

2014 Oliver Koonz Human Rights Prize Submission

Jacob Tobia

Program II: Human Rights Advocacy and Leadership Trinity College Class of 2014

This excerpt from my senior thesis explores the racial tensions that existed within South Africa's gay rights movement in the 1980s. Through chronicling the failure of the South African gay rights movement to effectively stand against apartheid, this paper seeks to shed light on a movement that is often forgotten and maligned in the South African historical record. Overall, I hope that this paper is able to complicate single-issue human rights frameworks. As this paper will demonstrate, human rights movements that only focus their attention on a single facet of oppression or injustice within a community are often destined to fail. In the context of South Africa in the 1980s, the gay rights movement couldn't mobilize exclusively around gay identity when 90% of the country lived under a system of racial domination. Through calling into question the utility of single-issue gay organizing, this paper seeks to pose challenging questions for the contemporary LGBT movement—one that is quickly expanding into countries still marred by racial injustice and colonial legacies. How can queer movements work for LGBTQ rights while simultaneously recognizing the other struggles faced in a community? This will remain a critical question for the LGBTQ rights movement, and human rights movements more generally, in the twenty-first century.

On Shifting Ground:

Gay Politics and Racial Justice in 1980s South Africa

To the untrained eye, the narrative of the South African LGBTQ rights movement is one of liberation. It begins in 1966, when the police raided a gay house party in the upscale suburb of Forest Town; continues through 1982, when courageous activists formed the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA); parades through 1990, when the first Gay Pride March wound its way through the bustling streets of Johannesburg; rallies past 1996, when South Africa became the first country in the world to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination in their constitution; and ends in 2005, when the Constitutional Court legalized same-sex marriage throughout the country. Many would say that, over the course of 40 years, gays and lesbians were able to effectively bring about equality and liberation in South Africa—so much so that South Africa has been able to take a key role on the world stage in promoting gay rights throughout the African continent.

In some ways, it is possible to say that lesbians and gays have found a sense of liberation in South Africa; but that statement is predicated profoundly upon where one chooses to look.

In her seminal queer text, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Sedgwick begins by framing her argument around one simple axiom: people are different.¹ The truth she articulates is one that is so simple as to seem innocuous, and yet, it is all too quickly forgotten in queer communities and throughout retellings of queer history. Any two queer people, even those who appear to be the most similar, will be marked by one difference or another, and when you amalgamate thousands of queer people into a community, the differences expressed within that community become innumerable.

¹ Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 22.

Too often, in the quest to understand queer history and create a cohesive narrative of queer struggle, historians cast these differences within queer communities aside. They are viewed as distractions from the greater arc of queer liberation, brushed aside as internal strife that ultimately becomes irrelevant to the struggle against an oppressively heterosexist world. For purposes of identitarian coherence, and in many cases simple convenience, historians and activists alike overlook divisions in queer communities across the world.

But what do we lose when, in the process of creating our communal history, we ignore division? Who do we silence in the act of historical homogenization? And more importantly, who becomes marginalized? Who is cast aside?

Nowhere are those differences more immediately visceral than in the history of South Africa's gay and lesbian struggle. In exploring South African queer history, the differences between queer people demand to be heard, both as a necessary historical element and as a site of historical conflict.

This is due in part to the heterogeneity of South Africa's population. A combination of black, Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, white, Indian, coloured, East Asian, and many other groups, South Africa's rich cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity makes it among the most colorful nations in the world, but through the aegis of apartheid these differences were weighted with vast inequality. Under the yoke of white supremacy, racial and ethnic difference became not only a site of cultural difference, but also a site of political struggle. Indeed, the policies and repressions of the apartheid government were so severe and the struggle against it so intense, that to this day, the anti-apartheid struggle and its associated movements have characterized countless endeavors into South African history.

But how was this intense political struggle mapped onto South Africa's early movement for gay and lesbian rights? How did the early gay rights movement in South Africa contend with apartheid? And in a heterogeneous, unequal nation, can a movement predicated solely on

sexuality ever serve as a point of unification? Can queer people in South Africa come together *as* queer people? Or are the divisions too deep, the rift between groups too cavernous, for there to ever be a sense of gay community?

Nowhere are these differences more visible than in the story of Simon Nkoli, an anti-apartheid and gay rights activist who the predominately-white Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) refused to support following his imprisonment for anti-apartheid activities. Nkoli's case became a chief cause within the international gay and lesbian community in the mid-1980s, and the unwillingness of GASA's white leaders to stand behind him contributed significantly to the end of the Gay Association of South Africa in 1987.

When Simon Nkoli joined GASA as one of the organization's first black members in 1983, he immediately noticed that black members were not treated with the same respect nor given the same privileges as white members. After a new member joined GASA, they were given a membership card—which was bright pink—that allowed them to get discounts at local gay clubs in Johannesburg. Nkoli realized the segregation of the organization when he first attempted to use his pink GASA card. He recalled:

I tried Mandy's [a Johannesburg gay club] and they said 'no blacks'. The Dungeon. 'No blacks.' I showed them their ad in Link/Skakel: 'All GASA members welcome at a discount.' 'I'm a member of GASA,' I'd say. 'Yes,' they'd reply, 'but you're black. What if the police come?' The only place I managed to get in was somewhere in Jeppe Street: I was the only black person there and I felt so intimidated that I never went back.²

For Nkoli, who had aggressively organized for the rights of black students since 1976 and had served as a regional secretary of the anti-apartheid Congress of South African Students (COSAS), the white gay community created a painful split in his life between his identity as an anti-apartheid activist and his work as a gay activist.³ According to historian Henriette Gunkel,

² Mark Gevisser, "A Different Fight for Freedom," in *Defiant Desire*, eds. Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (New York: Routledge, 1995), 52.

³ See Simon Nkoli, "This Strange Feeling," In *The Invisible Ghetto: Lesbian and Gay Writing from South Africa*, edited by Matthew Krouse and Kim Berman, (London: Gay Men's Press, 1995), 19, and Simon Nkoli,

GASA “separated his sexual politics from his overall political position,” constantly making him choose between his struggle as a black man and his struggle as a gay man.⁴

After only a year of membership in GASA, Nkoli along with his partner Roy Shepherd, decided that they needed to create an alternative space for GASA’s black membership. To address the significant needs of the black gay community that went unmet by GASA, Nkoli publicly announced a meeting of black gay men in the black Sunday newspaper *City Press*. In the article that ran on a Sunday in May of 1984, Nkoli urged black gay men to get in touch with him for more information. He received so many responses from the article that he called a special meeting less than a week later, which 82 people attended.

