Trevor, 2 July 1987).

<sup>293</sup> Mazibuko (AGA) in Soweto/Johannesburg Gay and Lesbian Working Group Report Back, (March 1988), (C6) South African Organizations, Soweto/Johannesburg Working Group, AM 2623, GALA). Mazibuko later denied saying this.

<sup>294</sup> Much information on GLOW exists because one of its objectives was to collect material relating to gay

greater struggle, following from Nkoli's belief that his gayness and blackness were inseparable.<sup>295</sup> However, even GLOW concentrated more on gay needs specifically. I believe GLOW's draft constitution was essentialist in that it aimed to improve the living conditions of the gay and lesbian population, set up a gay and lesbian community centre in Soweto, create a gay cultural and sports organisation, and establish a national, progressive, gay newspaper to challenge Exit. Many of these issues did not affect gay people only yet GLOW wanted them rectified for gay men and lesbians.

Like SOJGO, GLOW supported Toms' cause but also had problems with what they saw as the homophobic manner in which it was conducted. They felt the ECC was homophobic because it insisted Toms was not to have a public gay profile. However the ECC's reasoning was that some things had to be forfeited in order to be ultimately successful. Most of the ECC's target constituency was young, white conscripts who were homophobic.<sup>296</sup> They would not support the ECC if they knew Toms was gay. Therefore Toms agreed not to challenge hegemonic, heterosexual masculinity, keeping his political activism "rooted in a heteronormative basis."<sup>297</sup>

In May 1988 Nkoli called all prominent gay activists together for conflict resolution.<sup>298</sup> He wanted them to stop the fighting for leadership. This seems to have been the leitmotif of the gay liberation movement in the 1980s – everybody wanted to lead the movement their way. Nkoli called the gay activists together because "at least one or two of the people ... must be on the mission to destroy the gay unity in South Africa."<sup>299</sup> Nothing came of Nkoli's meeting, supporting my assertion that the lack of gay unity meant the movement failed.

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and lesbian matters to establish a resource centre.

<sup>295</sup> Video: 'Steps for the Future'.

<sup>296</sup> Letter to PGLWG from OLGA, (30 April 1988), (PGLWG, AM 2657, GALA).

<sup>297</sup> Conway, 'Masculinity, Citizenship, and Political Objection to Compulsory Military Service in the South African Defence Force,' p 7. See p 179.

<sup>298</sup> Machela (RGO), Shelton (GLOW), Shepherd (GLOW), Lapinsky (OLGA), Mazibuko (AGA), Nicols (OLGA), and Nkoli (GLOW).

<sup>299</sup> Letter to Roy from Simon, (4 May 1988), (C6) South African Organizations, Soweto/Johannesburg Working Group, AM 2623, GALA).

GLOW disbanded in the early 1990s because once the Interim Constitution stipulated sexual orientation as a clause for non-discrimination there was really little need for GLOW. Its role in the gay liberation movement had been fulfilled.

### **The CPD**

One central body was needed to control and represent the different gay organisations. Most of the organisations in the gay liberation movement wanted unification but could not find common ground regarding political ideologies. Also, it was a battle between different racial definitions of masculinity. A number of issues had to be considered: did gay men need to organise specifically as gay men, should there be a gay movement if gay rights would always be at stake, and was blind support of gay issues necessary?<sup>300</sup> Again it was the same argument: gay essentialism at the expense of the broader struggle.

To create this unity the RGO and the then-LAGO spearheaded the formation of a new alliance. Invitations were sent to what they considered progressive organisations and six of them met in Cape Town in April 1987.<sup>301</sup> For the very first time in the gay history of this country gay groups came together to discuss their political stand.<sup>302</sup> The result was The Congress of the Pink Democrats (CPD),<sup>303</sup> the largest gay grouping in South Africa with 80% black membership.<sup>304</sup> But the CPD was possibly recognised as a large gay grouping not necessarily for the work it did, but because it was the only available umbrella body at the time.<sup>305</sup> However South African gay activists dispute this. Mohlahedi knew nothing about the CPD<sup>306</sup> and Kraak thought the CPD to be Cape-based and small.<sup>307</sup> The four organisations that finally made up the CPD were the RGO,

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<sup>300</sup> Edwin Cameron in CPD Agenda (n.d), (CPD B) Conference 1987, C) Convention 1988, AM 2626, GALA).

<sup>301</sup> Invitations were sent to GALA (UCT), the Gay Christian Convention (Cape, Durban, and Johannesburg), the Catholic Group (Jhb), GAB (Jhb), WGM, GSS (Natal), Yachad (Jhb), Flamingoes (P.E.), Inter-R (P.E.), AGA (Cape Town), Impact (Jhb), LAGO, AGA, the RGO, and GASA.

<sup>302</sup> Letter to Peter from RGO, (6 May 1987), (Alfred Machela Collection, A2 International, A3 Correspondence, AM 2622, GALA), p 1.

<sup>303</sup> The CPD is often referred to as The Alliance.

