




# **Navigating Freedom: Social Cohesion Policies and the Democratic Cultural Landscape of Durban's Liberation Heritage Route**

**by Steven Kotze and Bonginkosi Zuma**



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In October 2005, the UNESCO Commission for Culture adopted the Draft Resolution 33C/29 entitled *Roads to Independence: African Liberation Heritage*, to recognise the universal value and significance of this heritage (UNESCO 2005, p. 214). In the broadest perspective, this UNESCO programme draws together the common experience of African nations in their fight against colonial occupation, racism and the struggle for human rights. South Africa's struggle for liberation began with wars of resistance against colonial invasions and was followed by a coordinated fight against racist discrimination and apartheid by national political movements.<sup>1</sup>

The National Liberation Heritage Route (LHR) is an ongoing and far-reaching project of the South African National Heritage Council (NHC), designed to develop and manage resources related to the legacy of the liberation struggle throughout all nine provinces. While a small number of high profile sites make up a tentative UNESCO list, the implementation of a national route is effectively an undertaking of either provincial or local government within a framework established by the NHC.

This paper describes the initial phase of a localised route in Durban, the largest city in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, which does not directly form part of NHC planning and implementation, but rather serves to support the national programme by identifying sites limited to a single municipal area, and which do not qualify for inclusion on the proposed UNESCO list. In 2013, the eThekweni municipality, which runs the city of Durban, initiated a process to identify, document and commemorate local sites and icons of the struggle for freedom and democracy in South Africa. At its heart, this city-oriented liberation route of the largest urban area in KwaZulu-Natal pays homage to individuals representing a wide range of organisations, who made sacrifices or gave their lives in the fight against apartheid.

The National LHR seeks to ensure that young South Africans, as well as future generations, appreciate those great sacrifices made by ordinary women and men to achieve the rights all citizens now enjoy. The head of the NHC, Advocate Sonwabile Mancotywa, described the LHR as 'an embodiment of our collective experiences, our ideals, values and principles, which unified a people who were subjected to national oppression through a repressive system. We seek to honour the freedom fighters that swelled the ranks of the liberation movement, the progressive movement, the clandestine structures, the guerrilla (military) formations [and] those who carried high the banner through unprecedented international solidarity' (Houston *et al.* 2013, p. 4). In what follows below we provide an overview of how this local part of the LHR, hereafter referred to as the Durban Amandla LHR, has been implemented in Durban, as well as a more detailed description of the sites included in the project, and then discuss how this might contribute to government-sponsored programmes promoting social cohesion.

A key criticism of the 'National Strategy for Developing an Inclusive and a Cohesive South African Society' (Department of Arts and Culture 2012, online) is that while this policy has been widely debated and discussed, particularly in the wake of xenophobic violence in South Africa (Worby *et al.* 2008; Landau 2012), the 'existing definitions of social cohesion [are] all-encompassing [leading] to the use of the term being redundant' (Ndinga-Kanga 2015, p. 5). We believe, however, that the Durban Amandla LHR is a tangible intervention that fosters opportunities for enhancing social cohesion by emphasising local history in the public sphere. By locating physical plaques (containing maps, images and text in two languages) adjacent to historically significant sites, the Durban route allows visitors from disparate social backgrounds to engage with otherwise hidden elements of the city's past and the background of other communities of which they may be unaware.

The plaques and content of the route expose relationships between various sites, organisations and individuals within the physical environment, thereby calling attention to the 'political implications of practising [space] differently' (Massey 2005, p. 13). Doreen Massey argues that it is precisely this relational nature of space that is fundamental in allowing such encounters, as 'there are always connections yet to be made,

juxtapositions yet to flower into interaction (or not, for not all potential connections have to be established), relations which may or may not be accomplished' (Massey 2005, p. 11). Moreover, Henri Lefebvre's understanding of social space as a social construction (1991) is significant with respect to the consequences of apartheid urban planning, and any potential influence the Durban Amandla LHR has to mitigate the legacy of those policies.

While it may be difficult to precisely evaluate the impact of this project on the long-term effects of racial segregation and conflict, and Lefebvre warns that we cannot expect purely spatial interventions to result in social changes, raising the street level profile of a largely hidden cultural route of previously isolated struggle sites creates a disruption of the everyday spatial and temporal landscape in Durban (Lefebvre 1991, p. 190). Over time, the people who make use of this route, and the different ways in which the content of the route is utilised and engaged with, will provide insights into the effectiveness of such a project as part of social cohesion programmes.

## Amandla: the Liberation Heritage Route in Durban

Following a two-day consultation with community and heritage stakeholders within eThekweni municipality in July 2013, the Durban Local History Museum was tasked with the responsibility of coordinating with stakeholders to gather information on sites of significance and creating a system to implement a format for the LHR in Durban. Beyond the city centre, sites on the Inanda Heritage Route, such as the Gandhi settlement at Phoenix and Ohlange Institute, are well known and qualify as locations of international significance, together with nearby locations such as John Dube House, home of the first president of the African National Congress (ANC). For ease of access to the different physical sites, a pilot project was undertaken to establish a cultural route linked to sites around the inner-city area of Durban. The project was specifically envisioned as a route of numbered sites (Minutes of LHR – Durban Local History Museums), most of which could be walked, and not strictly a ‘cultural landscape’ as narrowly defined by UNESCO (Fowler 2002, p. 18). While closely linked to the concept of cultural landscapes, the choice to identify the sites in association with one another, primarily as a cultural route, is grounded in text of the preamble of the ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes, which states that such routes, ‘represent interactive, dynamic, and evolving processes of human intercultural links that reflect the rich diversity of the contributions of different peoples to cultural heritage’ (ICOMOS 2008, p. 1). This definition incorporates the wide variety of cultural and political organisations, as well as individuals that played a role in the development of non-racial opposition to colonialism, segregation and apartheid in Durban for more than a century until 1994.

