Resistance Coded in Comics:
Visual Literacy in South Africa

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ABSTRACT
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Resistance Coded in Comics:
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(Under the direction of Carol Magee)

This thesis examines three South African comic books published by the South African Council on Higher Education and The Storyteller Group, both nongovernmental organizations, in the late 1980s/ early 1990s and argues that they functioned as subversive tools in the anti-apartheid movement. Distributed for free amongst black South African students, *Down Second Avenue*, *Mhudi*, and *Equiano* use historical events to raise awareness about contemporary issues, such as education, segregation, and unequal treatment. Through textual and visual analysis of the comic books and their worksheets, I examine how they create visual literacy for these youths, thus empowering their audiences. I situate these comics within a larger discourse of comic book culture in South Africa with an eye to understanding how popular media critically engages youths in their surroundings. Doing so provides much needed critical analysis of African comics, as well as adding to literature exploring the role of images in political struggles.

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INTRODUCTION

A woman stands in a classroom at a blackboard; students face her, their backs to the viewer. In the next panel, people sit around a fire in a semicircle, facing outward (figure 1). These two juxtaposed images, taken from the educational comic *Down Second Avenue: The Comic*, illustrate the two types of education the author Ezekiel Mphahlele received as a black youth in South Africa in the early 1900s. In the first panel, Mphahlele sits in a classroom with his fellow students, male and female, and receives a vocabulary lesson. The students dress in nice white shirts, over which the girls wear black jumpers. The teacher, armed with a pointer, towers over the seated students as they work their way through a vocabulary lesson. Unable to find an opening to enter among the rows of faceless students, the viewer is excluded from the scene. The viewer is relegated to the position of observer, visually incapable of becoming a participant. The formality of the institutionalized classroom is emphasized repeatedly through the orderliness of the scene, from the neat, tucked-in clothing to the rows of students, and the parallel rows of words on the board.

In contrast to the first panel, the panel adjacent shows Mphahlele learning from his elders in the village, and the scene is much different. Seated around a fire, the female students are absent and the clothing appears to be less formal. Unlike the previous panel

where the teacher stood in front of the class to lecture, in this one the elders (teachers) sit

amongst the students, creating a more intimate scene. The teachers are hard to visually

distinguish from the students, marked only by the speech bubbles containing their dialogue

recounting the history of their people. It is in this panel that the students receive the history of

their ancestors and the lessons and values of their community. Visually, viewers are invited

to sit amongst the students around the campfire semicircle, completing the circuit. This

welcoming atmosphere is achieved by positioning the participants facing outwards. Here the

students listen to stories, learning much more than simple vocabulary and pronunciation. This

more traditional way of educating, in comparison to the previous panel depicting children in

a classroom, presents the importance placed on communal, in addition to personal,

development. The comic book *Down Second Avenue* from which this panel is taken,

illustrates the learning environment through which black South African children were

indoctrinated into the politics of the country.

 Down Second Avenue is one of three South African comic books published by the

South African Council on Higher Education (henceforth SACHED) and The Storyteller

Group in the late 1980s/ early 1990s that this thesis examines. I argue that these comics

functioned as subversive tools in the anti-apartheid movement in that they worked within the

official educational system, but offered anti-apartheid sentiment and values by which their

readers might be empowered. Using the guise of history, they functioned as anti-apartheid

propaganda targeting the younger generation of black South Africans. Produced as part of the

"People's College Comics" project, these comics were distributed for free amongst teenage

black South African students by these non-governmental organizations. Originally published

in *Upbeat*, a monthly magazine for children produced by SACHED, these were later

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published as individual comic books.[1] Empowering students through the popular medium of comics allowed them to learn more effectively by combining word and image. Examining how comic books use visual literacy to transmit coded meanings is important for understanding how popular media can be critically engaging. I situate these comics within a larger comic book culture in South Africa, with reference to *Drum* magazine, with an eye to understanding how the medium of comics engages youths in their surroundings. Doing so provides much needed critical analysis of African comics and adds to the literature exploring the role of images in political struggles.

The content of the comics, as well as the implications and suggestions behind the individual narratives and worksheets, was carefully constructed to reflect specific ideas and motivations for young readers. The comics cover a range of issues, including the brutality inflicted upon black bodies by white males, resistance to such violence, resilience in the face of violence and oppression, the triumph of the protagonist over violence and oppression, and the means to obtain such a triumph. All of these issues are interconnected and necessary to complete the narratives. At the same time, each of these issues had real world correspondences. Although all of these issues do not appear specifically in each comic, the comics combine two or more to construct the narrative that subverts the government's attempts to position blacks as inferior through work, school and housing and empowers the student reader to fight against this. I argue this through a critical examination of specific examples from each comic and an extended discussion of their accompanying worksheets.

The growing resistance from the political struggles of the apartheid era had a negative impact on the education of black South African youths. In the 1970s and 1980s the number

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[1] Andy Mason, "Ten Years After: South African Cartooning and the Politics of Liberation," in *Cartooning in Africa* (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2009), 286.

of formally educated black South Africans was well below that of their white counterparts. There were several factors that explained this, including poor educational facilities, scarce resources, and the need of students to go to work at an early age to help alleviate the family's financial burdens.[2]

Those opposed to the National Party rose up, forming resistance groups. The National Party was the Afrikaner government in power from 1948 to 1994. This period of time as also become known as the apartheid era. These groups included the African National Congress (ANC), which arose out of the previously established South African Native National Congress (1912), and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), founded in 1959.[3] In the mid-twentieth century, these organizations indicated an early onset of resistance to this newly formed government by those who were disenfranchised by it, as well as those sympathetic to the anti-National Party cause. Despite these groups' activism, this treatment of black South Africans continued to worsen throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

One result of this disenfranchisement was the creation of non-governmental organizations that were formed to facilitate learning in state controlled schools; SACHED and The Storyteller Group were two such groups.[4] SACHED and The Storyteller Group adopted the format of the comic book to speak to South African youths about critical issues. Comic books provided a means to reach the largest possible audience. According to their

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[2] Beryl A. Gerber and Stanton P. Newman, *Soweto's Children: The Development of Attitudes* (London: Academic Press, 1980, 67.

[3] Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1990), 207-208.

[4] Loren Kruger and Patricia Watson Shariff, "'Shoo- This Book Makes Me Think!' Education, Entertainment, and 'Life Skills' Comics in South Africa," in *South Africa in the Global Imaginary* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2004), 214.

website, the mission of SACHED is " to contribute to the development of a transformed, equitable, high quality higher education system capable of responding to the intellectual, ethical and human resources challenges of a democratic society based on social justice principles, which operate in a global context."[5] Their aim is to "provide resources which allow for independent self-help."[6] The production of these comics and their integrated worksheets aim to fulfill this goal to produce self-sufficient young learners, capable of working through the material independently of a school system if necessary.

In *The Right to Learn: The Struggle for Education in South Africa*, issued by SACHED as a commentary on the educational system of the country, the organization acknowledges the inherent political nature of the issue of education. By doing so, SACHED takes a stance against the government and its methods. They note that the "struggle for education is closely tied to the broader political struggle"[7] because "people's views on education fit in with their broader views about society."[8] With this in mind, SACHED expands the possibility to create a knowledgeable community of self-aware South Africans that will fight for equality and justice.

The Storyteller Group, founded in 1988 by comic and reading enthusiast Neil Napper, desired to provide "disadvantaged communities" with free comics that referenced popular,

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[5] South African Council on Higher Education, http://www.che.ac.za/.

[6] John A. Marcum, *Education, Race, and Social Change in South Africa* (Berkley; Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1982), 60.

[7] Pam Christie, ed, *The Right to Learn: The Struggle for Education in South Africa* (Braamfontein; Johannesburg: Raven Press; Sached Trust, 1985), 7.

[8] Ibid, 17.

local themes.[9] Napper wished to promote a "reading culture" amongst South African youths

and believed comics were the best medium to do so.[10] Yet because the majority of comics

were out of the price range of most South Africans, The Storyteller Group sought external

funding to make the comics either free or more affordable.[11] Because of the connections they

established in this endeavor and their on-going determination to distribute the comic books

free of charge, the aid of The Storyteller Group in the publication of *Mhudi: Sol Plaatje's*

Classic Tale of Love and War in the time of Mzilikazi enabled SACHED to distribute more

widely.