In later reflections about the meeting, Nkoli remembered that the meeting had a fundamentally different tone from the apolitical tone that characterized GASA. People were talking actively about mobilization, protest, and direct political action—a discourse that would be unheard of at a white GASA meeting. After the meeting ended, most of the attendees had agreed to join the organization and meet the second Saturday of every month. Through something as simple as an article in the local paper, the Saturday Group—by many accounts the first black gay African political organization in the world—had been formed. As Nkoli would later recall, “The Saturday Group was very much concerned about mostly the black gays who doesn’t [sic] come out of the closet. This group was trying to form a black gay group in Soweto and elsewhere in the country.”⁵

As a mobilizing and advocacy organization, the Saturday Group was very successful early on. Under Nkoli’s leadership, the Saturday Group worked to create the first gay *shebeen*—the name given to bars in the townships—in Orlando West at Lee’s Place, and they held their

“Wardrobes: Coming Out as a Black Gay Activist in South Africa,” In *Defiant Desire*, edited by Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 253.

⁴ Henriette Gunkel, *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa*, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 66.

⁵ Simon Nkoli, “I Did Not Ask Publicity—Nkoli,” *Exit*, June 1986.

first fundraiser, a “merry mix” attended by over 200 people.⁶ They also began advertising the organization in *Exit*, South Africa’s leading gay and lesbian magazine at the time, as “a non-racial interest group within the Gay Association of South Africa,” where “gays of all races, sexes, ages and creeds are welcome.”⁷

Nkoli’s leadership of the Saturday Group came to a swift end on September 3rd, 1984—a mere three months after the Saturday Group’s first meeting—when the police arrested and detained Nkoli as part of a mass protest. The protest, which was coordinated by an affiliate of the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Vaal Civic Association, was organized in response to the unfair electoral politics and rent increases that were imposed on the Sebokeng township community, where Nkoli lived at the time.⁸

That Monday, about 11,000 people joined in on the march and a violent clash between the police and the community ensued, leading to widespread looting, destruction of government property, and the deaths of five people—four of them city councilors.⁹ On September 23rd, 1984, the police arrested Nkoli along with 21 other UDF/Vaal Civic Association leaders who were implicated in the uprising.¹⁰ Following his detention the fledgling Saturday Group essentially collapsed.¹¹ While Nkoli’s arrest did not garner much attention at first, it would go on to test the true inclusivity of both the anti-apartheid struggle and the gay rights movement.

Initially, security forces detained Nkoli in Pretoria Prison for nearly a year, an experience that he wrote about in a memoir three years before his death in 1998.¹² In the memoir, he recalls

⁶ “Lively Soweto Visit for Saturday Group,” *Link/Skakel*, September 1984.

⁷ “Saturday Group,” *Link/Skakel*, August 1984.

⁸ The town council had already voted to increase rent in the area on two separate occasions, and in August the town council voted for yet another rent increase of R5.90 per month set to take effect on September 1st. See Patrick MacEntee, *The “Treason” Trials at Pietermaritzburg and Delmas*, (New York: United Nations Centre Against Apartheid, October 1986), 12.

⁹ Kim Bolan, “Apartheid Fighter Recalls Torture of Prison Hymns,” *Vancouver Sun*, August 23, 1989, A8.

¹⁰ Simon Nkoli, “Wardrobes: Coming Out as a Black Gay Activist in South Africa,” In *Defiant Desire*, edited by Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 253.

¹¹ Simon Nkoli, “I Did Not Ask Publicity—Nkoli,” *Exit*, June 1986.

¹² *Ibid*, 251.

being very worried about how his sexual orientation would affect his prison experience, his relationship with his fellow prisoners, his treatment by the police, and ultimately his trial. His fears were validated when, during his initial interrogation, his interrogators confronted him about his sexual orientation. He remembered the police said, “You say you’re fighting for the people, but you’re a moffie. Do you really think the ANC and the SACP would be mad enough to take a moffie on?” On another occasion, the police brought in a baton and told him to go fuck himself with it.¹³ They even threatened to allow other prisoners to rape Nkoli.¹⁴ On October 18th, after a month of interrogation, the Pretoria Supreme Court refused to grant bail for any of the accused—citing the instability of the country as the justification for detention.

During his first few months in prison, Nkoli wasn’t just worried about how the police would use his sexual orientation against him; he also became very concerned about how his fellow prisoners—all leaders in the anti-apartheid United Democratic Front—would react. Given his past experience with Congress of South African Students (COSAS)—in which fellow leaders almost ousted him from the leadership because of his sexuality—he had become acutely aware of how vehement homophobia could be within the anti-apartheid struggle.¹⁵ At the time, anti-apartheid activists saw homosexuality among political prisoners as a betrayal of the liberation struggle, and informal communal “courts” were often set up in prisons whereby inmates could punish comrades found to be engaging in homosexual conduct.¹⁶

Accordingly, when he got to prison, Nkoli began planning exactly how he would come out to his co-accused, but before he could even try, something happened that forced him to speak

¹³ Nkoli, “Wardrobes,” in *Defiant Desire*, 253.

¹⁴ Among the torture, harassment, and trauma of interrogation, Nkoli remembers one scene vividly: “During further torture and interrogation at John Vorster Square, one policeman, who had seen snaps of white men in my photo album, became particularly angry. ‘Why do you like fucking white men?’ he asked. ‘What have they done to you? Why don’t you have sex with your own people?’” See Nkoli, “Wardrobes,” in *Defiant Desire*, 253.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 253.

¹⁶ As theorist Brenna Munro has noted, during the heyday of the anti-apartheid struggle, “To be a good comrade is to resist homosexuality, to engage in homosexuality is to betray the political group.” Brenna Munro, *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 29.

up: one prisoner caught another one of the accused having an affair with a white prison warder. The other prisoners discovered the affair when the prison warder in charge of Nkoli's block found a love-letter that had been written between two of the men. The letter quickly made its way to Terror Lekota and Moss Chikane, the leaders of the accused, and they called a meeting of the group in the largest cell, Cell 47.

When Nkoli arrived at Cell 47 for the meeting, he initially thought the meeting was about him, because he heard Lekota furiously spouting about being arrested with homosexuals. Nkoli thought to himself "God what have I done?"¹⁷ Lekota started the meeting by saying, "Comrades, I've got this love letter. It's disgusting," and Nkoli realized that the meeting was not about him. Lekota went on to read the letter and identify the author, who the other prisoners then began to accost.