Although the British Colony of Natal was established in 1845, the first endeavour to enact racist discriminatory legislation began during the 1870s (Swanson 1983, p. 403). Such laws, as well as pervasive social prejudice, were opposed by generations of activists including M.K. Gandhi, a founder of the Natal Indian Congress in 1894 (Swanson 1983, p. 417) and Rev. John L. Dube, who became the first president of the ANC in 1912 (Hughes 2011). In the 20th century, as Durban became the largest urban centre in the region, a racially restricted franchise gave rise to a system of laws that imposed state control on many aspects of life including traditional beer production, and later the free movement and labour rights of African women and men (la Hausse 1982, p. 64). Large scale passive resistance campaigns at the advent of apartheid in the late 1940s (Desai and Vahed 2010b, p. 195) were later supplanted by a militant labour movement, which resulted in a major strike in Durban in early 1973 (Brown 2010, p. 31), while at the same time Steve Bantu Biko and others developed a political philosophy of Black Consciousness as students based in the city (Rosenberg *et al.* 2013, p. 260). The various legacies of this diverse political culture in Durban, including many other examples discussed later in the paper, incorporate a combined heritage, which the LHR seeks to preserve and promote.

In order to distinguish the most relevant examples at the initiation of the project, a consultation process was conducted with community stakeholder groups, including representatives of Currie’s Fountain Development Trust, Denis Hurley Centre, Diakonia Council of Churches, Durban University of Technology, Early Morning Market, Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Trust, Grey Street Mosque, Monty Naicker Commemoration Committee, Surat Hindu Association and Victoria Street Market, as well as the City Architects department (Minutes of LHR—Durban Local History Museums). Through monthly meetings and site visits, a list of 30 sites were identified as the core of the LHR for the inner city of Durban.



Fig. 1. Durban Liberation Heritage route emblem, Local History Museums, eThekweni municipality.  
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## Preliminary steps

A pilot phase of this route in eThekweni municipality will be launched using these sites, after which the route will be extended using the same consultative process. The Local History Museums sourced funding for the design of unique branding and signage for the different sites on the route, as well as a dedicated website that includes a digital map allowing users to navigate easily between the various sites (See Amandla Durban, online). This allows the physical markers and digital map to complement one another across the respective media used, and facilitate the exploration of this cultural route or landscape by users at street level. The group name chosen for this project is Amandla: The Liberation Heritage of Durban, with a distinctive raised-fist logo in red (Fig. 1).

The City Architects department advised on construction requirements for site markers, described as ‘wayfinder pylons’, which are durable enough to withstand street traffic as they are placed on pavements as close as possible to each chosen site. These site markers are based on a format previously used in eThekweni municipality for other street signage and serve a variety of functions. Firstly, in a similar way to the blue English Heritage plaques, the markers allow users to recognise the site both by name and as part of the route, as many of the institutions no longer function in their original locations. Secondly, a panel of texts in English and Zulu on the marker briefly explains the historical significance of the site and any significant figures associated with that place, along with a black and white photograph to provide additional context. Finally, the reverse side of the marker panel contains a map of inner-city Durban showing other LHR sites nearby.

The installation of these ‘wayfinder’ route markers, including textual and photographic information at the physical locations of Liberation Heritage sites, is the first attempt by Durban Local History Museums to curate a cultural landscape, even though it does not conform to the specific requirements laid out by UNESCO. Locating 30 large-format displays across a discrete area covering approximately three square kilometres of the inner-city has essentially resulted in an outdoor museum exhibition on the history of South Africa’s struggle for political freedom, as it transpired within



Fig. 2. An aerial view of KwaMuhle Museum, Bram Fischer Street, Durban, in 2015. © Durban Local History Museums Collection, eThekweni Municipality

Durban (Worpole 2000, p. 99). The project presents aspects of city history that are obscure in some cases, and have vanished entirely from their original contexts in others. By creating a network of sites, linked both virtually online and with physical markers at street level, visitors are not only drawn to the historical background of the selected sites, but also curious of other potentially hidden histories.

Since text on individual route markers is provided in both English and Zulu and illustrated, the space for contextual information is limited to approximately 250 words on each panel. To provide additional details and background information on each site, it was decided to link the information on route markers to the project website by means of an SMS (short message service) or ‘text message’ system as this is a universal technology. When a visitor onsite sends a free text message (containing the site’s unique code) to a designated number, they receive a text message with a hyperlink as a reply. When they click the hyperlink, they are taken to the project website and a detailed account of the relevant site. Users are provided the opportunity of gaining immediate access to more background if desired. The online website map is GPS-enabled, with technology available on most phones showing the proximity of other sites on the route, allowing users to navigate between them using a smartphone. Thus, the phones are seen not only as a channel of communication to gain access to additional background information if necessary, but also as a supplementary tool to find nearby sites on the route and assist users in planning which sites they would like to visit.

Although five sites are located outside the compact three square kilometre area at the core of the inner-city route, the remaining 25 sites are all within one kilometre of each other and the linear distance between these 25 sites is just over six kilometres. While visitors who explore the liberation sites determine their own route based on the selection of sites they wish to visit, the Local History Museums numbered the markers in a sequence starting at KwaMuhle Museum, using the shortest distance to connect each successive site (Fig. 2). Upon completion, this route will commemorate a series of organisations, leaders and events that range from those of international significance to the local, less well-known ones, and that are described below.

