

LANGA

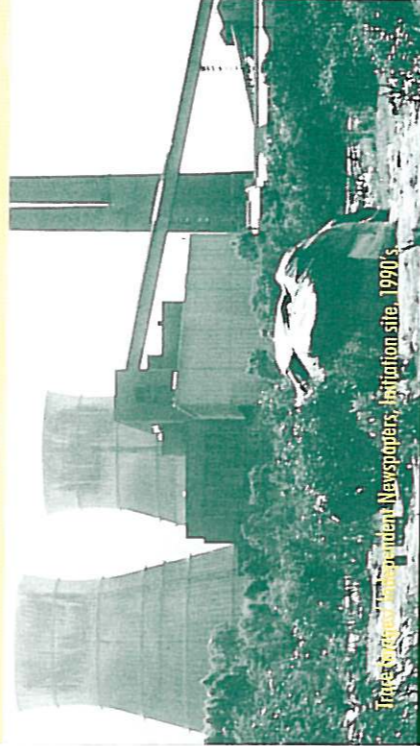


Development Phases

1. 1925 - 1931: The Old Location, between Bhunga Avenue and Jungle Walk, included the barracks, administrative buildings, the Spectal and Married quarters. Special quarters, situated between Bhunga and Haarlem Avenues, were single and double rooms, built back to back with communal toilets and wash houses. A block of 50 double rooms on Haarlem Street, known as the Spinster quarters, accommodated single mothers, widows and old ladies. Married quarters were two to three-roomed family houses.
2. 1932 - 1940: Married quarters, built behind the police station and on either side of Lerolith Avenue, north of Washington Street.
3. 1944 - 1957: Additional Single quarters including the Old "new" Flats and the Zones built on forested land that had been used for initiation and "illegal" brewing of African beer.
4. 1970s: additional Single quarters, replacing the temporary reception depot huts, became the New Flats.
5. 1980s : Single residential housing, Joe Slovo informal settlement between the New Flats and the N2.

1 Churches built the first five primary schools, in Langa. Secondary schooling was provided only after a ten-year battle by Langa residents. Government believed it would be an added attraction for Africans to move to the city.

Langa High School was begun in 1937. Classes were held in the vestries of churches until the education department built the first classrooms in 1943. The first principal was Mr. Vincent Qunta. As the only African secondary school in Cape Town at the time, students came from as far afield as Simonstown and the Boland. The school has a proud history of academic and sporting achievement.



2 The initiation of Xhosa boys into manhood is a tradition that has continued from the rural to the urban setting and is an important rite of passage in Langa. A central feature of initiation is circumcision. Initiation schools take place on the open area adjacent to Settlers Way (N2).

3 The cultural heart of Langa, Mendi Square, was named after the troopship Mendi that carried African soldiers from South Africa for service in France during the First World War. The Mendi sunk in the English Channel on 20 February 1917, drowning 615 men in a tragedy that has since assumed mythic proportions. Cultural celebrations, including the Mendi Memorial Day, took place on this square and visiting chiefs were received here. The first child killed in Langa in the student uprisings of 1976, Xolile Mosele, died on Mendi Square.

4 Now a safe haven for women and children, the Langa Hospital, built in 1928, housed a male and female ward, a TB ward and later, a maternity ward. People traveled from the Eastern Cape to attend the hospital. The injured during the 1960 Langa March were treated here.

5 Individuals who made notable contributions towards the history of Langa are commemorated in the naming of buildings and spaces, rather than in their final resting-place. Langa Cemetery is a sacred space for the ancestors of all Langa residents.

The wealth of church buildings honour the long tradition of religion and important role of the churches in shaping the history of Langa. The Presbyterian, Wesleyan and Church of England were the first churches built in Langa. Not initially represented in buildings are the independent churches (Ethiopian, Zionist) which grew substantially in Langa with the emergence of an urban, black working class from 1938. Laws forbidding the council to grant land to separatist churches forced such churches to meet outdoors, in the Market Hall and in private homes.