Before he knew what he was doing, Nkoli stood up—interrupting Lekota—and said, "What about me?" The room spiraled into confusion, and Lekota was dumbstruck. Nkoli remembered one man saying, "We should have our own trial. I'm not going to stand accused with a homosexual man... What will they think when we have a homosexual man with us?" Hearing that, Nkoli had taken enough. He rose in front of the room and said "I think I should leave this meeting now... You're not [just] talking about the person who committed this act. You're actually talking about homosexual men and I am one."¹⁸

The room went silent in shock. For the next few weeks, the revelation about Nkoli's identity as a gay man became the main topic of conversation among the prisoners. At first, many of the co-accused wanted to ask for separate trials because they thought that Nkoli's presence would interfere with the rest of the proceedings.¹⁹ The lawyers who were to defend the accused were consulted on the issue and they were firm: there would be only one trial. If the other

¹⁷ Nkoli, "Wardrobes," in *Defiant Desire*, 254.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 254.

¹⁹ Henriette Gunkel, *Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality*, 66.

accused still insisted on separate trials, their attorneys threatened to leave the case. Perhaps the most supportive lawyer of them all was George Bizos.²⁰ While Nkoli faced constant degradation from many of his co-accused, Bizos provided much-needed support for Nkoli.

On June 11, 1985 after nine months in prison, the state charged Nkoli with treason and murder along with the other 21 leaders. The group trial began on January 20th, 1986 in a remote town about 70 kilometers east of Johannesburg and southeast of Pretoria called Delmas. According to a report from the UN Centre Against Apartheid, Delmas was chosen “because of its remoteness, so as to prevent any show of community support for the defendants.”²¹ Eventually and somewhat miraculously, Nkoli’s identity began to be normalized among the co-defendants. Whether they accepted Nkoli out of genuine transformation or because of political expediency is difficult to determine, but at the end of the day the “Delmas 22”—as the group of 22 political prisoners had come to be known—learned to embrace Nkoli as one of their own.

At around the same time, Nkoli’s situation and the case of the Delmas 22 started gaining traction internationally. Nkoli first received international attention from the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group (SHRG)—a gay and lesbian advocacy organization. In the 28th issue of *Gay Scotland*, the newsletter of SHRG, a brief article appeared about Nkoli’s detention.²² In the winter of 1985, this article made its way onto the desk of Tim McCaskell, the “multi-lingual and well-traveled” international news editor for Canada’s leading gay and lesbian journal *The Body Politic*.²³ Through the *Body Politic* Tim McCaskell authored a series of reports on Nkoli in early 1986.²⁴

²⁰ George Bizos also served as one of Nelson Mandela’s attorneys during the Rivonia Trial, where Mandela was sentenced to a long period of imprisonment.

²¹ Patrick MacEntee, *The “Treason” Trials at Pietermaritzburg and Delmas*, 13.

²² Brian Dempsey “Scottish Homosexual Rights Group in South Africa,” LGBT History Scotland, <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/hamamelis/RIP-ISPrivate/Miscellaneous/BrianDempsey/SHRG%20on%20South%20Africa%20for%20Deeg.html> (accessed April 7, 2014).

²³ “Inventory of the Records of The Body Politic,” The Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, <http://www.clga.ca/Material/Records/inven/tbp/news.htm> (accessed April 7, 2014).

²⁴ McCaskell remembered, “Anti-apartheid activism was a major current in progressive organizing in Toronto in the mid 80’s, so the story immediately piqued my interest. I contacted the Toronto Committee for the

Enough people in Canada were inspired by what they read about Nkoli that they formed a group called the Simon Nkoli Anti-Apartheid Committee (SNAAC). In the words of McCaskell, SNAAC sought to provide “Simon with emotional and material support. Prison was very hard. We corresponded regularly, arranged for subscriptions to LGBT magazines, publicized his case, and sent him the news clippings to let him know that people around the world were supporting him.”²⁵ Furthermore, SNAAC focused intently on working against homophobia in the anti-apartheid movement and working against racism in the gay liberation movement. To do this, they participated in pickets of the ANC and did their best to ensure that mainstream media throughout Canada and the world featured Simon’s Case. SNAAC did not have to do this work alone; the anti-apartheid movements in Britain, Sweden and Holland also took up Nkoli’s cause.²⁶ In a sense, it was “the confluence of his [Nkoli’s] open homosexuality and his imprisonment as a soldier against apartheid made him immensely appealing,” as a *cause celebre* for many gay and lesbian activists organizations around the world.²⁷

Other than the materials and letters that Nkoli received from SNAAC, Nkoli received letters from anti-apartheid organizations and gay organizations across Europe and from many other places throughout the world, including over 150 Christmas cards in 1986.²⁸

A month later, in January of 1987, the Second National March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights made the freedom of Nkoli a specific demand of their platform.²⁹ Both to Nkoli and to the other UDF leaders in jail with him, the outpouring of international support for Nkoli not only affirmed the cause of ending apartheid; it also affirmed a widespread sense of support for the gay and lesbian community. In a way, international support legitimized Nkoli as a gay

Liberation of South African Colonies and...[they were] able to put me in touch with someone who was in contact with...Simon Nkoli.” See Tim McCaskell, “Queers Against Apartheid,” *Canadian Dimension*, Jul/Aug 2010, 4.

²⁵ Ibid, 15.

²⁶ Mark Gevisser, “Different Fight,” in *Defiant Desire*, 56.

²⁷ Ibid, 56.

²⁸ Nkoli, “Wardrobes,” in *Defiant Desire*, 255.

²⁹ Stephanie Poggi, “A Letter from South Africa: Black Gay Activist Simon Nkoli Tells His Story,” *Gay Community News*, September 19, 1987, 9.

man in the eyes of his peers who were standing trial with him. Moreover, Nkoli transformed the discourse that his co-accused used to conceptualize homosexuality. Prior to his coming out, most of his co-accused thought of homosexuality as something to be punished, but through his openness, Nkoli “shifted the discussion from sodomy to identity, from punishment to personal codification.”³⁰ Given that many of his co-accused went on to be substantial leaders in the post-apartheid government, Nkoli’s engagement with his sexuality during the course of the trial would later take on substantial significance in the new South Africa.³¹

All of the international attention given to Nkoli’s case did not bode well for GASA. In a time when GASA began vigorously pursuing affiliation and recognition for their organization within the international gay and lesbian community, Nkoli’s case proved to be a troubling thorn in GASA’s side. Internally, GASA remained incredibly divided concerning whether or not to support Nkoli in his struggles against the apartheid state, and this internal tension would soon be placed on the international stage. Fortunately or unfortunately, during this period of racial tension within the gay rights movement in South Africa and given the increased international attention placed on South Africa in the 1980s, GASA did not have the luxury of going through these growing pains outside of the public eye.

In 1983, GASA made the decision to apply for membership in the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA).³² For GASA, membership in ILGA meant that the organization would receive “international recognition of the part it plays in the struggle for gay civil rights in South Africa,” and would represent the opportunity to make “a meaningful contribution to the

³⁰ Brenna Munro, *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come*, 52.