Locating the route’s point of departure at the museum is a critical element in the design of the project (LHR Minutes, Durban Local History Museum). KwaMuhle serves both as a physical reminder of apartheid policies, which once were administered from within its walls, but also as a point of orientation and historical context for the Amandla Durban route (Berning *et al.* 1991). Many of the other sites described below have also been repurposed, and while some are consciously used to commemorate their own struggle-related heritage (such as the Gandhi Memorial and Diakonia); others are now commercial ventures bearing no resemblance to their original purpose. The route markers thus denote what Massey terms the ‘heterogeneity’ of space, an expression of the dynamic nature of space, where a multiplicity of meanings coexist (Massey 2005, p. 9).



Fig. 3. A crowd gathered in Red Square, Dr Yusuf Dadoo Street, Durban, during the launch of the Defiance Campaign on 13 June 1946. © Durban Local History Museums Collection, eThekweni Municipality

## Liberation Heritage Route Sites in Durban

The endeavour to develop *Amandla: The Liberation Heritage Route of Durban* promotes a wider awareness of the struggle against apartheid by incorporating sites that are testament to the social fabric of Durban at various times in its history (Fig. 3). To accentuate the often concealed historical context of sites, and of broader areas surrounding groups of sites serves as tangible evidence of the mass struggle against racism and discrimination, thereby promoting social cohesion. The spectrum of places includes spiritual and religious centres, business and leisure settings such as markets, restaurants and beaches, as well as spaces whose function was essentially political like administrative offices, venues for rallies or marches and places associated with overt acts of oppression.

The Amandla project seeks to create a living, interactive exhibition that records how sites were used at different times and the ways in which they have changed during the intervening decades. Collectively, the Durban LHR sites thereby offer points of view that museum exhibitions often lack, demonstrating how events not only have a historical context, but are also located within in a physical landscape shaped by the fluctuating social, cultural and architectural setting of a city. Brief outlines of the various sites are provided below to give an indication of the rich histories explored by the route, for the most part, within a three kilometre radius of Durban's inner city.

KwaMuhle Museum (29°51'10.3"S, 31°01'27.0"E) commemorates the struggle for dignity by ordinary people during apartheid. Constructed in 1927, this building housed the notorious Department of Native Affairs, which administered discriminatory policies and enforced laws of racial segregation (Berning *et al.* 1991). These offices were frequently the target of protests, and the building was bombed by uMkhonto we-Sizwe in 1961 (TRC Report 1998, p. 170).

The former apartheid institution contains exhibitions providing insight into the way most South Africans were treated as 'second class citizens' until 1994, incorporating the misery and absurdity forced upon African people through legislation such as pass laws, influx control and forced removals (Harrison 2004, p. 78).

Cartwright Flats (29°51'08.5"S, 31°01'09.3"E) was a popular meeting place for large crowds of workers who were members of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union. Among leaders who addressed workers at this site was Johannes Nkosi, a Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) activist who took advantage of rising militancy among urban Africans in 1929 to promote a CPSA political programme calling for a 'South African native republic' and the burning of passbooks. In a fiery speech at Cartwright Flats on 16 December 1930, Nkosi called upon Africans to fight for their freedom and was fatally wounded in a bloody clash between African workers and Durban city police (Merret 1994, p. 13).



Fig. 4. The Bantu Social Centre on Charlotte Maxeke Street, Durban, as seen in 1953. © Len Rosenberg Collection, Durban University of Technology

The Durban Bantu Social Centre (29°51'06.4"S, 31°01'03.7"E), which moved to this site on 21 October 1933, was created by municipal officials in response to a period of large scale black urbanisation (Fig. 4). Before the 1930s, African people tended to socialise in hostels, beerhalls, the Industrial Commercial Workers' Union Club and in a handful of churches. The Bantu Social Centre was intended as a means of 'suitable control' over African men when they were not at work (Hughes 2011, p. 237). According to its founding aims, it was a place where '[...] worthy character may be encouraged and developed. Bantu men may spend leisure time instead of roaming the streets' (Shepstone 1933). Contrary to the hopes of its white founders, the centre was instead used by an educated black African elite to interact with working-class people and it became a platform for political meetings.

During the 1970s, the national headquarters of the South African Students Organisation (SASO), and offices of the Black Community Programmes (BCP) were housed at 86 Charlotte Maxeke Street (29°51'07.0"S, 31°00'54.3"E), in a buildings owned by the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (Rosenberg *et al.* 2013, p. 253). In 1968, black students led by Bantu Stephen Biko broke away from the multi-racial National Union of South African Students and formed SASO, as

a radical national body for activists in racially segregated university campuses. Working from these offices, Steve Biko, Barney Pityana and other SASO leaders developed and promoted the ideology of Black Consciousness, marking a resurgence of revolutionary political activity since the early 1960s (Rosenberg *et al.* 2013, p. 255). On 19 October 1977, SASO, BPC and allied Black Consciousness organisations were banned and their leaders arrested following national unrest over the torture and death in detention of Steve Biko (Rosenberg *et al.* 2013, p. 260).

Himalaya House (29°51'16.9"S, 31°00'38.0"E) was the first large apartment block built in this part of Durban. It was home to many leaders in the liberation struggle and played a meaningful role in the historical development of the Black Consciousness Movement (Babenia and Edwards 1995, p. 87). This new political philosophy developed, in part, through discussions over meals and informal gatherings here and at other social places such as the Alan Taylor student residence (29°56'40.5"S, 30°59'08.6"E) in Tara Road (Robbs 2005; Noble 2013). This movement not only called for resistance to apartheid, for freedom of speech and human rights for South African blacks, but a readiness to make black consciousness, rather than simple liberal democracy, a rallying point.