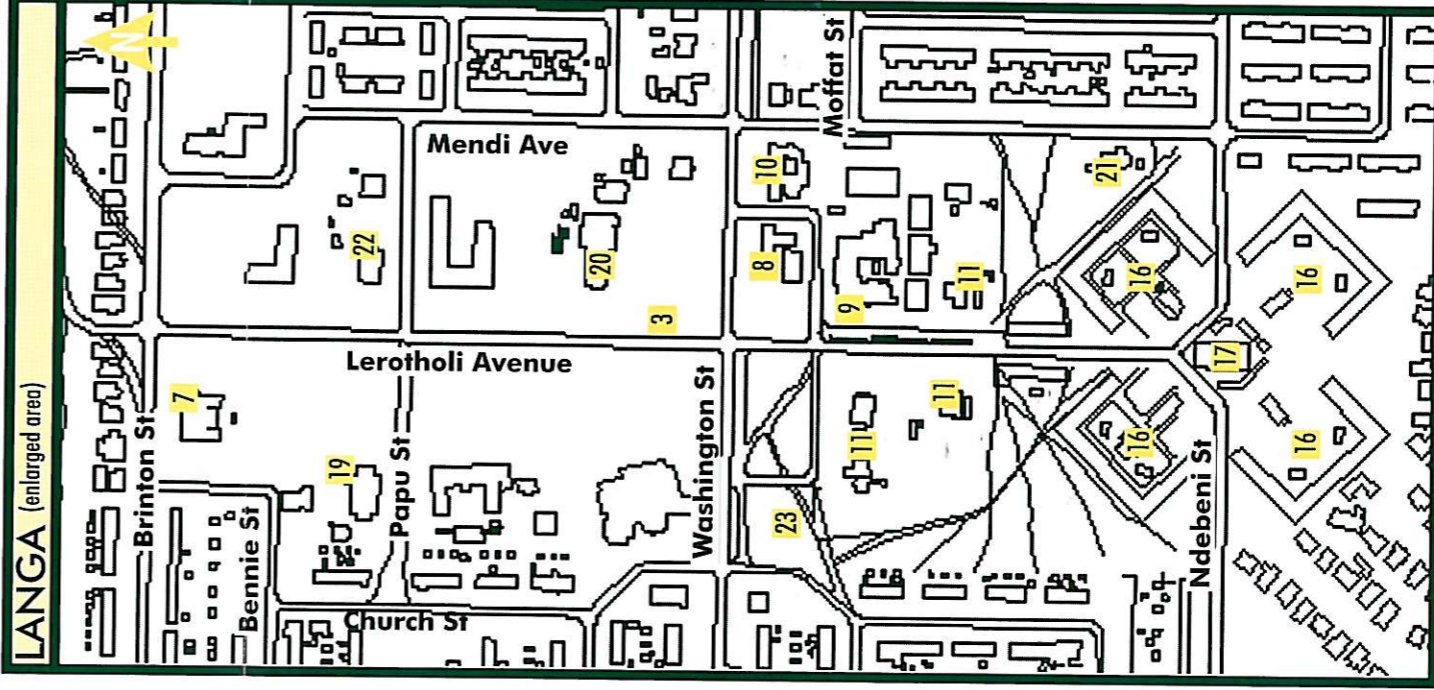
St Cyprian's Langa Church, Papu Street
St Vincent's Church, Bonteheuwel Ave
St James' Catholic Church, Bonteheuwel Ave
Presbyterian Church, Bonteheuwel Ave