       Although produced in South Africa, only *Down Second Avenue* and *Mhudi*

specifically deal with South Africa. *Down Second Avenue* was originally published in 1959

as the autobiography of Ezekiel (Es'kia) Mphahlele. Through the eyes of the author, *Down*

Second Avenue traces the problems with South Africa's education system, problems that

began with the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which segregated schools based on race. This

practice continued until the end of apartheid in 1994, to the detriment of non-white students.

Down Second Avenue was originally published in the magazine *Upbeat* in 1981, and was

later reprinted independently in 1988.[12] The scenes of student protestors found in the comic

would have been intimately familiar to the contemporary readers, because the student led

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[9] Mason, 287.

[10] John A. Lent, "Comics for Development and Conscientization," in *Cartooning in Africa* (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2009), 58.

[11] John A. Lent, "African Cartooning: An Overview of Historical and Contemporary Issues," in *Cartooning in Africa* (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2009), 33.

[12] The "Soweto uprising" occurred on June 16, 1976 in Soweto, South Africa as a result of the Bantu Education Act's legislation that black schools were to be taught in Afrikaans, the language associated with the oppressive government. This will be discussed in further detail in chapter two.

uprising in Soweto (1976), a black township outside of Johannesburg, occurred just five

years before the original publication date. These coded resonances are fully explored in

chapter two, which makes explicit connections between the historical events of the comic and

the actual conditions of the contemporary lives of black South Africans.

Mhudi: Sol Plaatje's Classic Tale of Love and War in the time of Mzilikazi was the

last of the three to be published; like *Down Second Avenue: The Comic*, it dealt with an

explicitly South African narrative. Appearing in 1991, it traces early periods of South

African history, focusing on the Natives' Land Act of 1913. It is based on the novel *Mhudi:*

An Epic of South African Native Life a Hundred Years Ago by Sol Plaatje, which was

released in 1930 but written a decade prior.[13] It is not autobiographical like the other two

comics I consider here, but is instead based on historical facts as told by a fictional

storyteller. As in *Down Second Avenue, Mhudi's* narrative of events provides parallels recent

South African occurrences, namely the forced relocation of non-white South Africans to

areas designated as "Homelands" in the 1970s. At the same time, this story provides youth

with historical examples of black South Africans resisting governmental inequality and

surviving even in the bleakest of circumstances.

While *Equiano: The Slave who Fought to be Free* does not deal with issues solely

inherent to South Africa, its tale is nonetheless relevant to the lives of South African youths.

Like *Down Second Avenue, Equiano* is based on a true story, originally published in 1789,

and it follows the life of the lead character from his homeland in West Africa, through his

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[13] Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, *Mhudi: an Epic of South African Native Life a Hundred Years Ago* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970), copyright page.

tribulations as a slave in Europe and America, and finally to his self-emancipation.[14] The tale

of one man's struggle against oppression offers inspiration especially for black readers in the

context of apartheid.

      This thesis explores the intersections of the educational and political missions of the

comics produced and distributed by SACHED and The Storyteller Group. Chapter one

provides an overview of the content of each comic. Understanding their narratives is

important to comprehending the tactics of subversion, which is the focus of chapter two. This

latter chapter analyzes specific instances of subversion, exploring them in terms of how

larger issues, including the original reception of the books and their authors, affect reader

comprehension of their politicized nature. Comic book and visual literacy theories will aid in

my interpretation of their rebellious content. Chapter three will position them in a larger

framework of comic culture in South Africa, with their relationship to newspaper and

magazine distribution, as well as post-apartheid consumption of comics as art.

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[14] The autobiography can be found under two different titles: *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olandah Equiano* and *Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*. The author was known by both Olandah Equiano and Gustavus Vassa, hence the difference of names in the alternative titles. Andrew Rick, Joyce Ozynski, and Harriet Perlman, *Equiano: The Slave who fought to be Free* (Braamfontein; Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988), copyright page.

CHAPTER ONE

Comic Narratives, Comic Theory and Historical Background

As mentioned in the introduction, this chapter provides an overview of the important moments in each comic narrative. Doing so will allow for a more complete understanding of how these comics function, their intended purposes, and how they relate to contemporary, political events. These issues will be further developed in chapter two. Before delving into specific instances of subversion, however, I situate these comics historically, drawing similarities between events in the comics and events faced by South African readers. I also explore the verbo-visual relationship found in these comics, using the work of American cartoonist and comic book theorist Scott McCloud. This provides insight into the unique relationship between text and image presented in comic books.

Studies on childhood information acquisition emphasize the necessity of combining textual and visual representations of material. This simultaneous combination activates the left and right hemispheres of the brain.[15] Visual images help children to understand,

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[15] Lynell Burmark, "Visual Literacy: What You Get Is What You See," in *Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime, Cartoons, and More to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills* (Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, 2008), 11-12.

remember, and organize the accompanying words.[16] The Dual Coding Theory hypothesizes

that information in the human mind can be stored both verbally and visually, both as pictures

and as words.[17] By incorporating visuals into learning, teachers are able to speed up the

period of comprehension drastically.[18] As visual literacy expert Lynell Burmark states,

"Words by their very nature are *sequential…* images, on the other hand, are *simultaneous*."[19]

Words must be read in sequence, one after another, in order to comprehend the information.

Conversely, images can be absorbed at once, with the eye moving around the image in a

multitude of directions, based on what first attracts it. Successful images draw the eye to the

most important elements first, while simultaneously conveying the mood, emotions, and

location of the scene. Through the interpreting of facial expressions and setting, all visual

cues, students determine the mood and thoughts of the characters, deciphering the coded

messages contained within the narrative. For example, in figure 1, it is instantly clear that the

viewer is being presented with two distinct types of education and that the type on the left is

imbibed with a formal quality the one on the right lacks. This is conveyed in the first panel

through the orderliness of the students' clothing and the rows they sit in, as well as the

formality of the teacher and the chalkboard. The second panel presents a more relaxed

atmosphere, where teachers and students sit on the floor as equals in an inviting semicircle.

All of this information is conveyed visually and simultaneously, and the viewer can jump

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[16] James Bucky Carter, "Comics, the Canon, and the Classroom," in *Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime, Cartoons, and More to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills* (Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, 2008), 48.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Burmark, 8.

[19] Original emphasis, ibid.

back and forth between the two to form this comparison. The text sequentially reinforces this idea, as well as provides additional information about the narrator's thoughts and feelings on these two different educational systems.

In addition to offering simultaneous comprehension, the worksheets included with the SACHED comics aid students in processing the material. The worksheets are designed to be accessible and challenging to a range of ages, with some offering simple fill in the blank exercises and others encouraging students to write their own essays. Many of the worksheets test memory skills, asking students to recall specific facts from the story line. Some worksheets ask students to interpret images and facial expressions to write dialogue for the characters. Others focus on grammar, encouraging children to identify verbs and rewrite sentences in the past tense. In chapter two, a more detailed analysis of these worksheets will be presented. They are mentioned here to stress their significance for young readers as an important tool to understand complex political issues.

The first comic considered here was the last to be published. I begin with it because of its historical positioning, for it allows me to trace in a logical timeline the sociopolitical history of South Africa in reference to the stories the comics tell. *Mhudi: Sol Plaatje's Classic Tale of Love and War in the time of Mzilikazi* was published in 1991, though the events of the comic occur much earlier. The opening events take place in 1913, after the enforcement of the Natives' Land Act.[20] This act stripped thousands of black South Africans of their homes and gave their land to white citizens. Reserves were established for black citizens, and those who lived outside of them were left with few options other than laboring for white farmers. The act also prohibited black citizens from purchasing or leasing land

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[20] Leonard Thompson, 161-162.

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from anyone who was not also black. This further marginalized the black population in South Africa and hindered them from making decent wages.[21]

Mhudi starts with an evicted family clustered around a campfire in the woods, weary and dispirited.[22] The grandfather recounts the story of how his parents, Mhudi and Ra-Thaga, met in the mid-1800s. During this time another powerful force, king Mzilikazi of the Matabele, forced other groups to pay land taxes to him. When one group refused and killed one of Mzilikazi's tax collectors, the king burned down their city and drove the residents from their homes. While wandering in the wilderness, displaced by Mzilikazi's men, Mhudi and Ra-Thaga met one another and fell in love.