St Aidan's hospital was founded at 49 Cross Street in 1883 by Rev Dr Lancelot Parker Booth, an Anglican missionary. Appalled at the conditions of hardship prevailing among parts of the Durban Indian community, Rev Booth founded the first Anglican Mission for Indians in Colonial Natal with a focus on education and medical care (Wrinch-Schulz 1983). Rev Booth set up a simple dispensary and clinic in the backyard of his Mission House school at 49 Cross Street (29°51'15.3"S, 31°00'54.3"E) and the Mission Hospital was opened in 1897 with financial assistance from the Natal Indian Congress and Parsee Rustomjee. St Aidan's Hospital later moved to the current site at 133 M.L. Sultan Road (29°51'03.6"S, 31°00'39.3"E). St Aidan's made it possible for the Indian poor to receive health care and basic education, regardless of their religious background or caste. The new hospital was opened on 4 July 1935 (Rosenberg *et al.* 2013, p. 205), but under the Group Areas Act the hospital was noted as a 'special zone' in 1960, to allow continued treatment of all races in a white residential area (Wrinch-Schulz 1983).

The first Indian high school and teachers' training college built in South Africa was opened at Sastri College (29°51'05.0"S, 31°00'31.6"E) in October 1929 (Fig. 5). Founded by the Honourable V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, it was designed by the architect Hermann Kallenbach, a friend of Mahatma Gandhi. Srinivasa Sastri collected £28,000 from Indian families and created an institution that functioned both as a boys-only secondary school and a teachers training college (Thakur 1992). Access to higher education led to improvements in both the standard of teaching and the number of teachers available for Indian schools. In 1936, the Natal University College established a segregated campus for black students, using the facilities of Sastri College (Rosenberg *et al.* 2013, p. 148). Here a generation of intellectuals from diverse ethnic, language and class backgrounds was educated and united in opposition to racism and segregation.

Curries Fountain Stadium (29°51'00.9"S, 31°00'27.2"E) has the unique status of a site where the ideals of non-racial sports were developed and put into practice, as well as a venue for mass political events. Playing fields were created here in 1892 when colonial segregation policies prevented black teams from using grounds reserved exclusively for whites (Rosenberg, Sumboornam and Vahed 2013, p. 11). A permanent home for non-racial sports fixtures was only brought about in 1924. The first mass



Fig. 5. Sastri College in Durban shortly after it was opened in October 1929. © Durban Local History Museums Collection, eThekweni Municipality

political gathering was held on the site in 1913 and during the apartheid era activists gathered at Curries Fountain before marching in protest against government policies of segregation and racial discrimination (Rosenberg, Sumboornam and Vahed 2013, p. 231). The stadium is also associated with important political events in its own right, such as the Frelimo Rally in 1974 (Brown 2012, p. 70).

Colloquially known as the 'Duchene' after the Old Dutch Road, which it spanned, the racially diverse residential neighbourhood that developed on the lower slopes of the Berea ridge was first settled by former indentured Indian labourers (29°51'04.2"2, 31°00'29.7"E). Situated close to markets and transport

routes after an adjacent wetland was drained, the area flourished during the 1930s (Maharaj 1999, p. 252). New residents moved into the network of narrow lanes to create a distinct social character in the 'Duchene'. Under apartheid this racially diverse community of largely working-class families was identified as a 'Slum Zone', resulting in the displacement of many families. Residents resisted relocation for 20 years and many still lived in the area in the 1980s when the evictions were finally stopped. It is one of the few inner-city 'black spots' in the country that survived apartheid forced removals (Maharaj 1999, p. 259, see also Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. An aerial photograph from the mid-1970s depicting the construction of a new highway in Durban. The lower right of the image shows the mixed race residential area known as the 'Duchene', from which many residents were later forcibly removed to make way for the campus of the Durban University of Technology. © Len Rosenberg Collection, Durban University of Technology





Fig. 7. Protests led by African people outside the former municipal beerhall on Bertha Mkhize Street, Durban, on 17 June 1959. © Durban Local History Museums Collection, eThekweni Municipality

The Victoria Street Market (29°51'22.2"S, 31°00'53.2"E) and Early Morning Market (29°51'21.2"S, 31°00'42.4"E) reflect the struggles of a poor community striving to survive economically. The markets were founded by former indentured labourers who turned to market gardening for an income. Vendors were initially prevented from selling their merchandise in the colonial town market and access was only permitted later under onerous conditions. To bypass racist legislation, they created their own market, originally on the grounds of the mosque, and later on as the population grew larger on Victoria Street (Desai and Vahed 2010a, p. 267). Trading in the open, exposed to the elements, and without access to sanitation or toilets were part of their difficult work conditions. In 1910, the municipality built a covered market in Victoria Street for Indian traders, in which stall holders paid rent to the municipality. Those unable to afford the rent of stalls set up a 'Squatters Market' outside, which later became the Early Morning Market on an alternate site (Nadvi 2012, p. 99). This market commenced trading on 1 February 1934, after more than 25 years of struggle for a marketplace by poorer Indian gardeners excluded from the first market. Victoria Street market was destroyed by a fire that began under mysterious circumstances on 15 March 1973, which many traders suspected was an act of sabotage by government agents (Rosenberg *et al.* 2013, p. 60).