³¹ Many of Nkoli’s Co-Trialists, such as Terror Lekota and Moss Chikane, would go on to become important leaders in the new South African government in the late 1990s.

³² At the time, it was simply known as the International Gay Association. The name of the organization changed to the International Gay and Lesbian Association in 1986. For the sake of consistency and recognition, the organization’s current name is used throughout this paper.

gay struggle worldwide.”³³ GASA’s leadership saw membership in ILGA as an important step in establishing credibility for their organization, and as the first African organization to apply for membership in ILGA, GASA assumed that ILGA would be enthusiastic to have them.

And in some ways, they were right. At the 1983 ILGA World Conference held in Vienna, a distinct sense of excitement floated in the air when it was announced that GASA had applied for membership. The entry of GASA into ILGA represented the first time that an African LGBT organization had been admitted into ILGA’s ranks—a status that brought ILGA one step closer to realizing the global aspirations of the organization.

But as ILGA considered the new group, Ian Christie of the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group (SHRG) took the floor of the conference and began to relay a story about a black gay man he met from Soweto—presumptively Simon Nkoli—who had brought up serious concerns about the inclusiveness of GASA. In concluding his speech, Christie motioned that ILGA should not admit GASA before questions of racial inclusiveness had been adequately addressed, citing the UN resolution against apartheid as an international precedent that must be followed. This unleashed an impassioned conversation about race and inclusivity on the conference floor, the likes of which ILGA had never seen. Due to time constraints of the conference and the need for more information, ILGA decided to table the question until the 1984 Conference in Helsinki.³⁴

The next July—only two months after black members walked out of GASA to form the Saturday Group—ILGA once again took up the issue of GASA’s membership.³⁵ That year, GASA sent Pieter Bosman, the president of the organization, to represent GASA at the conference.³⁶ According to later accounts of the conference, Bosman’s “rational insight into gay issues in South Africa was a major factor in influencing the decision in Gasa’s favour,” in

³³ “What is the IGA?” *Link/Skakel*, September 1984.

³⁴ Jens Rydström, “Solidarity—with whom?: The International Gay & Lesbian Rights Movement and Apartheid,” in *Sex and Politics in South Africa*, eds. Neville Hoad, Karen Martin, and Graeme Reid, (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005), 34.

³⁵ David Paternotte, Alex Cosials Apellaniz, and David Tong, “ILGA: 1978-2008, A Chronology,” International Lesbian and Gay Association, <http://ilga.org/ilga/en/article/mG6UVpR17x> (accessed April 7, 2014).

³⁶ “Overwhelming Yes Vote: International Body Welcomes SA Gays,” *Link/Skakel*, August 1984.

addition to lobbying efforts that had been undertaken by GASA's International Secretary Ann Smith.³⁷ After Pieter made his remarks about GASA and its practices, ILGA voted to allow GASA to join as a full member, but adopted a statement against apartheid and in support of the boycott of South African goods to allay any sense that ILGA supported apartheid.³⁸

GASA celebrated membership in ILGA as a historic moment, and for a while, it seemed that the organization had successfully allayed all fears of racism and accusations of being pro-apartheid. Accordingly, at the 1985 ILGA Conference in Toronto, very little was said about South Africa. The conference had some discussion of apartheid and a small anti-apartheid committee formed, but the committee never seemed to have any influence. And even though he had already been in jail for nine months, no one at the ILGA conference even mentioned Simon Nkoli's name. For the moment, it seemed that GASA was in ILGA to stay.

But that all began to shift in 1986, when two critical activists undertook regular correspondence with Simon Nkoli: Ian Christie of the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group and Jon Voss of ILGA's Informational Secretariat in Stockholm. Voss was a long time member of the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights—commonly known as RFSL—and advocated prolifically on Nkoli's behalf. Voss's letters from Nkoli and other prominent South African activists comprise a significant historical record of Nkoli's detention, the South African gay movement's struggle with racism, and the anti-apartheid movement's struggle with homophobia.

Voss' correspondence with Nkoli started in January 1986 as the Delmas trial began, and the beginning of Voss' letters mark the formal beginning of ILGA's investigation into the Nkoli affair. On January 20th, Voss sent letters both to Nkoli's mother Elizabeth and to the South African Embassy in Stockholm requesting more information about Nkoli's case.³⁹ Also, on

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "IGA Meeting Condemns Global Discrimination," *Link/Skakel*, August 1984.

³⁹ Jon Voss to Elizabeth Nkoli, January 20, 1986, in Jens Rydström, "Solidarity—With Whom?" 36.

February 3rd, Voss wrote to the ANC office in Stockholm asking for a meeting to discuss how the international gay and lesbian community could become more involved in the anti-apartheid struggle, and what the organization's opinion was on gay and lesbian rights. The letter went unanswered.⁴⁰

In that same month, Ian Christie launched a separate attack on GASA. In 1985, a South African team had been organized by GASA and other organizations to represent South Africa at the 1986 International Gay Games in San Francisco.⁴¹ During a time in which South African sports teams were being excluded from the Olympics and from most professional athletic competitions, this represented an interesting departure from international norms. Through the SHRG, Ian Christie called for a boycott of the International Gay Games unless they banned South Africa from participating. In their call for a boycott, the SHRG noted, "the [gay] games are in breach of a United Nations resolution on apartheid which calls for a worldwide boycott of all cultural and athletic contacts with South Africa."⁴² They went on to mention Nkoli's detention as further reason to boycott the games: "a leading gay activist is currently being held in a South African jail for his opposition to apartheid...the South African Gay Association of doing nothing to help him."⁴³

By March of that year, Nkoli's trial and GASA's reaction to it had become the central concern of the international gay and lesbian community, and GASA received pressure on all sides to clarify their position. That month, Voss added to that pressure, writing to GASA and asking them why they had not supported Nkoli. In response to this pressure GASA felt the need to publicly clarify their position. In the March 1986 issue of *Exit*, GASA stated that Nkoli, "who is being held on charges of treason, terrorism, five of murder, promoting the aims of the ANC, and a number of alternative charges with 21 other people," would not receive any support from

⁴⁰ Jon Voss to ANC Stockholm Office, February 3, 1986, in Jens Rydström, "Solidarity—with whom?" 42.

