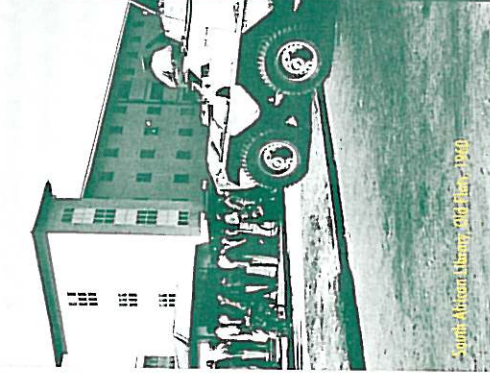
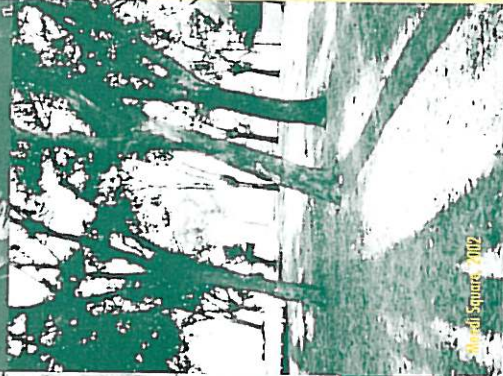


City of Cape Town Heritage advice pamphlet no. 9



Trace Images/Independent Newspapers, Jazz Music



Trace Images/Independent Newspapers



Trace Images/Independent Newspapers, Photographs taken at the Pass Office c1916

Living apartheid " I wouldn't expect any other community to experience what we experienced."
(Mrs C. M., 2002).

Under the racially discriminating legislation of the past, African residence in Cape Town could only be legally attained either by proof of having been born in the city, or proof of employment. A pass, indicating the status of each person, had to be carried by Africans at all times and regularly renewed. During the 1940s a migrant worker's passage into Langa, from stepping off the *Mbombela* train from the Eastern Cape, involved being herded from the train into the old Market Hall to have papers checked and then being passed through a "deverminisation chamber" at the top of Bennie street. Council made provision for new entrants to be housed in a Temporary Reception Depot until they found employment. If no employment was found, they were "repatiated" to the rural area from which they had come.

The 1950s onwards saw the National Party enforcing influx control with greater and greater determination. A new pass court and office room was built in Langa in the 1950s to handle pass administration and cases of contravention of pass laws. As the main pass court and office in the peninsula for many years people would come from as far afield as Simonstown and the Boland, to queue from 4a.m. each day, to renew their passes.

These decades are remembered for the experience of being chased and hounded down during pass raids by police. The invasion of lives and assault on dignity is

Langa: Cape Town's Oldest Township

Home over the years to some of South Africa's most notable politicians, artists, educationalists and sporting stars, the family township of Langa is Cape Town's oldest existing township. Langa has extended a welcome to many newcomers to the city. Forced out of site by apartheid, Langa now extends this welcome to its fellow Capetonians, to South Africans and foreigners visiting the city and celebrates its heritage as one of the older suburbs in a growing metropole. It is a place full of stories, laughter, tears, heroism and villainy. Its vibrant expression of politics, religion and culture is both unique to Langa and a lens through which South Africa's tumultuous past may be viewed.

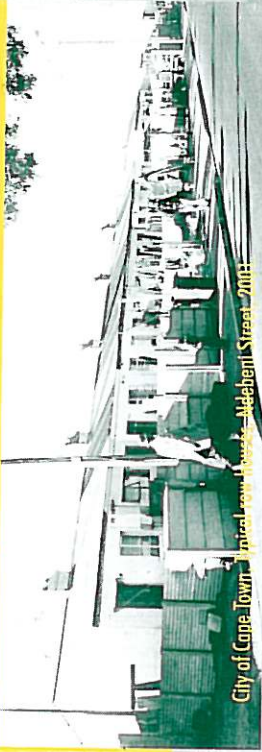
Langa was established in 1927. The infamous Native (Urban) Areas Act, 1923 had recently become law. This Act accommodated the demand for African labour whilst strenuously denying African people access to urban resources. Africans were to be "temporary sojourners" in cities. Langa, the Council's new "model" township on the outskirts of the city, embodied the basic tenets of the Act.

'Langa' (sun), is an abbreviation of Langalibalele, name of the rebel Hlubi chief who had resided on the land after release from Robben Island in 1875. The new community was formed from disparate groups: Ndabeni residents forced to move here on closure of Cape Town's first township, town residents and migrant workers coming from the Eastern Cape and the rest of South Africa. Residents were physically and socially divided between "permanent" Capetonians and migrants. Women struggled against the laws of the day to gain legal residence. The differences and divides have been important in shaping the history of Langa. Kinship networks and the common experience of oppression, narrow living space and harsh adversity, however, saw acts of cooperation and resistance that resulted in a community that created itself more than it was created by the authorities. Street life, with street-based sporting teams, hopskotch, "pucha" and marbles, along with a vibrant music and sports scene and traditional events were at the heart of life in Langa during the 1950s and 60s. Langa's music bands *Merry Macs*, *Chardettes* and *Hanolulu Swing Stars* played alongside the likes of Miriam Makeba in the old Market Hall. Capped in both rugby and cricket, the legendary Ben Malamba drew crowds to the sports stadium. Political debate thrived in Bhunga square, which saw Robert Sobukwe speaking alongside local activists. Everybody knew everybody in this family township. However, the shadow of racial oppression was never far away. Langa was designed with the administrative block and police station lying at the centre of the township to maintain control.

captured in the oft-repeated exclamation: " you couldn't even go to the toilet without your pass!" People arrested in pass raids were thrown into police vans, known as *umgqomo*: the rubbish bin.