From 1909 until the late 1960s, Durban municipality held a monopoly on the production and sale of traditional African beer, in beerhalls known as *eMatsheni* (Figs. 7 and 8). The Zulu name, meaning 'place of stones, originally designated from large rocks outside Durban railway station where African women sold beer before a monopoly was introduced (la Hausse 1984, p. 47). Revenue from sales of beer at Victoria Street beerhall (29°51'22.1"S, 31°00'53.3"E) funded a repressive system of social control for Africans and the beer monopoly supported the maintenance of barracks, hostels, beerhalls and breweries, as well as a subsidy for the cost of policing the town (la Hausse 1984). Municipal police also held those arrested during raids for 'pass' law violations at *eMatsheni* before incarceration in the Central Prison. This *eMatsheni* and others were seen as central symbols of the 'Durban System' limiting the independent economic activity of African women, and it was vandalised during protests that took place in Durban during 1929 and 1959 (Fig. 7).

The Surat Hindu Association (29°51'21.7"S, 31°00'56.3"E) was founded by the Gujarati-speaking community in Durban in 1907 and is the oldest registered organisation in KwaZulu-Natal (Bana and Brain 1990, p. 217). The Association defended the interests and rights of Indian people, who faced discrimination in colonial-era Natal. The founders also built a *Dharamashala* (or 'boarding house') to cater for Indians travelling from other parts of the country, or returning from India, due to a lack of hotels for Indian people in Durban at that time (Zegeye and Ahluwalia 2001, p. 18).

The Gandhi Memorial (29°51'17.5"S, 31°00'58.3"E) commemorates the enduring presence of Mahatma Gandhi in Durban. The historic site was one of two purchased by Gandhi during his stay in the city, and transferred to the Natal Indian Congress in 1896 and 1897. The Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Trust was established in 1960 to prevent their expropriation by the apartheid government. After 55 years the site was developed into a memorial, designed both in remembrance of Gandhi's time in Durban and to address the ongoing need for social, economic and political transformation in South African society. Although since demolished, offices used by M.K. Gandhi formerly at 14 Mercury Lane (29°51'32.3"S, 31°01'25.4"E) were used for the administration of both the International Printing Press and Indian Opinion, the newspaper he established in 1903. The International Printing Press was founded on 29 November 1898 at 113 Dr Yusuf Dadoo Street, alongside the Natal Indian Congress hall (Hofmeyr 2013).

The restaurant of Kapitan's Balcony Hotel was a Durban landmark and many patrons included political leaders from a wide variety of organisations who met at Kapitan's for meals and strategy sessions. It is reputed that Durban's celebrated 'Bunny Chow' curries were first made in Grey Street, possibly at Kapitan's Hotel (29°51'20.5"S, 31°01'00.5"E). Segregation prevented African customers from eating inside the hotel, and they were served through a hatch directly onto the street. Indian shopkeepers were known as *banias*, resulting in the name Bunny Chow meaning 'food from the shopkeepers' (Cosgove 2009, p. 118).



Fig. 8. Protests led by African people outside the former municipal beerhall on Bertha Mkhize Street, Durban, on 17 June 1959. © Durban Local History Museums Collection, eThekweni Municipality

In August 1881, Aboobaker Amod Jhaveri and Hajee Mahomed Dada purchased a site in Grey Street for the construction of a mosque (Vahed 2001: 314). In 1884, the structure was enlarged to create the Juma Masjid (29°51'25.3"S, 31°00'59.5"E), the first mosque built in the colony of Natal. Social and political activists from the mosque congregation fought against racial discrimination, and Muslim leaders contested any laws that targeted Indians unfairly or limited rights they were entitled to as British subjects (Vahed 2001, p. 328).

The MK Gandhi Library (29°51'24.7"S, 31°00'59.4"E) was opened opposite the mosque on 10 September 1921, at a time when public library services for Indians were largely non-existent. It was the vision of Parsee Rustomjee, and the first librarians, Essop Bapu and A.M. Kotwal, assembled books and magazines with a focus on history, politics, religion and culture (South African Library Association 1947, p. 84). The library archive preserved records of Durban's early Indian community, while the Parsee Rustomjee Hall was used for meetings, public lectures and social functions by a wide variety of organisations.

The Denis Hurley Centre (29°51'26.1"S, 31°00'56.1"E) is a legacy of the political activism of Archbishop Denis Hurley. Hurley led Durban's Catholics for 45 years and became internationally known for his outspoken opposition to apartheid, stemming from his faith and a belief in the universal values of justice, freedom, truth, reconciliation and peace (Kearney 2009). In the 1970s, Archbishop Denis Hurley voiced a desire to establish an ecumenical organisation to work for justice in the greater Durban area. He believed the church should have been doing more in the struggle to end apartheid, stating that '[w]orking together to alleviate suffering and to humanise society is perhaps the most promising and exciting opportunity for ecumenism' (Mvambo-Dandala 2011). The Archbishop started discussions with other church leaders in Durban, and founded Diakonia (29°51'45.9"S, 31°01'02.7"E) on 25 March 1976 (Walshe 1997, p. 393).

A small open-air space is all that remains of a large area known as Red Square (29°51.28.7"S, 31°01'03.5"E), situated in Dr Yusuf Dadoo Street until 1967. The public space was convenient for large political gatherings, notably for rallies held by the South African Communist Party. The SACP offices were across the street in Lakhani Chambers (29°51.31.6"S, 31°01'03.0"E), which made this a convenient space for leaders to address crowds of workers (Zegeye and Ahluwalia 2001, p. 19). Authorities later regarded any protests here as Communist inspired, which resulted in the name 'Red Square'. When the Durban strikes broke out in January 1973, large crowds of workers gathered here to consult with union leaders based in offices at Lakhani Chambers.