⁴¹ "Call for Boycott of Gay Games," *Exit*, January 1986.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

GASA, despite being a member, due to the fact that he was not being detained, “because of his gay activities.”⁴⁴

In that same issue of *Exit*, Nkoli responded to the attention he’d received via a letter from prison that he published through Rev. Don Dowie. In his letter, Nkoli refuted the separation of his work into gay and non-gay activism: “I don’t fight for the rights of blacks because I am black or for the rights of gays because I am gay, but I do both because I am human and it is my right to be accepted as human.”⁴⁵ And while he condemned GASA for its lack of black representation and membership, he strongly asserted that he did not “want to be used as political ammunition,” at the international level, stressing that GASA’s problems with race had to be sorted out locally. “It will be difficult but we can do it, given goodwill,” wrote Nkoli, “It is not my desire that this problem should be discussed at an IGA conference. That is not the place or the way to do it.”⁴⁶

GASA’s leadership struggled immensely with the issue. Many of the leaders in GASA felt that apartheid was an unjust system that deserved to be abolished, but their more conservative membership and their constitution, which explicitly forbade “political” work, kept their hands tied. Ann Smith, GASA’s International Secretary at the time, best articulated this tension in a letter that she wrote to *Exit*. She noted that “Gasa walks the tight-rope balanced between the dictates of its members and those of a general liberal position,” and acknowledged that “Simon is in prison for his attempts to fight apartheid—a most invidious system of discrimination and one which must be abhorred by all thinking people.”⁴⁷ But she could not, in her capacity as a GASA officer, defy the organization’s constitution: “Personally, I believe that we should be fighting discrimination in all its manifestations, but Gasa’s members think otherwise.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ “Gasa on Nkoli,” *Exit*, March 1986.

⁴⁵ Father Don Dowie. “I’m not Political Ammunition, I want Human Rights—Nkoli,” *Exit*, March 1986.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Ann Smith, “Simon Part of Greater Problem,” *Exit*, March 1986.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Despite Nkoli's objections to the issue being dealt with on an international level, and the complicated responses of many of GASA's leaders, the pressure for ILGA to expel GASA continued to increase. During this period, Voss maintained regular correspondence with Nkoli, and he kept Nkoli abreast of the developments at ILGA. In multiple letters, Nkoli urged Voss and ILGA *not* to expel GASA. On April 10, Nkoli wrote "I really feel bad if ILGA is going to expel GASA...GASA has been doing so much to bring change in the life of the oppressed gays."⁴⁹ And again in May of 1986, Nkoli published yet another editorial in *Exit*, specifying that he did not "wish to be used as an escaped-goat [sic] to disaffiliate Gasa from ILGA."⁵⁰

In the months leading up to ILGA's July 1986 world conference in Copenhagen, the SHRG filed a resolution to suspend GASA from ILGA for a two-year period. In their resolution, SHRC cited GASA's unresponsiveness to ILGA's inquiries—particularly concerning their lack of support for Nkoli—as the justification for their expulsion. GASA got word of the resolution and sent Kevan Botha to the conference that year in defense of the organization. At the conference, organizers held a special session to discuss the resolution and decide whether or not to present it before the plenary session of the general body for a vote. Botha himself chaired the session.

During the session, Botha argued that GASA was against apartheid, as the organization's signature on the 1984 ILGA statement against apartheid indicated, and that communication problems were the reason why GASA had not responded to ILGA's inquiry concerning Nkoli. He further asserted that GASA as a non-racial organization, citing their "multiracial work in sport, in its committees, in the advice bureau, and in law reform campaigns." But the most compelling argument for the retention of GASA in ILGA was by far the fact that Nkoli himself did not advocate for the expulsion of GASA.

⁴⁹ Simon Nkoli to Jon Voss, April 10, 1986, in Jens Rydström, "Solidarity—With Whom?" 37.

⁵⁰ Given that English was not Nkoli's first language, Nkoli may have meant to say "scapegoat," but misunderstood the idiom, instead writing "escaped-goat." Simon Nkoli, "Expelling Gasa will Affect Me—Nkoli," *Exit*, May 1986.

Before he went to Copenhagen, Botha contacted Nkoli's attorney Caroline Heaton-Nicholls multiple times to ensure that Nkoli supported GASA's membership in ILGA.⁵¹ Nkoli said that he did, and this would come back to haunt him. Primarily because of Nkoli's own advocacy on behalf of GASA, and also because of Botha's testimony and defense of GASA, the conference session decided not to pass along the resolution urging the suspension of the organization.⁵² Instead, they agreed to send a letter of support from ILGA to Nkoli, to send a letter against the government's actions to the then-president P.W. Botha, and to circulate a petition at the conference supporting the Delmas 22.⁵³ However, despite Simon's support of GASA, when the petition supporting the Delmas 22 began circulating, Botha refused to sign on behalf of GASA..

Following the vote to keep GASA in ILGA, *Exit* celebrated the victory and lauded Kevan Botha as a hero. The headlines range from jubilant—"Victory for SA," "A Bouquet After the Vote," "Gasa Has Stopped Distortion," "ILGA Vote Was Triumph"—to the downright vindictive headline, "ILGA Gets Dressing Down."⁵⁴ In startlingly nationalist tones, one article claimed that Botha had "defended his country and his organization," by keeping GASA in ILGA.⁵⁵ Interestingly, the article neglected to mention Nkoli's support for GASA, which by many accounts was the only reason why GASA had remained in ILGA.⁵⁶ Furthermore, later in the article, Botha is quoted as saying that he "cautioned the ILGA about aligning itself automatically with support for Simon Nkoli," because, "Amongst other charges, five of murder put the case in a different category."⁵⁷ In essence, Botha perpetuated the apartheid state's propagandist assertion that Nkoli was responsible for murder.

⁵¹ Caroline Heaton-Nicholls to Kevan Botha, September 9, 1986, in Hoard et al, *Sex and Politics in SA*, 158.

⁵² "Victory for SA," *Exit*, July/August 1986.

⁵³ "A Bouquet After the Vote," *Exit*, July/August 1986.

⁵⁴ See *Exit*, July/August 1986.

⁵⁵ "A Bouquet After the Vote," *Exit*, July/August 1986.

⁵⁶ Caroline Heaton-Nicholls to Kevan Botha, September 9, 1986, in Hoard et al, *Sex and Politics in SA*, 158.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 3.