From the 1960s defiant women began to enter the single quarters to live with their husbands. Children recall watching their mothers running away from the police during night raids on the barracks and flats. Children themselves were arrested at times and fathers would have to pay for their release. In court the only acceptable plea was "guilty".

"In a township people had to create their own entertainment, so kids used to go out and sing under the street lamps." (Ms F. D., 2002)



City of Cape Town, Langa Youth Hostel, Ndabeni Street, 2011

Township life, games, sport, politics, music and love was experienced on the street and street names reflect the contradictions and conflicts of the society many Africans lived in. Moshesh street commemorates the founder of the Soho nation; the Rev. Dr Walter Rubusana was founding member and vice-president of the South African Native Congress, which became the ANC in 1925; Ndabeni street commemorates the township from which many Langa residents were forcibly removed; Livingstone and Moffat streets impose a colonial missionary heritage while Washington and Harlem streets indicate a degree of African-American cultural influence. Leroholi street linked the old station to the Administration buildings and main barracks in what has become known as the "migrant passage". It also formed the backbone of cultural festivities, which moved from Mendi Square up to the Market Hall. This street also became known as "Lovers' Lane" as it was where couples would court.

A colourful character that many Langa residents remember had an idiosyncratic gait and wore expensive suits. People would hail him *Tshiintsha mfana KaTapile!* Change your walk, son of Tapile! In response he would switch to another graceful gait.

Conditions within the township were harsh. Accommodation was overcrowded and rentals high. Residents were denied municipal representation and any expression of grievance was frustrated. The shift towards national liberation politics from the 1950s onwards, with its focus on the pass laws, was fuelled by such local frustrations.

On the 21st of March 1960 Langa erupted following the PAC-led anti-pass march. Crowds meeting at the Old Flats were fired at by police and four people killed. The township was cordoned off and soldiers lined the street of Jungle Walk.

The 1970's saw the rise of Black Consciousness as a political movement in South Africa. In Langa, the Black Mamba Youth Movement was established int 1972 and worked to concenitise all sections of the community.

1976 witnessed the students' uprisings, beginning with a march from Langa High School to Sobukwe Square and returned to Mendi Square, with the students singing soft songs and holding placards. Students were met with bullets and the first child casualty in Langa was killed on Mendi Square. Langa became a fertile recruiting ground for the military wings of the liberation movements. The 1980s were again years of active resistance, culminating in the first democratic elections of 1994. Older residents recall 27 April 1994 with mixed feelings. The excitement was overwhelming, but intermingled with bitterness at the pain and loss endured over the years.

Cultural Festivals

The 1940s and 1950s were the heyday of traditional ethnic and religious festivals in Langa. Nsikana Day celebrated Nsikana, considered by many to be the patron saint of the Xhosa. Mendi Day commemorated the loss of African lives with the sinking of the troopship Mendi in 1917. On Mfengu Memorial Day, Mfengu, in full tribal costume, carrying colourful bundles, would march from the outskirts of Langa to the Langa Market Hall in a symbolic re-enactment of the flight of the Mfengu into the Cape. Moshoeshoe Day commemorated the founding of the Basotho nation.

Celebrations included traditional praise singers, speeches, traditional dances and food. Visiting chiefs would be received at Mendi Square, from where the festivities would move up Leroholi Street into the old Market Hall for feasting.

While some Langa residents, striving for a national, or working-class identity, saw these festivals as divisive, such festivals and tribal societies organised in Langa importantly offered some kind of social identity in an urban environment very hostile to many black people. They also enshrined black history in memory at a time when it was given no place in the official histories.



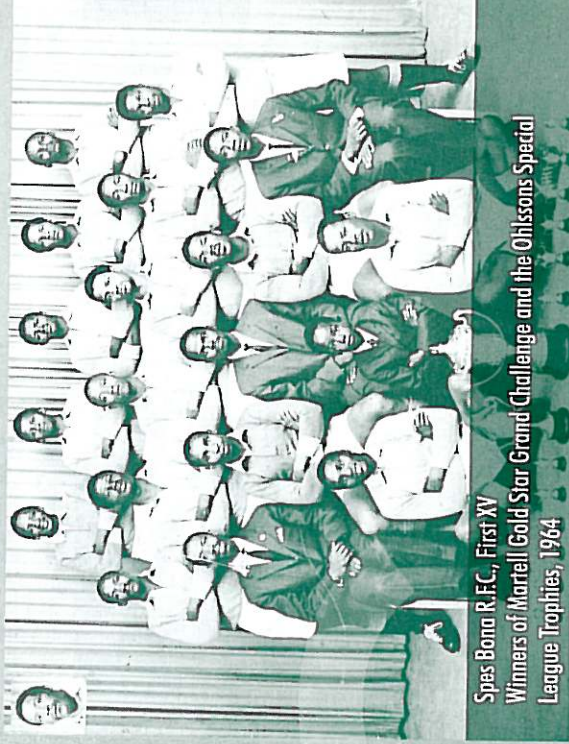
South African Library, Nsikana Day, 26.04.1954

Suggested Parking

Outside the Pass Office, opposite police station.

Toilets

Toilet facilities available within Guga S'Thebe, 23 opposite the Pass Office, also in public bath houses, such as the bath house in Popu Square, Zone 8 and the Taxi rank , Langa Interchange, Washington Street.



Spas Bona R.E.C., First XV
Winners of Marrell Gold Star Grand Challenge and the Ohlssons Special
League Trophies, 1964

Acknowledgements

Langa Heritage Reference Group for input and guidance
Langa residents contributing to oral histories of Langa