<sup>304</sup> K. Swart, 'Demands Not Divisive', *South News*, (26 Nov.-2 Dec. 1987), (The Papers of LAGO and OLGA, Box 5: The OLGA Papers, File 2: Press Clippings, AM 2801, GALA).

<sup>305</sup> Informal interview with Anthony Manion, (3 Sept. 2002).

<sup>306</sup> Interview with Mohlahedi,

<sup>307</sup> Interview with Kraak.

LAGO, the AGA, and GALA. WGM joined later. GASA did not want to be a member of the CPD because the progressive status of the alliance was not conducive to its organisation.<sup>308</sup> In other words the CPD challenged white hegemony. But the CPD's existence ended up being very brief.

The CPD aimed to present gay and lesbian issues to non-gay groups in the anti-apartheid struggle and to gain official backing. It was very important to the CPD to gain support of the heterosexual left. It realised that non-gay political circles did not appreciate the opportunism (essentialism) of gay politics.<sup>309</sup> The CPD believed it was GASA's ideological thrust that had initiated this thinking and GASA had done more to entrench homophobia in the progressive left than the NP government could have managed.<sup>310</sup> The progressive left challenged the white, hegemonic masculinity and this would include GASA, albeit that the organisation was gay and attempting to define a different masculinity within the confines of the hegemonic masculinity. The CPD did not want GASA's essentialist stigma as this meant the gay struggle would be separate from the main struggle.<sup>311</sup> In order for the gay liberation movement to be recognised as part of the greater struggle, the gay struggle needed to move away from gay elitism. "Essentialism, certainly in local politics, ha(d) historically tended to replace the progressive thrust of our liberation movements with an elitism that fast becomes rightist."<sup>312</sup> I think the CPD was actually agitating against white masculinity, which it termed as gay essentialism. The CPD aimed to mark the division in South African gay politics between reaction, which was GASA's trademark, and progression.

There was a little uneasiness from LAGO regarding the membership of the AGA in the CPD because of its sexism.<sup>313</sup> There were three non-negotiables of the CPD: only non-racial, non-sexist, and non-heterosexist organisations could be members. Dragging and drag competitions were synonymous with the AGA and this isolated them. But it was not

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<sup>308</sup> CPD Newsletter, (n.d.), (CPD D) Correspondence E) Press, AM 2626, GALA).

<sup>309</sup> 'Congress of Pink Democrats – What Now?', (n.d.), (CPD, F) Papers, G) Stationary, AM 2626, GALA), p 1.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid, p 2.

the dressing up that LAGO had issue with; it was the pretending to be women: “as gay men surely that isn’t what we are aiming at. We are gay because as men we like MEN not pseudo-women.”<sup>314</sup> The CPD insisted dragging entrenched heteronormativity. The hegemonic masculinity dictated desire must always be heterosexual therefore homosexuals could only be parodies of heterosexuality. For example drag queens are considered women and in homosexual relationships there is the perception that one man is the man, the other the woman,<sup>315</sup> that is, one man is more effeminate than the other. One of the CPD’s main ideological thrusts was to combat heterosexism. In their eyes, dragging encouraged this. Although dragging is only one variant in the gay sub-culture it is the one that most strongly displays heterosexism and therefore the one component of gay life that the CPD objected to. Also, I consider the CPD to be more political than social, moving towards a gay identity that made gay men equal citizens. However, the CPD was trying to narrowly define gay identity. Taking part in drag competitions was an aspect of being gay for some, yet the CPD wanted its definition of gay identity recognised. Again the difficulty of establishing unity is obvious as well as the dangers of classification, which is essentialist.

In my opinion the CPD was doomed to failure because it was inaccessible to the masses; it was politicised, gay men would not understand, or had little interest in the CPD’s theories and academia. Many gay men who were not interested in politics did not support the CPD because they saw it as fanatical and, I would say, essentialist. Some did not even agree with an all-gay political organisation: that “is for queens with egos. It is gay apartheid.”<sup>316</sup> “Don’t go waving a gay flag, you’re only putting gayness ahead of a larger issue.”<sup>317</sup>

Success by the CPD remained to be seen. LAGO had spearheaded and co-founded the CPD but by the time the CPD was officially launched LAGO’s chairperson, Glen

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid, p 3.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Hayes, *Queer Nations*, p 133.

<sup>316</sup> K. Swart, ‘Children Also Need Love’, *South*, (26 Nov.-2 Dec. 1987), (The Papers of LAGO and OLGA, Box 5: The OLGA Papers, File 2: Press Clippings, AM 2801, GALA), p 9.

<sup>317</sup> Eddie Gourmet in Swart, ‘Children Also Need Love’, p 9.