One month later, in the August/September issue of *Exit*, the former GASA chairman James Willett-Clarke lauded Botha and GASA for repelling international scorn for South Africa. His mix of gay pride and South African nationalism reeked of gay liberation and racist oppression: “The despised ‘moffies’ have succeeded in staying in a world organization where the respectable straights failed to achieve this so often.”⁵⁸

Voss, Nkoli, and Caroline Heaton-Nicholls were infuriated by the fallout. Responding to Willett-Clarke’s letter in *Exit* Voss wrote angrily to Don Dowie that, “If GASA sees itself as representative of SA—the we shall with joy throw them out of ILGA. SA today is an embarrassment to all humankind—and saying that ‘gays have succeeded where respectable straights failed’ is an insult, both to ILGA and to all blacks in SA.”⁵⁹

Botha’s accusation that Nkoli was accused of murder particularly enraged Heaton-Nicholls, Nkoli’s attorney, who felt that Botha had manipulated Nkoli to endorse GASA’s membership in ILGA. She took the issue up with Botha directly. In a fiery six-page letter she publicly accused Botha of manipulating and slandering Simon:

The only reasonable inference to be drawn from your conduct is that you deliberately sought to manipulate Simon Nkoli and his legal advisers, notwithstanding the fact that Simon had been in detention without being convicted of any charges for nearly two years now, but that at the same time you were content to smear him in your effort to keep GASA in the ILGA... Your deliberate suppression of your true design until you had artfully procured Simon’s endorsement of the anti-expulsion stance constitutes despicable and disingenuous conduct.⁶⁰

After a flurry of scorn both internationally and nationally, and as a gesture to save face, Botha sent a letter to ILGA on behalf of GASA, apologizing to Nkoli the following October, a month after he received the letter from Nkoli’s attorney. In his letter, he asserted that he had left the ILGA conference with a different outlook and, in a flourish of doublespeak and deliberately vague language, promise that he was “enthused to motivate a direction for the association in

⁵⁸ “ILGA Vote Was Triumph,” *Exit*, August/September 1986.

⁵⁹ Jon Voss to Don Dowie, November 1, 1986, in Jens Rydström, “Solidarity—With Whom?” 38.

⁶⁰ Caroline Heaton-Nicholls to Kevan Botha, September 9, 1986, in Jens Rydström, “Solidarity—With Whom?” 43.

terms of which we could build on the existing foundations we have laid and thereby achieve a far greater identity with the human rights movement.”⁶¹ Further, he defended the false accusations that he had made concerning Nkoli, asserting that his comments were made “in the context that there has been no international suggestion that the trial is conducted unfairly,” and that “ILGA should not pre-empt the decision of the court.”⁶²

While GASA published a public apology in the October/September issue of *Exit*, Nkoli himself remained profoundly hurt and angered by GASA’s statements about his trial and participation in the anti-apartheid struggle.⁶³ On August 2nd, Nkoli wrote to his then-lover, Roy Shepard, saying “I have the right to refuse any support...in protest of GASA’s thinking that I am charged on irrelevant issues, what is gay related matters they wanted me to be arrested, sodomy, loitering, public indecent, or what? I am absolute mad to read about me being arrested on “irrelevant” issues to gay related matters.”⁶⁴ And again on November 2nd Nkoli wrote to Jon Voss, “I am absolutely difficult now for GASA. I don’t want to be used by them to further their own propaganda. They have never supported me...”⁶⁵

Botha would go on to see the error of his ways, commenting that, “the murder charges against them seem ludicrous...the State has been unable to prove that any of the 22 trialists perpetrated the murders,” but it would be many years before Nkoli and Botha could fully reconcile.⁶⁶ As a result of the scandal, Nkoli would never organize on behalf of GASA again.

After three years of detention, Simon Nkoli testified on June 24, 1987.⁶⁷ In total, Nkoli testified for only about seven hours—a very short period of time by the standards of the Delmas

⁶¹ Kevan Botha to David Murphy, ILGA, October 21, 1986, in Jens Rydström, “Solidarity—With Whom?” 39.

⁶² *Ibid*, 38.

⁶³ “Apology for Nkoli,” *Exit*, September/October 1986.

⁶⁴ Simon Nkoli to Roy Shepherd, August 2, 1986, in Hoad et al. *Sex and Politics in SA*, 157.

⁶⁵ Simon Nkoli to Jon Voss, November 2, 1986, in Jens Rydström, “Solidarity—With Whom?” 39.

⁶⁶ “Nkoli Trial Remanded,” *Exit*, October/November 1986.

⁶⁷ “Nkoli in Box,” *Exit*, July/August 1987.

trial.⁶⁸ During the seven hours, attorneys asked Nkoli about what kind of freedom he wanted, whether or not he supported Nelson Mandela, and whether or not he supported the ANC. Notably absent from the trial were any mentions of the actual charges—he was charged with murder for allegedly throwing a large rock at someone, although there were no witnesses to corroborate this fabricated charge.⁶⁹

In late June, with the question of Nkoli's guilt still in the air, the 1987 ILGA world conference opened in Cologne. For months leading up to the conference, various international organizations continued to campaign for GASA's expulsion from ILGA.⁷⁰ At the opening of the conference, it became clear that the ILGA's frustrations with GASA had come to a head, and there were two proposals on the table. The first, proposed by gay and lesbian groups from Japan, Catalonia, and Basque, called for the complete expulsion of GASA from ILGA. The second, supported by three Scandinavian gay and lesbian organizations, called for the suspension of GASA's membership while ILGA completed a formal investigation.

Before ILGA had a chance to vote on the issue of GASA's expulsion, ILGA leadership made an important announcement at the opening of the July 1st plenary session: Simon Nkoli had been released on bail after over three years of detention.⁷¹ The conference erupted in continuous applause. Jon Voss remembered it as an extremely emotional moment: "Alfred and I cried and a lot of us felt like something important had happened. Not just for Simon and Roy [Nkoli's partner], but also for the gay community as a whole."⁷² Following the announcement,

⁶⁸ One of Nkoli's co-accused, Popo Molefe, testified for over eleven days.

⁶⁹ While the prosecutor never brought up Nkoli's sexual orientation during the course of the trial, Nkoli brought it up himself: "I needed to prove that I wasn't at a meeting, and so I told the truth, which was that at that time I had been at a GASA event. Only then did the prosecutor start up on my homosexuality, but the judge angrily intervened, saying that he was not interested about who was gay and who was not, and that the prosecutor's line of questioning did not prove whether I had conspired. I was acquitted, in no small part, I think, due to my gay alibi!" Simon Nkoli, "Wardrobes," in *Defiant Desire*, 255.

⁷⁰ See "Scots Attack SA Again," *Exit*, January 1987, and "Now Scots Want Gasa Kicked Out—Again," *Exit*, April/May 1987.

⁷¹ "Bail for Nkoli," *Exit*, August 1987.

⁷² Jon Voss to Glen Shelton, July 9, 1987, in Jens Rydström, "Solidarity—With Whom?" 40.

the conference voted to send Nkoli a letter of congratulations and to suspend GASA's membership while ILGA conducted an investigation.

Ultimately, the investigation would never come to pass. GASA had been in decline as an organization for the past few years, and on July 26th, 1987 GASA's leadership announced that, except for a small branch in Cape Town, GASA would disband. According to pamphlets published at the time, Botha had been "claimed by burnout."⁷³ Seeing that GASA was no longer a viable organization, ILGA saw no need to move forward with the investigation.