Fig. 9. Anti-apartheid protest outside Durban City Hall on 22 September 1989. © Durban Local History Museums Collection, eThekweni Municipality

Offices in this building were used by many organisations and individuals engaged in the struggle against apartheid and racism. From the 1940s onwards, the regional offices of progressive organisations such as the ANC, NIC and South African Communist Party were housed in Lakhani Chambers (Desai and Vahed 2010b, p. 342). The close proximity of these offices to Red Square fostered the formal alliance between these organisations and was a factor in the coordination of their efforts to combat racist government policies. The close collaboration later organised between labour, nationalists and Communists was fostered by close personal relations that developed between leaders working in proximity to one another.

The Indian Congresses embraced passive resistance as a form of struggle. In the late 1940s, the leaders of the Natal Indian Congresses, Dr Gagathura Mohambry Naicker and Dr Yusuf Dadoo, supported by dozens of militant unionists and activists, revived the spirit of the 1913 mass campaigns to mobilise the Indian community. On 13 June 1946, the Passive Resistance Campaign against the Ghetto Act of 1946 was launched when 15,000 people marched from Red Square to Resistance Park in Umbilo (29°52'12.9"S, 30°59'42.3"E). A small group pitched tents to provoke arrest by the state and Naicker and Dadoo were

among the first resisters to go to prison in 1946 and the last to be released when the campaign ended in 1948 (Desai and Vahed 2010b, p. 173).

Since the Durban City Hall was inaugurated on 12 May 1910, the imposing domed building has been the centre of municipal government (29°51'29.7"S, 31°01'32.6"E). During decades of state-sanctioned racial segregation, and apartheid legislation after 1948, the city council represented the will of only a small white minority. As a result, the City Hall was a significant symbol of racist government for the majority of Durban residents (Fig. 9). Anti-apartheid protest marches against frequently moved along Dr Pixley kaSeme Street to the offices of the Mayor (Kearney 2009, p. 265). A key event in the final decline of apartheid occurred in the City Hall on 15 August 1985 when President P.W. Botha addressed the National Party Congress held in Durban. Although expected to announce major reforms, including the release of Nelson Mandela, Botha refused to submit to international pressure for change (Fig. 9). The event became known as the 'Rubicon Speech', and represented the last stand for advocates of South Africa's policy of racial segregation and political persecution (Dubow 2014, p. 221).

Durban Central Prison, which stood in Durban city centre (29°51'18.5"S, 31°01'46.2"E) from the early 20th century until it was decommissioned in 1985, was known to prisoners as *Sentele*, a Zulu pronunciation of 'Central'. Leaders from anti-apartheid organisations were held here during various campaigns, including those who burned passbooks (Desai and Vahed 2010b, p. 356). Any opponent to apartheid in Durban was probably held in this prison at some time. A short section of the prison wall and two guard towers were preserved in memory of the prisoners of conscience interned at the Central Prison for their political beliefs, and for their participation in the liberation struggle. A mural was created on this wall in 1992 to celebrate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as civil liberties later enshrined in South Africa's democratic constitution (O'Brien 1999, p. 423). A nearby site has been dedicated to Dr Gagathura Mohambry Naicker (29°51.20.8"S, 31°01.57.5"E). On completing his medical studies 'Monty' Naicker was drawn to radical politics, and was elected president of the NIC in 1945 (Desai and Vahed 2010b, p. 134). He took a central role in the 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign and worked with African National Congress president, Dr A.B. Xuma, and Dr Yusuf Dadoo, president of the Transvaal Indian Congress to create a multi-racial united front against apartheid (Desai and Vahed 2010b, p. 243).



Fig. 10. A 2015 view of the former Security Branch police offices in Masobiya Mdluli Street, Durban. © Durban Local History Museums Collection, eThekweni Municipality



Fig. 11. A 2015 view of the stone wall in Ballard Street, Durban, reputedly built by prisoners of war who served sentences of hard labour in Durban harbour following the Bhambatha uprising in 1906. © Durban Local History Museums Collection, eThekweni Municipality

The Security Branch of the South African Police was used by the government to suppress anti-apartheid organisations and activists (Fig. 10). Also known as the Special Branch, police agents acted to curb activities including sabotage, which the National Party regime considered subversive. The Security Branch was a violent, coercive force within the state security apparatus, and operated with cold-blooded efficiency. Police spies infiltrated banned underground organisations and political activists were subjected to detention and interrogation, frequently accompanied by torture. A building at 9 Fisher Street (29°51'32.0"S, 31°02'11.3"E) was the headquarters of the Security Branch in Durban (Nicholson 2005, p.133). On 18 March 1976, Masobiya Joseph Mdluli was brought here for interrogation and the injuries he suffered led to his death the following day (Dladla 1983, p. 32).

Between February and July 1906, the leaders of several African communities in the British colonies of Natal and Zululand rose in armed rebellion against injustice and colonial oppression. Chief Bhambatha kaMancinza of the Zondi clan was the most widely known leader, although other traditional leaders also joined the rebellion (Guy 2006). Following the brutal suppression of the uprising at Mome Gorge and the death of Chief Bhambatha Zondi, other leaders of the rebellion were tried for treason. Many rebel prisoners were sentenced to hard labour in the Railways Department, which included Durban harbour

(Guy 2006, p. 170). Prisoners from the Bhambatha Rebellion constructed the Escombe Sea Wall (29°52'12.7"S, 31°02'50.8"E), a low stone structure built to keep beach sand from silting the harbour. It is the only physical remnant of the rebel prisoners in Durban and is a provincial Category III Heritage Site (Fig. 11).