After travelling through the wilderness Mhudi and Ra-Thaga eventually found Chief Moroka's village, perched atop of Thaba Nchu, where other survivors of Mzilikazi's wrath had settled. Shortly after their arrival, white Boer (Afrikaner-- a descendent of seventeenth century Dutch settlers) men entered the village, stating that they intended no harm and were just requesting land on which to settle. Although Mhudi expresses her concern about the Boers, the Chief grants them their wish and the Boers settle on the site. Once settled, Mhudi witnesses one of the Boers cruelly beating a black slave (figure 2). The slave is an old man, distinguishable by his hair and wrinkled face. He grimaces in pain as a Boer man forcefully whips his back. The comic graphically portrays the violence by showing blood spurting off

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[21] This act, which frames the narrative of the comic, was a precursor for the Black Homeland Citizenship Act of 1970. Under this, the Homelands gained full sovereign status, stripping the people living in them of their South African citizenship and instead making them citizens of their designated Homelands. This allowed the white population to gain a majority vote in the country, despite the group's significantly smaller numbers of people. T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History* (Hampshire, England; New York: Macmillan Press; St. Martin's Press, 2000), 479.

[22] The following is a synopsis of *Mhudi: Sol Plaatje's Classic Tale of Love and Life in the time of Mzilikazi*.

the man's skin as the whip connects. A sense of pain and anguish is conveyed. The onlookers are startled as they watch this cruelty played out. They had not before witnessed such blatant cruelty and are shocked by the severity of the punishment.

A town meeting is called to discuss the beating; at the meeting the Boers request the help of Chief Moroka's men to fight Mzilikazi and prevent him from overtaking Thaba Nchu. After careful consideration Chief Moroka concedes, noting that the Boers are untrustworthy but that they need to stand together to defeat Mzilikazi. There are many pages of violent battle scenes, depicting both African spears and shields and European guns and trench tactics. The battle spans several pages, with one to two panels per page. This minimalistic use of panels allows the illustrator to fully depict the carnage of the battle. The first of these pages juxtaposes the Matabele warriors and the Boers, stacking the two horizontally (figure 3). The Boers hunker down in trenches, shooting bullets that tear into the flesh of the Matabele, whose spears and shields prove ineffective. The next page is a single panel depicting the Matabele fleeing while the Boers charge after them on horses, swords drawn (figure 4). Moroka's men stand in the background, shields and weapons raised. The last page of this battle is once again divided into two horizontal panels (figure 5). The top panel shows hand-to-hand combat between the Matabele and the Boers, this time with the addition of Moroka's army. The Boers fight with Moroka's army, bringing down the remaining Matabele soldiers. King Mzilikazi and his people are defeated, although he prophesizes that the Boers will turn on their ally, Chief Moroka, and take his land as well.

Referencing Halley's Comet, which was seen the night Mzilikazi's prophecy was made, the family connects the comet sighting in 1910 as a harbinger of the prophecy. As predicted, the white men have oppressed the people of Thaba Nchu and the rest of South

Africa and stripped them of their land. In the final panels the family huddles in the woods in 1913, tired and cold, but together. Even though they are currently homeless and oppressed, the grandfather encourages his family to look towards a more positive future.

This family shows the effects of the Natives' Land Act and the displacement caused because of it. The few decades prior to 1913 witnessed major change in South Africa. A power struggle between the British and the Afrikaners resulted in a war lasting from 1899 to 1902; although the British won they left the country in the hands of the Afrikaners, sticking with the system of indirect rule they used elsewhere on the continent. This led to the formation of the Union of South Africa, comprised of the Cape Colony, the Natal, the Transvaal, and the Orange Free State.[23] These events, preceding those in *Mhudi*, are what led to the establishment of the Natives Land Act. The period between 1910 and 1948 has come to be known as the "segregation era," in which black South Africans received lower wages, worked less skilled jobs, were granted fewer privileges, less land, and less education.[24]

Dealing with the next period of South African history, *Down Second Avenue: The Comic* (1988) covers from the early 1900s into the apartheid era, which began in 1948 with the coming to power of the National Party. The comic is a pictorial representation of the autobiography of Ezekiel Mphahlele, a black South African writer and educator.[25] As a self-proclaimed lover of teaching, he fought hard to make education accessible for his students, combing through second-hand bookstores for affordable used copies of textbooks. What

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[23] Leonard Thompson, xix.

[24] Ibid, 163.

[25] Ezekiel Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (Berlin: Seven Seas Publishers, 1962), 165; Ursula Barnett, *Ezekiel Mphahlele* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1976), 13.

follows is a description of the events in the comic that have been supplemented with scholarship on the author, the novel, and the comic.[26]

In 1919, Mphahlele was born in the Marabastad Township in Pretoria.[27] In 1924 he was sent to live with his grandmother in Maupaneng in Northeastern Transvaal, where he received the different types of education seen in figure 1.[28] These two types of education were prevalent in the townships at this time. Although Mphahlele struggled to complete his schoolwork in addition to his household chores, he enjoyed reading and was able to explore this passion when he was sent to St. Peter's Secondary School in Johannesburg in 1935 and had use of their library.[29] It was during his time at St. Peter's that Mphahlele became interested in politics through interactions with other politically minded students. In the late 1930s he went to Adams College, run by white missionaries.[30] School strikes resulted in the burning of school buildings and the subsequent censorship of political debates, as seen in this panel (figure 6). Here, the students raise their arms and open their mouths in protest. Each raises one arm in solidarity, as if moving together as a unit. The obscurity of their facial features allows readers to project themselves into the image, envisioning themselves as the

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[26] Like with *Mhudi*, what follows is a synopsis of *Down Second Avenue: The Comic*.

[27] Barnett, 13.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid, 5.

[30] Prior to 1953, mission institutions controlled the education of black South Africans, although their resources were limited. In 1959, the Extension of University Education Act prohibited established universities from accepting black students without special permission, making higher education harder for black South Africans. While universities were established for non-white students, they were tightly controlled by the government and received significantly less funding than the universities established for white students. Leonard Thompson, 196; Mzwakhe Nhlabati and Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue: The Comic* (Braamfontein; Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988), 6.

protestors. McCloud argues that such projection is possible because of the way people picture themselves, which he argues is a sketchy placement of shapes and not a photographic representation.[31] This allows student readers to envision him or herself in a position of empowered resistance, rebelling against the established institution of government-controlled education.

After college, Mphahlele took a teaching position in Orlando in 1945, which he was later fired from for condemning the new government issued textbooks that privileged white colonialism and was consequently banned from teaching in South Africa. After briefly teaching in Lesotho he returned to South Africa, taking a job as a journalist for *Drum* magazine in 1955. At *Drum* he reported many of the problems segregation and apartheid were causing, including the Bantu Education Act and the subsequent protests of it, as depicted in figure 7. Like in figure 6 these students raise their arms and open their mouths in protest, but in this panel their hands have become fists and they bear a sign stating "down with Bantu education." Chapter two provides insight to these subtle changes while chapter three provides further exploration of the significance of *Drum* and its importance for covering resistance movements and events at the time these comics were published.

Down Second Avenue traces the changes of the educational system in South Africa, beginning in the pre-apartheid early 1900s and continuing into the middle of the century, during the first decade of the National Party's control. It also traces one man's struggle to fight against this system by working within it, an aim that ultimately fails. After being banned from teaching in South Africa, Mphahlele tried to participate in the resistance against the government in other ways but felt as though he was not making a valid contribution to the

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[31] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), 36.

cause. In 1957 he relocated his family to Lagos, Nigeria. The comic ends here, with as panel of Mphahlele relaxing in a chair outside, surrounded by lush vegetation, while his son plays in the background with a handful of balloons (figure 8). It is significant that it is in Nigeria where he writes *Down Second Avenue*, because it is there that he feels free enough to do so. In South Africa, Mphahlele would not have had the freedom to express himself or his views criticizing the country's biased educational system.