Two major factors precipitated GASA's fade into obscurity. First, following GASA's abandonment of Simon Nkoli, most progressive gay and lesbian organizers decided that they would no longer work with the organization. Through its refusal to support Nkoli during his time of greatest need, most progressive gay and lesbian organizers labeled GASA as an organization of the past and an irrelevant supporter of the apartheid government. Ultimately, GASA's ideology had failed because it continued to support the legitimacy of the apartheid government—a government that was no longer seen as credible in the eyes of the international community.

Secondly, as unity among the gay and lesbian community began to break down, internal dissension and disagreement ripped through GASA's membership. By 1987, GASA's national structure was in disarray and localized gay and lesbian groups were somewhat fragmented in their political approach.

When he was released from prison, Nkoli emerged onto a gay political landscape that had undergone a considerable shift since he was arrested—a shift that, in many ways, he was responsible for. As GASA diminished in importance, a new wave of progressive gay and lesbian organizing began to sweep the country. This new wave of organizing had a very different set of priorities than its predecessor. While the refusal to oppose apartheid had characterized GASA, opposition to the apartheid state served as the foundation for the new wave of gay and lesbian

⁷³"LAGO News," August 28, 1987, in Jens Rydström, "Solidarity—With Whom?" 43.

organizing; and where GASA had failed to meet the needs of its black members, post-GASA organizing made serving the black community a central priority.

The new wave of gay organizing began a year before Nkoli was released, when Alfred Machela—a gay black man also living in Soweto—founded the Rand Gay Organization (RGO). For the first time since the fizzling out of the Saturday Group, a gay and lesbian organization that catered to the needs of black gays and lesbians came to prominence. By August of 1986, RGO already had 268 members, of which 37 were white.⁷⁴ When Machela founded RGO, GASA reacted with some defensiveness, seeing RGO as a rival organization. In an article announcing the founding of RGO, Machela did not seem concerned about a rivalry, and emphasized, “We are now looking to the future, and are working well together.”⁷⁵

While still in prison, Nkoli became aware of the Machela’s organizing work. In a letter that he wrote to *Gay Community News* reporter Stephanie Poggi, he reflected on the change that RGO represented: “Let me tell you without hesitation, GASA is doing nothing except that I heard that they are losing members. Kevan Botha...is nowhere to be seen. I also believe that the RGO has about 600 members. That is great—and much better than the Saturday Group.”⁷⁶

When Nkoli left prison, the progressive gay movement needed new blood and new vitality—two things that Nkoli could aptly provide. While RGO had enjoyed initial success, it had become a top-heavy organization reliant on Machela. When Machela left South Africa later in 1987, RGO quickly fell apart. Accordingly, in April of 1988, Nkoli founded what would go on to become one of the most influential gay and lesbian organizations in South African history: the Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand (GLOW).⁷⁷ GLOW represented a truly non-racial, anti-apartheid LGBT organization that catered to the diverse needs of a multiracial gay

⁷⁴ “RGO Growing Fast,” *Exit*, July/August 1986.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Stephanie Poggi, “A Letter from South Africa: Black Gay Activist Simon Nkoli Tells His Story,” *Gay Community News*, September 19, 1987, 9.

⁷⁷ Paul Mokgethi, “Because I’m Gay and I Believe,” in Hoard et al. *Sex and Politics in SA*, 65.

community. As an organization, GLOW argued for the inclusion of the gay and lesbian movement into the broader liberation struggle.⁷⁸

GLOW went on to serve as a pivotal organization throughout the transition to the new South African government, and the organization made great strides in ensuring that gay and lesbian identities were no longer seen as isolated to the white community. Through mobilizing gay and lesbian people of color, GLOW ensured that the face of gay rights in the new South Africa was multiracial. GLOW accomplished this in multiple ways; most notably by planning the first Gay and Lesbian Pride March in 1990, which established the gay rights movement as a part of the broader liberation struggle. The 1990 Pride March also served to elevate black gay and lesbian activists, such as Bev Ditsie, into the limelight. Through gaining greater mobilization and support for the black gay community, GLOW kept the gay and lesbian struggle relevant to changing South African politics.

When the gay rights movement set its sights on the new South African constitution, the visibility of black gay and lesbian leaders also became vitally important. From 1994 to 1996, the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality—which was headed by none other than GASA’s Kevan Botha—undertook a fervent lobbying campaign to ensure that gays and lesbians would have their rights constitutionally protected in the new South Africa. Ultimately, the coalition succeeded in their goal and the South African Constitution became the first in the world to include “sexual orientation” as a category for non-discrimination. This victory in South Africa’s gay rights movement fundamentally relied on figures such as Simon Nkoli and Cecil Williams—gay men who were involved in the anti-apartheid struggle—for validity.⁷⁹ Because

⁷⁸ Nkoli was quoted as saying, “The charge has been leveled against gay and lesbian organizations that we are divisive [sic] in the struggle for a future democratic, non-racial SA. The same charges were made against the women’s movement when it first appeared. That movement is now accepted as part of society...Unless we make the gay cause an issue it is likely to remain invisibilised [sic] and the new culture is likely to be as homophobic as the current one.” See “Glow Formed in JHB/Soweto,” *Exit*, April/May 1988.

⁷⁹ Cecil Williams is perhaps best known for his relationship to Nelson Mandela and his involvement in the ANC. In 1960, Williams accompanied Nelson Mandela around the country while he organized the beginnings of Umkhonto We Sizwe, the underground militant wing of the ANC. So when the police arrested Mandela in

gay rights advocates could claim that gay and lesbian people fought against apartheid, they were entitled to ask for protection and equality under the new South African constitution.

In hindsight, it is easy to characterize the Gay Association of South Africa and the gay reform movement as myopic. Given contemporary knowledge of South African politics and history, the gay reform movement's insular focus on gay rights seems out of context and out of touch with the community surrounding them. On the verge of liberation from apartheid, any organization that refused to renounce the apartheid government is an easy historical target for scorn and dismissal. From our current vantage point in the 21st century, it seems as if GASA was always destined to fail.

But such an analysis is in itself shortsighted and overly simplistic. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, single-issue politics was the norm for gay organizing worldwide. Pioneering gay organizations in the United States, Canada, England, the Netherlands, and many other places put their differences aside in order to build a cohesive struggle for gay and lesbian rights. Everywhere that gay communities came together, there were differences to reconcile, but in most places around the world, these differences were surmountable. In 1951, when Harry Hay founded the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles—the first organization dedicated to gay rights in the United States—he was able to successfully bring together a group of predominately white gay men to advocate on behalf of their own rights.⁸⁰ Yet again in 1964, when the Campaign for Homosexual Equality was formed in the United Kingdom, a group of majority-white gays and lesbians were able to build a national network of gay and lesbian community organizations. In

Pietermaritzburg some months later, they found Williams in the car with him and placed him under house arrest. This involvement has earned Williams the title of "The Man Who Drove With Mandela," and he is contemporaneously considered an icon of the gay rights movement in South Africa. See "Cecil Williams," South African History Online, accessed, May 1, 2012, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/cecil-williams>, *The Man Who Drove with Mandela*, dir. by Greta Schiller (1999; Beulah Films, Amazon), and Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, (Boston: Little and Brown, 1994), 273.