Throughout the 20th century, Durban City Council determined the use of space within the city in response to political demands of the white middle class. When Durban's population expanded rapidly after the turn of the 20th century the Indian Ocean beach was developed into one of the premier seaside attractions in South Africa (Hughes 2012, p. 145). The area was transformed with piers, boardwalks and a swimming enclosure intended for the exclusive use of white bathers, although racial segregation on beaches was not yet enforced by law. In 1929 the Durban Council set aside a stretch of beach adjacent to the harbour breakwater for the use of African bathers (Hughes 2012, p. 152), and the following year beach segregation was formally enforced by Provincial Notice No. 206 of 1930. African and Indian residents flocked to beaches allocated to their respective communities. After apartheid was established in 1948 the National Party government imposed more rigid requirements for social segregation of race groups. The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 did specify use of beaches, and was amended to include them in 1960. In 1967,

the Reservation of Separate Amenities Ordinance No. 37 (Natal), not only segregated all of Durban's beaches according to race group, but reserved the best and most conveniently located beaches for white residents. The so-called 'African Bathing Beach' (29°49'16.4"S, 31°02'14.1"E) was relocated to a site, just south of the Mngeni River. Regardless of efforts to ease segregation on Durban beaches during the late 1970s and 1980s, these laws were only repealed in October 1990.

### Creating social awareness

As seen by the types of sites that the LHR includes, the current project seeks to create an alternate social awareness of that historical struggle by using a very broad variety of site types. These range from spiritual and religious centres to commercial or recreational settings such as markets, restaurants and beaches, as well as more obvious places like political offices, scenes of rallies or marches and sites of overt oppression. By locating the route markers at street level alongside the respective sites, the Local History Museum has curated an extensive outdoor exhibition on this aspect of Durban's history, thereby creating an effective cultural landscape of liberation heritage within the context of ongoing daily life in the city. The size, scale and distinctive red colour of the site markers are designed to attract the attention of both locals and visitors, while the print maps on the pylons and GPS navigation available via smartphone technology alerts users to the proximity of other sites and hopefully encourages further exploration of other sites on the route. The 30 sites identified for the launch of this project are not intended as a comprehensive list, but should be regarded as representative of the initiative's full potential. Public responses beyond stakeholder groups is anticipated, allowing for further expansion of the route within eThekweni municipality, to include new selections of sites and historical contexts not yet addressed.

Through the process of visiting all of the sites, or just selecting a few, visitors are encouraged to engage with the shifting physical and social context of our various historical sites. The project extends the work of the Local History Museum beyond its institutional walls. With exhibition content of this nature—on pavements and in the streets—people who participate in this heritage experience perceive how history is accumulated within everyday spaces, in the form of layers of architecture, the changing use of the sites, and past and present developments. Accounts of events and movements are more integrated with places where people lived, enjoyed leisure time, worshipped or attended political rallies. In addition to this vital sense of spatial context, visitors are also able to discern the changes that have occurred in these spaces during the intervening time. In this way, the Liberation Heritage Route of inner city Durban provides a

perspective that museum exhibitions often struggle to give, and show that events have a spatial as well as temporal context, which is always changing as the social, cultural and architectural dynamic of a city shifts over time.

### Towards a socially cohesive society

Arguably, one of the most significant shifts in recent history is the advent of democracy in South Africa, embodied by the new constitution. Adopted in 1996, the constitution emerged as a document that placed the country at the forefront of respect for human rights and dignity for all citizens. A critical view of the constitution, however, might posit that while the letter of South Africa's constitution is perfect, the spirit is perhaps wanting as recent widespread demands for more effective social transformation demonstrated in 2015. The problem in this respect lies with both implementation and the evaluation of policies. If state strategies are not implemented in a manner that satisfies the South African people, initiatives aimed at engendering social cohesion and nurturing nation building are bound to be smothered. To what extent can a programme such as the Durban LHR implement the values of the constitution and how might it be positioned to foster better social cohesion?

When Nelson Mandela wrote that 'to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains but to live in a manner that respects and enhances the freedom of others', many South Africans and the rest of the world came to hope that South Africa would eventually become a more socially cohesive society, particularly in contrast with the dividedness of the apartheid period (Mandela 1994). Mandela was especially addressing those in a position of power, commending vigilance over the manner in which public resources were managed, essentially urging state officials to devise strategies that engendered conditions to care for and promote human dignity.

In 2000, the leaders of 189 nations made it their stated goal to rid the world of extreme poverty and the many forms of deprivation that have haunted all societies. That vision, which was translated into eight Millennium Development Goals (UN 2000), remained a powerful development framework for 15 years. South Africa was a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs), because these goals were clearly aligned with the vision expressed and supported by more than 3000 South Africans at Kliptown in 1955 who ratified the Freedom Charter, a document that, in turn, became an important basis for the nation's democratic constitution. One might argue that the original goals of the Charter were an integral part of the ongoing work and challenges taken on by the post-apartheid government.

It is against the backdrop of these historic demands for, and challenges to, social justice that the development of a LHR should be considered. In this paper, we seek to highlight issues pertinent to post-apartheid reconciliation, nation-building and social cohesion. While not completely disagreeing with the methodology used by the South African government in trying to create sustainable social environments within the country, we would like to point out certain deficiencies in South African policy, which both limit the success of a programme such as the LHR and potentially create grounds for breeding social exclusion.

### Current challenges to social cohesion

The final report of the MDGs (UN 2015) provides the world community with many reasons to celebrate. Thanks to concerted global, regional and national efforts, the MDGs have saved the lives of millions and improved conditions for many more in various respects. Among numerous statistics, the report states that the proportion of undernourished people in developing regions has fallen by almost half since 1990, from 23.3 per cent in 1990–1992 to 12.9 per cent in 2014–2016. Sub-Saharan Africa has had the best record of improvement in primary education of any region since the MDGs were established. The region achieved a 20 percentage point increase in the net school enrolment rate from 2000 to 2015, compared to a gain of eight percentage points between 1990 and 2000. The literacy rate among youth aged 15 to 24 has increased globally from 83 per cent to 91 per cent between 1990 and 2015. The developing regions as a whole have achieved the target to eliminate gender disparity in primary, secondary and tertiary education.