Although the final comic for discussion deals more broadly with Africa, it is relevant for its focus on slavery and the fight for freedom. *Equiano: The Slave who fought to be Free* was published immediately following *Down Second Avenue: The Comic* (1988).[32] It recounts the autobiographical story of a West African black man, Equiano, his enslavement and his subsequent travels and experience as a slave and later as a freeman. His travels to the coast of Africa from the interior regions of Nigeria show him encountering new art forms and cultures. His first view of Europeans occurs on a beach; the Europeans are wearing colonial style clothing, appropriate to the historical time frame of the story, and treating the slaves poorly as they are transported by boat to America. It is on this voyage that he first experiences the physical punishment of a slave (figure 9). Tied to a pole by his hands, a slave is whipped for trying to escape. Multiple lacerations drip with blood as a white crewmember brandishes a whip, ready to strike again. The implications of these representations of interracial interactions will be addressed more fully in chapter two, with a critical exploration of race relations in South Africa, but here I raise them to show that interracial interactions are themes introduced early in the story and developed throughout, playing an integral role in the narrative.

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[32] What follows is a synopsis of *Equiano: The Slave who fought to be Free*.

After his initial voyage to America, Equiano travels to London, where Captain Pascal purchases him and gives him to Miss Watson as a servant. Miss Watson teaches him how to read and write and has him baptized, events that become important in his quest for freedom. In the late 1750s Captain Pascal takes Equiano to fight the French in the Seven Year War; after the war Equiano asks the captain for his freedom but is denied. These four panels depict this moment in an action-to-action scene (figure 10). These panels use minimal text and rely heavily on the images to convey events and emotion. In the second panel Equiano asks the English captain of the ship for his freedom and is answered with incredulity. In panel three the English ship captain grabs Equiano by the shirt and Equiano grabs his hand to stop him. In the fourth and last panel the captain brandishes a knife and threatens to cut his throat if he ever tries to escape. The violent force of this threat is represented by the jaggedness of the speech bubble of the captain, extending outside of the panel in its severity. This illustrates the first instance of Equiano attempting to obtain his freedom, foreshadowing future events in the comic.

To prevent Equiano from obtaining freedom, Captain Pascal sells Equiano to Captain Doran who takes him to the West Indies, where he is sold to Mr. King. Here, Equiano was overworked on the sugar plantations, a place where slaves were tortured and often killed. The plantation slaves gathered together at night, discussing their lives and plotting for freedom. Learning he can purchase his own freedom, Equiano vows to do so, no matter how long it takes. When Mr. King takes Equiano abroad to aid in loading and unloading cargo he slowly works towards raising money for the purchase of his freedom, selling fruit, glasses, and other small items on the side, saving up his money one penny at a time.

Through hard work, and after many years, Equiano saved enough money to buy his freedom, only to realize that the world was unjust and he was still treated as a slave. Although he re-encountered friendly people like Miss Watson who helped him to find job in London as a hairdresser, he also dealt with people who tortured him and robbed him of his pay. To make a better living he went back to working on boats and travelling the world for nine years, visiting many places and meeting other freed slaves. While working as a freed man aboard a ship, the captain ties him up to prevent him from leaving the crew (figure 11). When Equiano presents the captain with his letter of freedom, it is dismissed and Equiano is punished. Although he is not beaten, he is strung up by his arms and legs and forced to withstand the elements until a small boy frees him. Equiano began to speak about the unfair treatment of black men, participating in the anti-slavery movement in England and giving public speeches about his own experiences. He wrote his autobiography to document his experiences during his enslavement and to argue for fair pay and equal treatment. As I argue in the next chapter, taking place in the mid 1700s and in a country thousands of miles away, *Equiano* proves that historical subjects not specifically challenging education or on topics local to an area can be utilized to teach children a larger historical narrative and work towards a political agenda.

This political agenda is significant, for as Vusi Malindi, a black South African cartoonist and animator, has stated of comics, "growing up under apartheid, you didn't see yourself as a person with many options. Everything was very limited. Everything in the comics seemed like outer space- something you could never reach."[33] The comics produced as part of the People's College Comics series sought to remedy this, presenting youth with

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[33] Lent, "African Cartooning," 16.

situations parallel to their own. The relatability of the narrative was imperative to the comprehension of the material and the effectiveness of its subversive tactics. Cartoonist and author Andy Mason, who was involved with this project, has said, "[black] South Africans never read comics as kids as they were very poor."[34] Because of monetary concerns, the creation of educational documents that could be mass distributed for free to the largest possible audience was integral to the mission of SACHED and The Storyteller Group.

In reaching this large audience they were able to disseminate widely their propagandistic messages. I will now provide an in-depth analysis of what coded messages these comics are sending beyond the immediate content of their narrative stories, and how they articulate it. I do so with the aid of comic book and visual literacy theories. By looking closely at examples from the comics and their worksheets, it will become apparent that their content is subversive and coded with anti-apartheid messages. The choices about which books to adapt to this medium, as well as who was chosen to work on the projects, is also telling and will be given closer examination.

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[34] Lent, "African Cartooning," 16.

CHAPTER TWO

Subversive Strategies

Expanding upon the descriptions provided in chapter one, I now turn to making explicit the ways in which these comics subvert[35] the National Party's policies. I argue that every aspect of these comics was configured to provide subversion of existing educational and social policies that oppressed black South Africans, while maintaining the guise of historical, educational materials. From the selection of the books for adaptation, to those chosen to work on the comics, to the narratives themselves and the worksheets included at the end, nothing is as straightforward as it first appears. Working together, these parts make up a larger whole that was specifically designed for distribution amongst school-aged black youth to encourage them implicitly to resist and rebel against the government's racist policies while simultaneously informing them explicitly of historical struggles and resistance movements. An examination of these individual aspects and their relationship to contemporary South African events follows.

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[35] I am using the Merriam-Webster Dictionary's definition of "subverting" for this thesis: "the act of subverting: the state of being subverted; especially: a systematic attempt to overthrow or undermine a government or political system by persons working secretly from within." Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "Subverting," http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/subverting.

In his endnotes to *Equiano: The Slave who fought to be Free,* historian Joshua Brown comments upon the different types of clothing used. While white characters are depicted in colonial dress, the black characters wear more present-day clothing.[36] He speculates that this may be to pull the black characters out of their historical moment, making them easier for readers to relate to.[37] I would like to push this speculation further, arguing that the relation between the historical and modern suggested through the entire comic functions as a critique of contemporary South African issues. This is true for all of the comics considered here. Masquerading as educational, historically grounded comics, they confront current issues of educational discrimination, land ownership, and segregation subtly and implicitly, and thus circulate without adverse political consequence. Ideally, students would be able to make connections between the historical events depicted in the comics and their own situations, realizing the problems inherent in their way of life.

In order for students to make such connections, every aspect of the production of the comics for the People's College Comics project was engineered to create conscious and subconscious recognition of coded political messages for their readers. It is not coincidental that the subject matter of each book chosen to be illustrated in comic book form directly coincided with concerns in South Africa prevalent at the time of the comics' publication, or that these concerns affect those who are underprivileged or suppressed because of governmental policies, as were the comics' target audiences. The books, their authors, and those chosen to work on the comics all carry significance that cannot be overlooked.

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[36] Joshua Brown, et al, *History from South Africa: Alternative Visions and Practices* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 465.

[37] Ibid.

Ezekiel Mphahlele, the author of *Down Second Avenue*, was a well-known and well-respected writer in South Africa. After the publication of his autobiography in 1962 he continued to write and work as a teacher, receiving numerous honorary degrees and prestigious titles, including a nomination for the Nobel Prize in literature in 1969.[38] He returned to South Africa in 1977, where he lived until his death in 2008.[39] Njabulo S. Ndebele, a highly influential South African fiction writer and professor, has called the book version of *Down Second Avenue* one of the "major building blocks of South African history," and has stated that its "writing embodies the endurance of spirit, which wore apartheid down."[40] This was written for an article about the most significant books to emerge out of Africa, signifying just how widespread its reception has been. It has been hailed as being "South Africa's most singular contribution to black literature," by South African novelist Peter Abrahams and cited as the "most widely known autobiography by a black South African writer," by N.W. Visser.[41] The choice, then, to adapt *Down Second Avenue* for the first release of the People's College Comics project was not coincidental. Ursula A. Barnett, the author of one of Mphahlele's numerous biographies, has praised the early autobiography for capturing the spirit of the author and relating the experience he endured.[42] Mphahlele's

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[38] Ruth Obee, *Es'kia Mphahlele: Themes of Alienation and African Humanism* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), xiv.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Njabulo S. Ndebele, "From Ptahhotep to Postcolonialism," *TLS* 5133 (6) (2001): 6.