⁸⁰ Vern L. Bullough, *Homosexuality: A History from Ancient Greece to Gay Liberation*, (New York: Meridian, 1979), 15.

1980, when the Human Rights Campaign was founded in Washington, DC, a group of predominately white gay men were able to come together in order to influence government policy and decisions.⁸¹ And over sixty years after the founding of the Mattachine Society, when the pivotal marriage equality cases *Windsor v. US* and *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* were argued before the US Supreme Court in 2013, a group of white attorneys and white plaintiffs were able to successfully sue in court for increased rights for same-sex couples.

For over fifty years, single-issue gay organizing worked well in a Western context. When gay organizers came together in the Western world, they could come together only as gay people. Given that these movements germinated in majority-white contexts, they were not made to confront racial justice as a central part of their work. When the Mattachine Society was founded, they were never substantially challenged to consider racial justice or to more effectively include people of color in their coalition. Neither was the Campaign for Homosexual Equality made to comment about the anti-colonial movements sweeping the world at the time of its formation. Even through today, accusations of racism that have been levied against the gay rights movement in the United States have never been able to disarm its political power.

Throughout the 1980s, GASA's organizers were simply trying to implement models of gay organizing that they had learned from successful and thriving gay rights movements in North America and Western Europe. But in the context of 1980s South Africa, GASA could not get away with the single-issue framework that it had learned from its peers. Given South Africa's heterogeneous population and swelling tide of black resistance, a single-issue framework simply couldn't cut it.

So how then do we judge GASA's legacy? Do we dismiss them as an embarrassing blemish in South Africa's past? Do we write off their racial exclusion as understandable given their context? Do we condemn them for their inability to see beyond a single-issue framework?

⁸¹ William Naphy, *Born to Be Gay: A History of Homosexuality*, (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing, 2004), 55.

More importantly, how should we then judge other single-issue gay rights movements? Do we also condemn movements in the United States as equally racist, myopic, and shortsighted because they refused to challenge the vast racial injustices around them?

In many ways, the story of GASA calls for a retelling of gay history altogether. GASA did not exist in a vacuum, and its shortfalls as an organization were common across many gay rights organizations around the world. In the case of South Africa's gay reform movement, the politics of race, class, and privilege are unavoidable in historical analysis. But in homogenous contexts where intersectional politics can be more easily ignored, it is equally incumbent on historians to consider the shortcomings and limitations of single-issue gay organizing.

Before social movements can run, they must learn to walk. In the tempestuous political terrain of the 1970s and 1980s, when violence and political polarization characterized everyday life, South Africa's gay and lesbian movement had difficulty finding its footing. As the movement began to take its first steps, the ground continually shifted beneath them, rumbling with increased police presence, economic sanctions, violent resistance, and international pressure. In order to march forward as a community, South Africa's gay and lesbian movement needed ground on which to stand, and by the end of the 1980s, gay organizers had realized that the apartheid system could never be stable ground. For the white gay and lesbian organizers who put so much of their time and energy into organizing the Gay Association of South Africa, this was a difficult truth to acknowledge. But the failure of GASA's attempt to move forward brought with it valuable lessons for South Africa's gay and lesbian community. Emerging from the 1980s, gay and lesbian movements in South Africa would no longer rest on a single-issue, Western framework of reform. Instead, they worked with the anti-apartheid struggle, and through doing so, found higher ground on which to walk.

Works Cited

Newspapers and Magazines

- Capital Gay* (London): 1987
Canadian Dimension (Winnipeg): 2010
Exit (Johannesburg): 1985-88
Gay Community News (Boston): 1987
Link/Skakel (Johannesburg): 1982-85
The Vancouver Sun (Vancouver): 1989

Primary Sources: Miscellaneous, Published

- Exit-Link/Skakel* Collection. Gay and Lesbian Archives, University of the Witwatersrand Historical Papers Collection: Johannesburg, South Africa.
- Gevisser, Mark “A Different Fight for Freedom.” In *Defiant Desire*, edited by Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron, 14-88. New York. Routledge, 1995.
- Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. Boston: Little and Brown, 1994.
- MacEntee, Patrick. *The “Treason” Trials at Pietermaritzburg and Delmas*. New York: United Nations Centre Against Apartheid, 1986.
- Mokgethi, Paul. “Because I’m Gay and I Believe.” in *Sex and Politics in South Africa*, eds. Neville Hoad, Karen Martin, and Graeme Reid, 64-67. Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005.
- Nkoli, Simon. “This Strange Feeling.” In *The Invisible Ghetto: Lesbian and Gay Writing from South Africa*, edited by Matthew Krouse and Kim Berman, 19-26. London: Gay Men’s Press, 1995.
- Nkoli, Simon. “Wardrobes: Coming Out as a Black Gay Activist in South Africa.” In *Defiant Desire*, edited by Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron, 249-257. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Rydström, Jens. “Solidarity—with whom?: The International Gay & Lesbian Rights Movement and Apartheid.” In *Sex and Politics in South Africa*, eds. Neville Hoad, Karen Martin, and Graeme Reid, 34-49. Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005.

Secondary Sources

- Bullough, Vern L. *Homosexuality: A History from Ancient Greece to Gay Liberation*. New York: Meridian, 1979.
- “Cecil Williams.” South African History Online. Accessed, May 1, 2012.
<http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/cecil-williams>.

- Dempsey, Brian. "Scottish Homosexual Rights Group in South Africa." LGBT History Scotland. Accessed April 7, 2014. <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/hamamelis/RIP-ISPrivate/Miscellaneous/BrianDempsey/SHRG on South africa for Deeg.html>.
- Gunkel, Henriette. *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- "Inventory of the Records of The Body Politic." The Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives. Accessed April 7, 2014. <http://www.clga.ca/Material/Records/inven/tbp/news.htm>.
- Munro, Brenna. *South Africa and the Dream of Love to Come: Queer Sexuality and the Struggle for Freedom*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
- Naphy, William. *Born to Be Gay: A History of Homosexuality*. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing, 2004.
- Paternotte, David, Alex Cosials Apellaniz, and David Tong. "ILGA: 1978-2008, A Chronology." International Lesbian and Gay Association. Accessed April 7, 2014. <http://ilga.org/ilga/en/article/mG6UVpR17x>.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1990.
- The Man Who Drove with Mandela*, Directed by Greta Schiller. Beulah Films, Amazon, 1999.