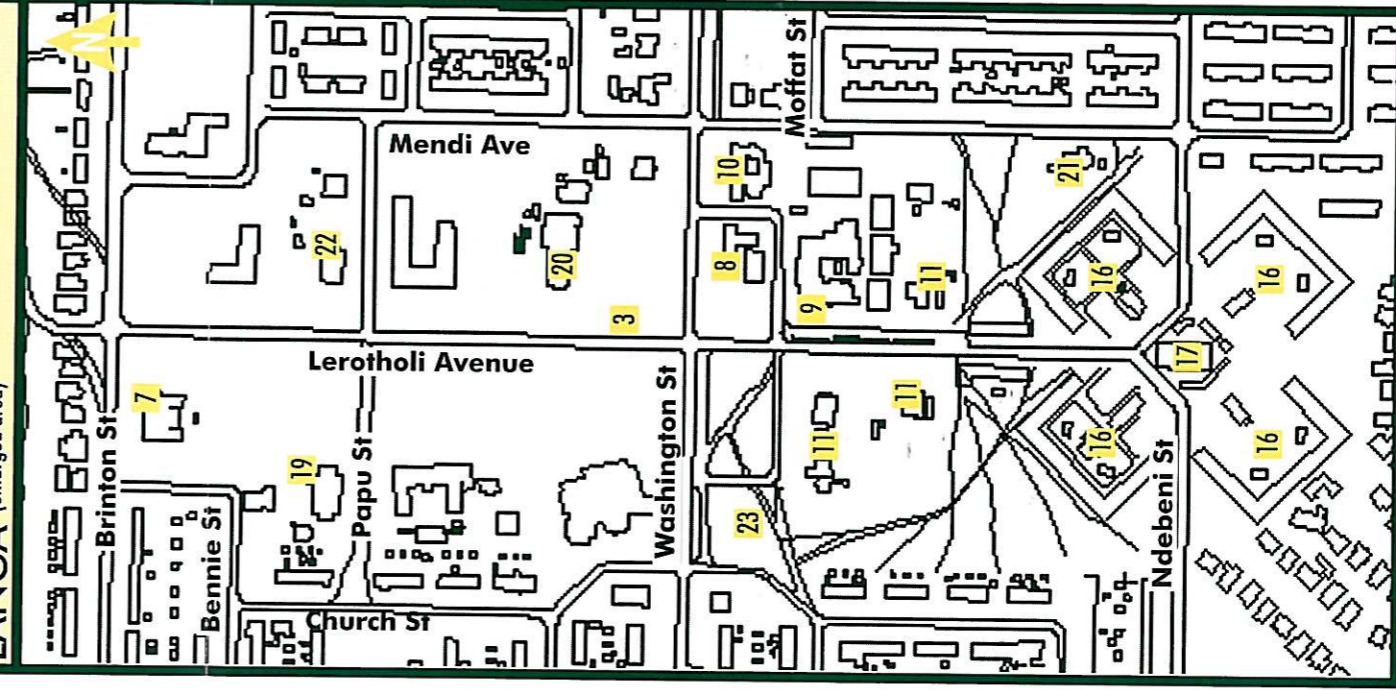
6 Not, as it appears, an empty lot, but once the very heart of political life in Langa, Bhunga Square was famous for its Sunday afternoon gatherings. Political parties would make their way to Bhunga Square, singing as they marched. A makeshift platform was set up for speakers. Walter Sisulu and Robert Sobukwe spoke here. Musical bands were also a regular feature. Bhunga gatherings were considered a bit dangerous for children, who made it a game to watch from the surrounding bluegum trees.



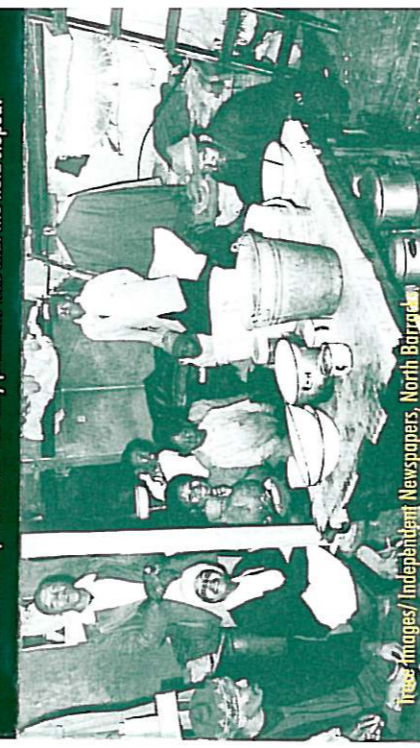
7 Where the buzz was: the Langa Civic Hall began its life as a market place located alongside the old station to serve residents returning to Langa by train. In 1931 a portion of the market was converted into a public hall where Langa's social life flourished. Wedding parties and tribal ceremonies took place here, but the civic hall is particularly remembered for "afternoon spends", Saturday afternoon dances with music provided by one of Langa's many jazz bands. The hall has been demolished and an Apostolic Church built on the site.