[41] Peter Abrahams, *Tell Freedom: Memories of Africa* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), 136; N.W. Visser, "SA, the Renaissance that Failed," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 11 (1976): 51.

[42] Barnett, 50-51.

life's story not only presents readers with depictions of black oppression, but also his subsequent success provides a hopeful role model for what might be achieved.

Sol Plaatje has received similar acclaim as Mphahlele; his novel *Mhudi: An Epic of South African Native Life a Hundred Years Ago* (1970), was the first novel published in English by a black South African.[43] Visser states of *Mhudi,* "novel provides a prospective on the South African experience, the perspective of the generally voiceless black populace, that has never been widely available in South Africa."[44] Plaatje wrote this novel in response to current socio-political conditions that privileged white culture, so in this way he may be seen as being subversive. He begins his preface by stating that he wishes to provide South Africa with a literary perspective that is native instead of European.[45] He goes on to note that the money raised from sales of the novel would be used to collect and print local folk-tales for distribution, for he feared that they would be forgotten due to the spread of European ideas.[46] His novel has also been praised for its ability to capture the South African experience,[47] and I would argue that the combination of all of these factors is why it was printed in comic book form for students.

Andy Mason's involvement with the project to adapt Plaatje's novel is notable; he started the Durban Comix Circle in the mid-1980s as an outlet for comic artists working on

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[43] Plaatje, *Mhudi, an Epic of South African Native Life a Hundred Years Ago,* copyright page.

[44] Visser, 44.

[45] Plaatje, *Mhudi, an Epic of South African Native Life a Hundred Years Ago,* preface.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Visser, 44.

developmental comics.[48] In the early 1980s he worked with SACHED to produce the comic "Stella Starfinder," a character he has claimed was an "allegory for resistance to repression."[49] It therefore comes as no surprise that Mason was involved with the People's College Comics project.

While *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olandah Equiano*, or *Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*, was not written by a South African and therefore does not have the same relevance or appeal the others might have for a local audience, the decision to adapt this memoir for the second release of the People's College Comics program was still calculated and cunning. A tale of unwavering commitment to obtain freedom and raise awareness about the abolitionist movement, *Equiano* has parallels to South African history that would have been readily apparent to young readers faced with the ever growing public opposition to a repressive system that constrained their freedom. The illustrator, Rick Andrew, is a well-known South African cartoonist who had gained notoriety the year prior to the release of *Equiano* with an educational comic about waterproofing houses after devastating floods hit the country.[50] Andrews has published comics in the early 1980s in *PAX* (*Pre-Azanian Comix)*, an underground collaborative that focused on anti-apartheid imagery.[51] He was chosen to illustrate *Equiano* because of his naturalistic style and was urged to produce clear images that could be easily understood by young black readers.[52] This decision

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[48] Lent, "African Cartooning," 33.

[49] Lent, "Comics for Development," 54-55.

[50] Ibid, 54.

[51] Mason, 291.

[52] Ibid, 265.

could be reflective of the unfamiliarity of the subject matter of this comic and the desire to translate foreign locations and peoples clearly to a local audience. By relating the end of slavery to a country that was rapidly approaching a radical shift in its own practices of unequal treatment of peoples, these foreign events became localized and personal.

As mentioned, the political climate of the late 1980s, when these comics began circulation, was tenuous. The early half of the decade saw hints of reform; still, the living conditions of black South Africans under the presidency of Pieter Willem Botha (1984-1989) continued to deteriorate.[53] Rather than winning the favor of black citizens, the policies of Botha's government resulted in riots all over South Africa, with blacks demanding more reform and equality. This pushed the government to declare a partial state of emergency in 1985 and to enforce martial law by 1986. During this time schools functioned as centers of resistance and students rallied together as they had in 1976 during the Soweto uprising, in which students protested against the ruling to teach black schools in Afrikaans, the language of the oppressor, rather than English or indigenous local languages.[54] The biased control and limiting of knowledge production caused the black population of adolescents in Soweto to demand equal and unbiased education.

As discussed, the government used education as a means of controlling the population, creating a system that privileged white Afrikaners and kept black citizens oppressed through the limitation of education and erasures of history. As Steve Biko, a

[53] Michael Morris, *Every Step of the Way: The Journey to Freedom in South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004), 213.

[54] This resulted in the uprising of thousands of black schoolchildren in Soweto and led to hundreds of deaths when police opened fire on the crowd. Leonard Thompson, 212; Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Apartheid, Democracy* (Malden, M.A.; Oxford: Blackwell Pub, 2007), 131.

college student who formed the South Africa Students Organization (SASO), an organization exclusively for black students stated, "blacks no longer seek to reform the system because doing so implies acceptance of the major points around which the system revolves. Blacks are out to completely transform the system and to make of it what they wish."[55] The desire to be completely in control of one's own destiny was evident; this was reflected in protests, speeches, and artistic production throughout the 1980s.

Following a stroke in 1989, P.W. Botha was forced to step down as president and was replaced by Frederik Willem de Klerk. He released ANC leaders in 1989-1990 and began discussions on the future of South Africa with Nelson Mandela, a long-jailed anti-apartheid activist and leader in the ANC. de Klerk was a conservative Nationalist, but he believed that reform was the only way for the National Party to retain power. He believed that they could win the favor of the non-white population of South Africa, underestimating their desire to be truly free.

With this idea of transformation over reformation as a predominate desire of black South Africans in mind, I now offer examples of how these comics encouraged young readers to fight against the system and work towards the creation of a new one. While the late 1980s/ early 1990s saw glimmers of hope and hints of change, especially with the release of Mandela and other political prisoners, it was still a time of great stress and violence. For those younger citizens that may not have been familiar with the history of the country and its resistance movements, the comics could provide historical grounding and real-life examples for emulation. For those who were aware or had experienced similar circumstances, the comics could reinforce their desires to work against the National Party and continue the fight

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[55] Leonard Thompson, 212.

for freedom. Coded in historical narratives, these comics provided helpful tools of resistance strategies while simultaneously giving hope to readers. By first going through the comic narratives and then moving to their included worksheets, I demonstrate how these coded messages function as subversive strategies. By expanding the argument to include the worksheets, it will become clear how the two parts of the published material work together to inform young readers.

The Comics

As I have shown, the comics were adapted from books that were picked for their implications of the National Party's biased and unequal policies. Grounded in South African literary history, *Down Second Avenue* and *Mhudi* make direct correlations between the issues and circumstances youth in the late 1980s faced with issues and circumstances from the past; this gives students a historical framework to work within as well as the motivation necessary to continue the struggle. By linking current events to a long history of resistance and rebellion, the comics create a sense of community and purpose that allows the student readers to feel like they belong to a larger whole. It can be reassuring to know that one is not alone in the fight; by illustrating that many others have come before with the same purposes and showing their realistic (and positive) outcomes, it encourages young readers to press forward with the cause. *Equiano* moves outside the South African cause and into a larger, more global sphere, connecting young readers to a worldwide resistance to oppression and inequality. By focusing on specific themes, such as brutality, resistance and resilience, all three of these comics encourage self-empowerment. These comics also provide hope, which

was desperately needed in the bleak times of police brutality, forced removals, and the multitude of harsh conditions black citizens were submitted to. Because these comics offer tentatively happy endings, they provide hope while still maintaining a realistic outlook.

The brutality towards blacks, as inflicted by white males, can be explicitly found in both *Equiano* and *Mhudi*. In both the majority of the violence depicted is done to slaves (oppressed blacks), as visible in figure 2 and figure 9; the unwarranted cruelty of these actions is forcibly brought home in the panels. Both illustrate black slaves being whipped by white slave owners; however, *Mhudi* represents it much more graphically than *Equiano*. As mentioned in the first chapter, there is a scene in which Mhudi visits the Boer camp and witnesses the whipping of an old slave (figure 2). The accompanying text reads "One day, Mhudi saw something terrible at the Boer camp. She could not imagine what the Boer's slave had done to deserve such cruelty."[56] This indicates that Mhudi and the other onlookers were not used to such treatment, either of themselves or others, and find it shocking that one would treat another human so poorly and savagely. Unlike the image in *Equiano*, we see the slave frontally. The pain on the old man's face reflects the way the whip tears at his skin, resulting in the spraying of blood. This visually heightens the viewer's perception of the incident, making it come alive in ways words cannot. *Mhudi*, moreover, was published in 1991, three years after *Equiano* and *Down Second Avenue*; its heightened levels of graphic violence corresponds to the growing violence in South Africa and the higher levels of resistance to the National Party. Although Mandela and Botha had entered into discussion at this point, there was still much animosity and distrust amongst the black population for de Klerk and the

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[56] Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, *Mhudi: Sol Plaatje's Classic Tale of Love and War in the time of Mzilikazi* (Johannesburg; Melville: SACHED; Storyteller Group, 1991), 17.