However, as the South African MDG Report of 2013 vividly illustrates, there are still many challenges in the country's endeavour to ensure that it achieves those stated goals (Millennium Development Goals 2013). The South African government is confident that it has dealt effectively with the goal to reduce extreme poverty by half, but remains deeply concerned that relative inequality remains high, as measured by the Gini coefficient, which measures the inequality of a distribution. This is partly because of the high unemployment rate and the low labour force participation rate in the economy. Meanwhile, the 'triple challenges' of unemployment, poverty and inequality threaten any gains South Africa has made in trying to create a socially cohesive society. Only once these three significant challenges are sufficiently improved will the government's pursuit of social cohesion be allayed, as a more socially cohesive society will consequentially manifest itself in South Africa as a matter of course.

Pursuing social cohesion as a policy has proven problematic for two main reasons, namely the lack of an agreed upon definition or means of measuring implementation (Ndinga-Kanga 2015). In 2012, the South African Department of Arts and Culture produced a 'National Social Cohesion Strategy' as the basis for discussion at the National Summit on Social Cohesion held at Kliptown in July 2012. Although this strategy and other policies provide a framework through which social cohesion can be examined, the government does not provide a clear definition of either what it means by social cohesion, nor how this may be measured. Definitions used by the government are devoid of enforcement clauses or mandatory regimes. It frequently sounds as though the government and certain organisations are playing a tricky rhetorical game when the term 'social cohesion' is used without establishing a common definition or facilitating redress by means of social and political processes. Is it possible for a project like the Durban Amandla LHR to make a meaningful contribution to social cohesion when the government's definition of it, and mechanisms for measuring it, are loosely defined?

### Lessons for the future

While South Africans may share a similar vocabulary when it comes to social cohesion, we do not yet share a similar understanding of that vocabulary. We find that Ndinga-Kanga's definition is a productive one. She has defined social cohesion as 'the bond between members residing in a state, a bond facilitated by equal opportunity to successfully participate in economic, social and political processes that enhance relative well-being while diminishing inequality in the greater society; and that result in higher levels of trust and association with a national identity across a diverse range of complex and fluid identities' (Ndinga-Kanga 2015).

However, we would argue that social cohesion should also include opportunities to participate in cultural processes. Drawing from the work of Richard Sandell, McNulty illustrates how a museum programme such as the Ulwazi Programme, a multi-authored platform that records and shares local histories and culture in the eThekweni municipality, extends representations of cultural heritage and offers individuals opportunities to participate in the process of cultural production (McNulty 2013, p. 64). Although a spatial intervention like the Durban LHR does not focus on the economic sector, it does emphasise both historic and ongoing struggles for equality in South Africa, and allows everyday people to interact with both physical and digital spaces.

Following Henri Lefebvre's principle (1991) that social space is a social product, and the social production of urban space is fundamental to the reproduction of society, the most obvious way to interpret the enduring racial segregation of South African cities on the basis of apartheid-era planning and designs is that social divisions based on race and class must be repeated in future generations. According to Lefebvre, even an ambitious attempt to elevate and recognise alternative, radical or progressive history in the urban cultural landscape of Durban is misguided because we cannot 'change the city to change life'. He also defines monumentality, the construction of physical monuments to the past, as a 'singular spatial representation of collective identity' that fails to acknowledge the lived experience of space for the majority of South Africans (Lefebvre 1991, p. 221).

The Durban Amandla cultural route, however, endeavours to shift the emphasis of memorialisation away from a paradigm of statues or large-scale monuments to a series of physical markers on the street, containing text and images. The markers, and the information provided about the various sites, disrupt the daily spaces surrounding the places where people work and transact business, consume food or make purchases, thereby affecting the present through what is known of the past. This disruptive function of the Durban Amandla LHR content enables a form of performative discourse, potentially producing innovations of collective or individual use of space, described by Pierre Bourdieu as *habitus* (Bourdieu 1984, p. 279).

The route and cultural landscape that it make tangible interventions that affect the knowledge and therefore agency of individuals, and the communities they inhabit. With greater emphasis on the transformative nature of such interventions than we would claim, Bourdieu stated that, 'to change the world, one has to change the ways of world-making, that is, the vision of the world and the practical operations by which groups are produced and reproduced' (Bourdieu 1989, p. 23). By means of a conscious disruptive mediation of the knowledge of the past, though, the Durban Amandla LHR seeks to actively engage with the practical reproduction of symbolic power in the city.

In the current context of South African government, where social cohesion is poorly defined, and the implementation of policies does not include tangible ways to measure the changes that social cohesion could bring, the Durban Amandla LHR programme offers an approach that contributes to enhancing social cohesion as defined by Ndinga-Kanga with our addition of the importance of cultural processes in social cohesion. Although the realisation of a more socially cohesive society is subject to the alleviation of economic disparities and persistent racial segregation in South African cities, the LHR is an example of efforts by the South African heritage sector to foster a more inclusive society by providing an accessible narrative of the historic struggle against apartheid segregation in Durban. While, following Lefebvre, we do not contend this type of project is able to ‘change the city to change life’, we believe that by using physical sites, digital spaces and museum resources, this cultural route is well placed to provoke newfound curiosity about the history of daily spaces residents occupy, thus disrupting Durban’s engagement with the past.

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#### NOTES

1 The Afrikaans word ‘apartheid’, meaning ‘separateness’, is only written with a capital letter when designating the regime which enforced it; without capitalisation the word refers to the name of the system itself.

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