LANGA (enlarged area)



13 The site of Khuleni school was known as *Esigigigini*: the slope. Older residents still remember the time when this site was a dam, reached through the pine forest area behind the Old Location, in which children swam. With the development of the Zones 14 from the mid-1940s, the dam was shut down and the site became a sports field. The only problem was that the field sloped!



15 Built on the same line as the Main Barracks, 16 the North Barracks, built in 1927, have now been converted to family housing.

17 The Beer Hall, built with the barracks in 1925, originally contained the eating houses for the migrant residents. Until 1942 four African traders were licensed to run these, after which the council ran a monopoly food scheme. After years of opposition including a riot in which a resident died and £678 of damage was done to the eating-house, a beer hall, run by the council, was established here in 1948. This building was partially destroyed in the liberation struggles of the 1980s. Beer-halls were seen as sapping the anger of people that should have been directed into the struggle.

18 On the 21 March 1960 four people were killed and many wounded by police following a PAC-led anti-pass march on the Langa police station. The ground between the eight blocks of flats, erected in 1945, was commonly used for mass meetings. The crowd reassembled here on the afternoon of March 21, to be addressed by activists, notably the Langa-based Phillip Kgosana. During the afternoon crowds swelled to more than 10 000, with people arriving from Nyanga West and East. The crowds were given to a count of three to disperse before police fired into the crowd. The Robert Sobukwe Square commemorates this atrocity.

LANGA HERITAGE SITES



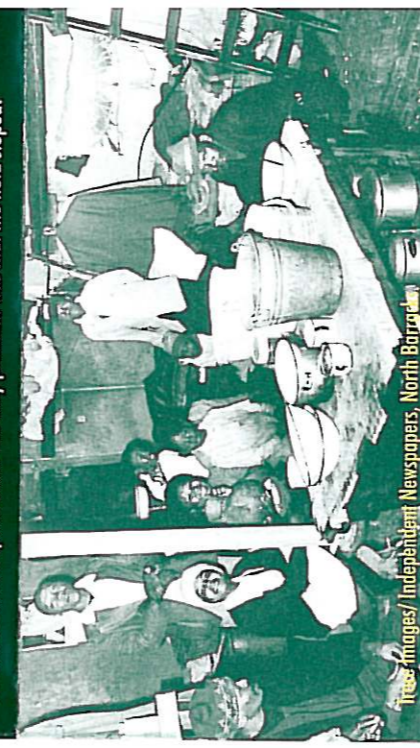
8 A human hellhole: a pass court and office was built in the early 1950s to administer passes and hear cases of Urban Areas Act contravention. Up to thirty cases could be heard in as many minutes, with officials barely glancing at defendants. Pass offenders could be arrested in the middle of the night and forced to appear in their underwear. A sign in Xhosa in the building read: Do not spit. Built of untreated wood the building disintegrated after its disuse. It has been restored as part of the Langa heritage project.

9 The council's administrative block, encompassing the police station, 10 pass court and office, 8 administration offices and white officials' residences, 11 was physically and functionally at the centre of the township life, regulating rentals, passes, registration, social welfare issues, beer licensing and domestic disputes. Housing all pass records, the administration building was a natural target of resistance and frustration and was partially burnt down in 1960. It continues to function as a municipal office today.

12 The original sportsground was built in 1934 by African labour as part of relief work during the depression. The stadium was built in 1959. Sport in Langa, rugby, cricket, football and tennis has always been vibrant. Sporting teams developed along "homeboy" lines, with men from the same areas and towns teaming up together.



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