National Party, especially amongst the youth.[57] They criticized the ANC and Mandela for dealing with the government when police brutality and killings were still taking place.[58] Because of the long history of segregation, oppression and mistreatment, the youth distrusted any interactions with the Afrikaner government. They were after a transformation, not a reformation.

The other violent scene in *Mhudi* is a battle between the Boers and the Matabele (figures 3-5). The text accompanying the three pages is minimal; only one bears any dialogue and the rest have short descriptions of the events taking place, appearing outside of the panels so as not to disrupt the action. Sound cues appear in the text, reiterating the booming of the Boers' guns and the screaming of Mzilikazi's forces as the bullets tore through their skin. This allows the images to speak for themselves, with the viewers interpreting the violence with their own eyes. Readers use their visual literacy tools to interpret the scenes based on preconceived knowledge, much of which was gained through lived experiences. The three pages on which the battle appears pit whites against blacks, as well as blacks against blacks. This parallels the fighting occurring in the last few years of apartheid; during this time members of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) formed an alliance with the National Party and this often resulted in black-on-black violence.[59] Synonymous with the "Zulu nation," the IFP drew on the Zulu monarchy and the ideas of (Zulu) national pride attached to it to compel members to join and fight for their cause.[60] Led by Mangosuthu

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[57] Morris, 253.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid, 254.

[60] Ibid.

Buthelezi, a former ANC youth leader who sought control over the KwaZulu, the IFP was an ethnic movement that proved to be divisive in the struggle to end apartheid.[61] Concerned with its own welfare, members were known to engage in violence against black apartheid resisters, independently and in conjunction with the government, which aided the government's police forces. This black-on-black violence was also seen in *Mhudi*, with Mzilikazi's forces attacking other groups to control larger areas of land.

Not all of the oppression in these comics is conveyed through violent force, nor are all of the resistance tactics. The main text of *Down Second Avenue* deals explicitly with the educational system in South Africa and one man's struggle to educate black students and fight against the Bantu Education Act. As suggested in chapter one, there are multiple panels depicting resistance in *Down Second Avenue*. The first of these shows Mphahlele himself as a participant of resistance, as a student at Adams College (figure 6). This mass of student protestors appears again later in the comic, this time in protest of the Bantu Education Act (figure 7). In both panels, no dialogue boxes appear. The only text accompanying them is placed above the image to describe the events and elaborate on their cause. As in the battle scenes found in *Mhudi*, these panels allow the illustrations to "speak" for themselves.

These panels create relatable images, not only because of the youthful participants but also because of their forms of resistance. Students would have identified with young protestors marching for a cause. Specifically, the Soweto riots, which started out as a march against the use of Afrikaans in the classroom, can be paralleled with the students protesting educational reform in the comic. The multiple scenes of resistance involving student protestors is not coincidental; schools had a history of being centers of resistance and places

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[61] Davenport, 434-5.

where students rallied together to protest governmental oppression. Utilizing the extremely prominent and fresh incident of Soweto (1976), this 1981 comic offers a narrative of adolescent resistance dating back to the mid-twentieth century (when Mphahlele and his peers were active) and extending into the present, indicating to young readers the history of resistance amongst students their age. As previously mentioned, McCloud theorizes that readers can position themselves in these types of panels because of the way in which they have been drawn.[62] The vague faces allow students to project themselves into the scene, imagining that they are a part of it. This could be read as an encouragement to students to continue this tradition of rebellion and protest, thereby asserting themselves into a continuing narrative.

Equiano embodies the idea of resistance as well, for the whole narrative is Equiano fighting for his freedom and slowly obtaining it. Although he is beaten and forced to work in harsh conditions, he never loses hope. After almost two decades of slavery, Equiano becomes a free man, though this freedom is bittersweet. This fight for freedom parallels the efforts of organizations like the ANC, PAC and UDF; groups of people working together to abolish unequal treatment and biased governmental policies was prevalent throughout South Africa's anti-apartheid groups, as it was for abolitionist groups, as illustrated in Equiano. Therefore, black South Africans would easily relate to Equiano's struggles. The abolitionist groups of black and white members in Europe held demonstrations and lectures to illustrate the inhumane nature of slavery. Equiano joined this movement, speaking out about his own experience and the harsh reality of being a slave. They fought for fair pay and better working

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[62] McCloud, 36.

conditions, asking other citizens to sign petitions and fighting against the stereotypes prevalent in England at the time, much like the resistance groups in South Africa.

Despite the violence suffered by the black characters in these comics, they survive the harsh conditions and resist circumstances in which they are forced to live. The story of Mhudi and Ra-Thaga highlights the resistance of the people against Mzilikazi's army while the story of the grandfather and the children shows their resilience in the face of adversity. The decision to convey both of these themes to a black South African audience in 1991 would not have been unintentional; at a time when the country was on the verge of change it would have been necessary for those who were fighting to keep fighting and for everyone to hold out hope for a better future. Although none of the comics have truly happy endings, they all convey a tentative positivity that has the possibility of improvement.

This idea of hope is visible throughout the three comics, especially at their endings. *Down Second Avenue* embodies this; the final panel features Mphahlele lounging in a tropical environment, surrounded by lush plant life, while his son plays in the background with balloons (figure 8). This background is much different than the rest of the comic; in this panel an air of calm and joy is exuded while the other panels project chaos, disorder, and fear. As noted in chapter one, it is only in Nigeria that he feels comfortable enough to write this memoir because of the governmental oppression of free speech present in South Africa at the time.

The endings of *Mhudi* and *Equiano* are much more tentative in their positivity, but convey a feeling of hope nevertheless. The final pages of *Mhudi* return to the family huddled in the woods from the beginning. Scared and cold, the children turn to their grandfather, the teller of the story, for advice. He advises them to be strong, for "one day our land will belong

to us again."[63] This provides the children with hope, as it provides readers with a similar hope. Faced with the same struggle, they would take heart from this sentiment. Similarly, the ending of *Equiano* offers a less definitive ending than *Down Second Avenue*, but the ending, like that of *Mhudi*, is more relatable for readers. Youth in South Africa did not have the luxury of leaving the country; instead, they were faced with the government's unjust policies daily. *Equiano* shows the protagonist joining abolitionist movements and documenting his struggles to aid in the fight to end slavery and gain equality; black South Africans still fighting for equal rights would find hope in this realistic ending. In this sense, these comics are more relatable than *Down Second Avenue*, despite its focus on South African education.

The Worksheets

At the end of each of the three comics a dozen or so pages of worksheets are included that aid readers' comprehension of the narratives and allow them to practice various school subjects. These subjects include math, science, reading and writing. This broad spectrum makes the comics versatile and able to be utilized for a well-rounded education. Because teachers can use the same comic to teach every subject, the comics become more user-friendly for educators and convenient because students must only read one comic to cover a range of material. The worksheets also offer the opportunity to explore the intricacies of the comics; through the worksheets the subversive nature of the comics is made explicit and offers readers with suggestions for reflecting on their own personal situations. In this sense,

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[63] Plaatje, *Mhudi: Sol Plaatje's Classic Tale of Love and War in the time of Mzilikazi*, 37.

these comics have multiple educational layers, which begin with scholastic subjects and end with life lessons. Some of these are explored in this section.