Shelton, had become chair of GALA.<sup>318</sup> The CPD was already in trouble, even though it was supposed to epitomise the new unity progressive, gay men were hoping for. General disorder and lack of information “bedeviled” the 1987 CPD conference.<sup>319</sup> GALA was battling to bring support to the CPD as its own membership on campus was dwindling. LAGO made matters worse by questioning the integrity of GALA. GALA retaliated that LAGO was obstructionist. Other crises in local gay and lesbian politics involved egotism. “The situation (had) become embarrassingly untenable.”<sup>320</sup> It seems to me that the finger pointing was getting out of hand and the arguments were becoming petty. At the second CPD conference it was evident that there were ideological differences between the former LAGO members and OLGA.<sup>321</sup> OLGA also challenged the CPD: was the Alliance putting itself inside the democratic movement or was it a pressure group outside, as seemed to be the case.<sup>322</sup>

Machela had opposition from the CPD. One member protested that Machela’s chairmanship “does not give (him) the right to ride the name that (they) are all proud of and had visions of it becoming the first really non-racial, multi-political gay group, better than GASA ever will or has been.”<sup>323</sup> Machela was accused of using the CPD meetings “to further (his) own aims without the support of the people. (He was) saying things and doing things that most of the members (weren’t) aware of ...”<sup>324</sup> When Machela was in London he was instructed to give out CPD pamphlets to organisations, which he did not do. He said the Security Police had confiscated the pamphlets at Jan Smuts airport.<sup>325</sup> The CPD was also angry with Machela because at the ILGA conference he had

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<sup>318</sup> An open letter to OLGA and the international gay and lesbian community from Glen Shelton, (4 May 1988), (Alfred Machela Collection, D. South African Organizations, AM 2622, GALA), p 3. Shelton was not the only member of LAGO who resigned. Another member left because she was “horrified and disgusted by the undemocratic, vicious and very carefully orchestrated attack” on another member of LAGO. (An open letter from Glen Shelton, 4 May 1988).

<sup>319</sup> CPD Minutes, (9-11 Oct. 1987), (CPD B) Conference 1987, C) Convention 1988, AM 2626, GALA), p 6/7.

<sup>320</sup> An open letter from Glen Shelton, p 1.

<sup>321</sup> Memo to Idol Films from J. Nicol, ‘A Brief Chronology of Events Regarding the Lesbian/Gay Organizations in Which I Was Involved.’ (Papers of OLGA, LAGO, Box 5: The OLGA Papers, File 3: Miscellaneous, AM 2801, GALA), p 4.

<sup>322</sup> Letter from former LAGO members to RGO: ‘The Working Group’, (6 Nov. 1987), (AM 2801, Papers of LAGO and OLGA, Box 5: The OLGA Papers, File 1; Correspondence O-Z, GALA), p 2.

<sup>323</sup> Letter from R. Ah Chow to A. Machela, p 1.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.



apparently claimed that he would fight to keep GASA in the ILGA.<sup>326</sup> Yet Machela was mandated by the CPD to request GASA's expulsion. Machela said the copy of the CPD's request for GASA's expulsion was also among the documents confiscated. The CPD also accused Machela of lying because he told the ILGA he had set up a gay community centre in Soweto with ILGA donations, but this never materialised.<sup>327</sup>

The dissension and disunity within the gay liberation movement was obvious and the movement was fast proving to be ineffective and therefore unsuccessful, especially when the CPD terminated in April 1988. It lacked infrastructure on the ground and never really did anything except issue a founding statement to the press. The organisation lasted just over a year. In effect the CPD had existed in name only. At both the CPD conferences most of the time was spent discussing the technicalities of the structure and aims of the CPD. Hence the one organisation of the 1980s that was potentially leading the gay liberation movement had failed.

### **Conclusion**

Owing to the opposing theoretical arguments concerning the broader struggle, race, and the battle of various masculinities for recognition and definition the 1980s, gay liberation movement was not unified. GASA had taken an essentialist, self-proclaimed apolitical stance to fight the President's Council and created a comfortable social environment for white, gay men. GASA benefited from the status quo – the organisation wanted to retain its white, male privilege – and in order to do this it chose not to challenge the NP government. However, GASA also had to appease the gay liberation movement in order to continue to lead the movement and so on paper, it insisted it was anti-apartheid. Its lack of action in this regard proved its theory and practice were contradictory.

On the other hand the CPD with the RGO and OLGA believed it was only through the broad struggle that would gain gay men their rights. Civil rights for black, gay men had

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<sup>325</sup> Now Johannesburg International Airport.

<sup>326</sup> Exit, (no. 20 June/July 1987) in Letter to all members of CPD from Glen Shelton, (12 Feb. 1988), (CPD) Correspondence, E) Press, AM 2626, GALA), p 2.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

to come before gay rights. The gay liberation movement had grown but its disunity hindered its potential progress, especially due to the emergence of new gay organisations that had their own ideas of their position with regard to the hegemonic masculinity. With many different gay organisations battling to establish themselves first and foremost, the gay liberation movement achieved little in terms of unity. Most gay organisations were too short-lived to evolve and although GASA survived longer than other gay organisations it evolved little, conforming to white politics in the 1980s. Even though OLGA was successful, the gay liberation movement in its entirety was a failure because there was no unity. One successful organisation within a movement does not constitute the success of the whole movement. Hence a unified gay liberation movement did not emerge. In the next two chapters I will go on to show how, in spite of this disunity, gay liberation was achieved in South Africa. Hence there was gay liberation, but the movement to secure it was a failure.