Although much of the connection between the violence in the comics and the violence that occurred around the students is implicit, there are examples where it is explicitly addressed. A worksheet in *Equiano* links the events in the comic directly to events in South Africa, making explicit the connections I have identified elsewhere. It presents an excerpt from the book *The Land Belongs to Us* by Peter Delius, that was published in South Africa in 1983, and recounts the story of a young boy who was captured by the Boers 200 years earlier and forced into slavery (figure 12). The inclusion of this excerpt in the worksheet highlights the practices of slavery found in South Africa, relating the narrative of *Equiano* to local histories. By relating issues of slavery in West Africa, the place from which Equiano came, to similar occurrences in South Africa, it makes distant issues more relevant to the lives of these student readers. This slavery is also seen in *Mhudi*, when Mhudi witnesses the Boers whipping his slave. One of the worksheets included in *Mhudi* asks students to imagine themselves in the difficult situations presented in the comic, including the previously discussed whipping scene (figure 13). Many of the students would have been subjected to similar methods of brutality, with white men brutally beating them for defending their rights in marches or for failing to complete work tasks "adequately." Requesting students to think about how they would react in such a situation allows them to think about how they did/do react, and to reflect on what their own actions mean.

Not all of the supplemental materials included with the comics teach through practice questions and critical thinking problems. The back cover of *Equiano* is not a worksheet but a board game (figure 14). In full color, the board game traces the resistance movements of

slavery in America. Through playing students receive a general sense of the history of slavery in America and the harsh conditions slaves faced while trying to obtain freedom. It begins with being captured and forced into slavery; rebellion strikes as early as the third space of the board, setting the tone of the game. Throughout the game the players escape and get caught, organize prayer meetings in the woods, and encounter historical figures like Nat Turner. They are also caught, imprisoned, and forced to return to their masters after reaching the North. After the Northern victory in the Civil War and the abolishment of slavery, the struggle against segregation begins and the board game ends. This poignant ending would have resonated with the students playing the game; although they may not have been enslaved, under apartheid they were forced into segregation and treated unequally. The last space has a group of people, both black and white, fighting for equality in America and hopeful that they will overcome the oppression still prevalent. This parallels the activities of groups like the ANC, PAC and others that were fighting against the system for equality amongst races.

Down Second Avenue deals with Homelands and forced removals, as well as the educational reform previously discussed. The last three pages of the worksheets included in *Down Second Avenue* focus on the forced removals in Marabastad in 1942, a precursor to the Black Homeland Citizenship Act of 1970. This can be viewed in conjunction with *Mhudi*, in which the family is forced from their homes under the Native's Land Act. The worksheet asks students to pretend to be newspaper reporters, documenting the reasoning behind the removal and the reaction of the residents, taken from fictional quotes from Mphahlele and his family. The second of these three pages provides the room to write this article, while the last page provides information on the demolishing of Marabastad, stating that more people

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moved into towns from rural areas because of the increase in industry caused by World War II, but the townships were not upgraded to accommodate so many residents. This page includes a drawing of Marabastad and asks students to think of ways the government could have improved the township rather than destroying it (figure 15). The worksheet suggests possible answers, including installing electricity, running water and toilets in the houses, planting trees and grass, improving the roads and sidewalks, removing the litter, and creating more houses for homeless people as potential improvements. The student readers would have been painfully familiar with policies that stripped blacks of their homes and forced them to live in designated areas outside of the cities, for many/most would have resided in such areas themselves, which likely lacked similar necessities.

These are just a few examples of the worksheets included with the comics. As indicated, they use a variety of techniques to inform students and educate them of acts of resistance and forms of rebellion. They encourage them not only to act against the conditions that result from the government's policies but also to think of solutions for their situations. In addition, they encourage them to think of others in their actions and how to better improve life for the community instead of the individual.

Conclusion

As moral philosopher and political ethics specialist Cynthia Willett states, "The comic can appear as a lawless element for subverting staid conventions or serve as a leveling force against hierarchical societies. It can alter a perspective and shift the balance of power.

The comic can destroy traditional social bonds, but it can also generate new ones."[64] I would argue that this is exactly what SACHED achieved when they printed and distributed *Down Second Avenue: The Comic*, *Mhudi: Sol Plaatje's Classic Tale of Love and War in the time of Mzilikazi*, and *Equiano: The Slave who fought to be Free*. As previously mentioned, SACHED was vocal in their opinion about the unequal and biased educational system. In *The Right to Learn: The Struggle for Education in South Africa*, they refer to education as being in a "crisis… and education is clearly a political issue."[65] They reflect a growing trend towards anti-apartheid support and the increasingly vocal demands for equality. As I mentioned, many of the problems with inequality in education stem from the segregation policies that began at the turn of the century and were heightened through the apartheid era.[66] As SACHED notes, the problems found in the educational system have parallels in many other facets of South African life.

The last part of Willett's quote hints at the positive aspects of social reform. Organizations like SACHED and The Storyteller Group are actively engaging with social reform and trying to establish new bonds between black youth and education that are stronger and better than those dictated by the government. These organizations seek to eradicate the unjust governmental bonds, which limited education to keep the youth ignorant and from challenging the government's policies. Using education as a tool, organizations like SACHED and The Storyteller Group can inform a large population of people of current sociopolitical situations in South Africa while teaching them history and critical reasoning

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[64] Cynthia Willett, *Irony in the Age of Empire: Comic Perspectives on Democracy and Freedom* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 5.

[65] Christie, 11.

[66] Ibid, 59.

skills. Through the creation of new bonds unified through the quest for equality, South

African citizens are better prepared to demand fair treatment and eliminate discrimination

from their government. The final chapter explores how these comics fit into a larger

sociopolitical framework by establishing them in a historical framework.

CHAPTER THREE

***Drum* Magazine, Comics, and Post-Apartheid Production**

Ezekiel Mphahlele briefly worked as a journalist for *Drum* magazine, documenting

political riots, forced evictions, and resistance movements. In *Down Second Avenue* he

documents this part of his life; the comic also illustrates this moment, dedicating an entire

page of panels to his time at the magazine (figure 16). More importantly, the comic dedicates

an entire page to the different circumstances black South Africans faced, the type of

circumstances covered in *Drum*. It is important to note that all of the panels show resistance.

The information is conveyed through a combination of panel and text; on this page, one

compliments the other and both are necessary to understand the actions depicted. The bus

boycott panel shows over a dozen people taking alternative modes of transportation, which

scared the transportation industry and led it to glimpse the power of the masses. This panel

shows an empty bus with over a dozen of people walking or riding bikes beside it; a group of

people shouts "azikhwelwa!" meaning "we refuse to ride." The text above the panel explains

this, noting the fear the industry felt for this boycott. The Sophiatown evictions panel shows

people refusing to leave their homes. "We won't move" is painted on the façade of a house,

with people out front warming themselves by a fire. The text indicates the location of the

action. The panel of schoolchildren resisting the Bantu Education Act has already been discussed at length in the preceding chapters, and demonstrates that resistance came from all parts of the population. The final panel depicts older women preparing to march to the Union Buildings. This panel, without the accompanying text, would be difficult to interpret, as it depicts three women holding bundles of paper. It is through the text that readers learn it is showing the march of 20,000 women on the Union Building. By illustrating people of various ages and genders, this page shows how all types of citizens had resisted the biased government. This opposition was both violent and non-violent in method.

The significance of this page of panels lies in its direct ties to current events in South Africa at the time this comic was published. *Drum* was a real magazine, which continued to report similar stories through the end of apartheid and continuing today. Students would have been familiar with the magazine and its coverage of similar current events, and therefore would easily relate to the stories Mphahlele reported on in the 1950s. Through publications like *Drum*, South Africans were able to learn about resistance acts on a large scale; this would bolster the resolutions of others and instill a sense of hope while providing them with new ideas and tactics for fighting the government. First produced in March of 1951, four years after the National Party assumed governance of the country, the magazine was initially called *The African Drum* and was run by a white editor who intended the magazine to cater to a racially diverse audience.[67] The lack of reader enthusiasm led to a shift in focus from a magazine for white readers that black readers would also enjoy to one directed towards an audience comprised specifically of black urban youth.[68] This focus on the younger portion of

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[67] Colin Osman, "Drum: An Introduction," *Creative Camera* 235/236 (July/Aug 1984), 1438.

[68] Ibid.

the population reflects the more radical viewpoints of the youngest generation of resistance fighters throughout the era. It is generally recognized that in a population it is the youth that embody the most extremist and activist manifestations of resistance, and the youth in South Africa are no different. Although owned by a white man, the majority of the magazine's staff was black, which enabled the magazine to cater to a black audience effectively.[69] Because the staff came from the townships and were involved in resistance movements they were able to successfully document the anti-apartheid struggle in ways that those who were not so intimately involved would not have been able to.[70]

Not only was *Drum* an important venue for representations of struggle activities, but it was an important site for comics as well. The magazine provided an outlet for comic artists to publish material that would have been found to be unsuitable for more mainstream outlets (publications catering to white audiences that propagated the government's policies) because of its overtly politicized content. White freelance cartoonist Len (Lennie) Sak's racialized character Jojo appeared in the magazine for the first time in 1959 and continued to make regular appearances throughout the apartheid era.[71] Regarded as "a much-loved icon of the struggle of ordinary black people," Jojo epitomized the "black Everyman" who lived in a township and faced hardships, which he overcame.[72] Because of the popularity of the magazine, the character of Jojo has been hailed as "the most popular black South African

[69] John Peffer, *Art and the End of Apartheid* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 250.

[70] Osman, 1438.

[71] Mason, 259-260.

[72] Ibid, 260-261.

cartoon character of the 20th century."[73] With this in mind, it can be said that *Drum*

legitimates the medium of comic representation. When we consider that Sak created the

character of Jojo at the *request* of the magazine, it becomes clearer that this medium was

considered to be a valid means of transferring information to a large audience and making

political commentary on contemporary situations.[74] This is one of the multiple reasons the

medium of comics was a natural choice for the mission. The comics in *Drum*, loaded with

political commentary and targeted at younger audiences, would have resonated with the

project's readers and allowed them to grasp the underlying messages uncovered in the

previous chapter.

The inclusion of comic strips alongside the articles in *Drum* also creates a similar

type of visual literacy as seen in comics themselves. In reference to the Dual Coding Theory

discussed in chapter one, this combination of word and image allows for multiple levels of

comprehension and understanding. As previously discussed, comics do this in a self-

contained manner. As illustrated in figure 1, the images provide instantaneous information

while the text provides additional, supplementary information to create a better

understanding of the events.

As established, the comics produced for the People's College comics project followed

a history of comic production in South Africa, making their accessibility so high because of

the preexisting visual literacy created amongst youth through the reading of other comics.

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[73] Mason, 260.

[74] Ibid.

Andy Mason's 1980s comic circle,[75] Durban Comix Circle, provided an outlet for himself

and other comic artists, as well as the aid for development of other groups, including The

Storyteller Group.[76] Organizations like this allowed for cartoonists to discuss the field and

the uses of the medium in relation to contemporary events with one another; this led to a

stronger output of materials, such as the comics discussed in this thesis.[77]

Comics relating to socio-cultural issues also gained popularity at the end of apartheid.

Savyra Scott formed the organization Electric Rainbow in 1990 and published AIDS-related

comics about prevention and care.[78] Another comic collective, Moving Image, also produced

comics that addressed personal issues, such as family planning, women's rights and peer

pressure.[79] These comics, labeled "developmental," were targeted at youth in ways similar to

the educational comics discussed in this thesis and had the same aim: to educate youth.[80]

Although these focused almost exclusively on non-scholastic topics, as discussed, the comics

in the People's College Comics project also offered more than just vocabulary and math

lessons as well. When this is taken into account, the similarities between developmental and

educational comics becomes clear.

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[75] A comic circle is a group of cartoonists or comic artists with similar agendas that work together, either on projects or by giving one another ideas and feedback.

[76] Lent, "African Cartooning," 33.

[77] Lent, "Southern Africa: Hardly a Cartoonist's Eden," in *Cartooning in Africa* (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2009), 237.

[78] Lent, "Comics for Development," 55.

[79] Ibid, 56.

[80] Ibid.

After the end of apartheid in 1994, comics retained their importance in South Africa for educating young people. Maintaining a tradition dating back to the nineteenth century, comic artists in South Africa cover a range of issues, including those considered most pressing to young readers.[81] This easily transitions into the production of educational comics in the 1980s, for the inherent message conveyed in the majority of South African comics had to do with personal and political issues. The Storyteller Group was a main producer of comics of this nature, imbuing their narratives with solutions to personal and political issues young readers were confronted with daily. Following the People's College Comics project, the renewed interest in educational comics sparked an increased production of this genre of comics after the end of apartheid.[82] The organization aimed to provide a "popular visual literature" that they hoped would spark interest in reading while simultaneously informing young readers about HIV/AIDS, personal hygiene, peer pressure, family planning and relationships.[83] One of the most successful of these was *Heart to Heart*, a comic about sex, AIDS and gender issues released in 1994, the same year apartheid officially ended.[84] Continuing the free distribution of the earlier People's College Comics project, these were similarly aimed at disadvantaged black youth and were advertised in popular magazines and clothing stores frequented by their target audiences.[85]

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[81] Lent, "Southern Africa," 229.

[82] Mason, 287.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid, 289.

[85] Ibid, 287.

Political cartoons have gained a public prominence in the post-apartheid era, with artists like Jonathan Shapiro, also known as Zapiro, producing a prolific number of politically engaging comics every week.[86] An avid anti-apartheid activist who was jailed for the comics he created for the United Democratic Front (UDF)[87], Zapiro uses the mainstream media to reach the largest audience possible.[88] The popular strip "Madam & Eve," created by Stephen Francis (an American-born writer living in South Africa) and Rico Schacherl (an Austrian-born artist who grew up in South Africa)[89] illustrates a black maid named Eve who outwits her white Madam on a weekly basis.[90] Its commentary on the continued segregation between whites and blacks and the poor treatment black servants continue to face, combined with the wit of Eve, provides accurate commentary on class and race divisions still prevalent in a post-apartheid era.

In the twenty-first century, African comics have begun to receive international acclaim as art. In South Africa, an exhibition of comics was organized by the Durban Cartoon Project, launched by Mason, and the Comix Project, an organization based out of the School of Graphic Design, Witwatersrand Technikon.[91] This exhibition combined apartheid

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[86] Lent, "Southern Africa," 229.

[87] Mason, 274.

[88] Lent, "Southern Africa," 229.

[89] Mason, 281.

[90] Lent, "Southern Africa," 230.

[91] Lent, "African Cartooning," 34.

and post-apartheid comics, allowing viewers to visualize the progression of the medium and

its continued uses as a political and cultural tool.[92]

In another instance, the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York hosted the exhibition

"Africa Comics" that featured the works of 32 African comic artists and artist teams. Lasting

from November 15, 2006 to March 18, 2007, this exhibition's lengthy installation period

indicated its perceived significance by the hosting institution. The project itself was

conceived in 2001 by the organization Africa e Mediterraneo, which was concerned with

establishing cross-cultural relations between Africa and Italy.[93] Holland Cotter, in a review

for *The New York Times*, described the works in the exhibition as having "epic depth" that

"delivers the jabbing punch of news of the day."[94] South African artist Anton Kannemeyer

(Joe Dog), co-creator of the strip Bitterkomix, was included in the exhibition by the curators,

who selected a work illustrating the deep-rooted racial fears still inherent in the country.[95]

Varying wildly in style and composition, the shared characteristic of comics from all over

Africa is their focus on politics and people. Cotter praises the show for offering a view of

African art not usually seen in museums, for it is personal and contemporary rather than the

"all-purpose globalist" art Cotter believes is usually displayed.[96] The exhibition takes time to

experience, for viewers must look closely and read each individual strip, often in translation.

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[92] Lent, "African Cartooning," 34.

[93] Samir S. Patel, et al. *Africacomics* (New York: The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2006), copyright page.

[94] Holland Cotter, "African Comics, Far Beyond the Funny Pages," *New York Times*, November 24, 2006, weekend section.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

Its accompanying catalog of approximately 200 pages included reproductions of the comics as well as critical essays concerning comics in Africa. This exhibition and its catalog illustrate just how important African comics are to the citizens they are produced for as well as their educational and informative capabilities to a larger, global audience.

With the discussion of comic exhibitions, it is possible to now examine these comics for their artistic merit. Although produced primarily for their educational and subversive purposes, they nevertheless feature illustrations from artists working in the field. Exhibitions like the ones discussed show the growing acceptance of comics as a form of art. The skills discussed, including the simplification of features so readers can project themselves into the scene and the conveyance of emotion to alert the reader to response cues, are comparable to the coded meanings found in paintings. Following art historical canonical tropes, these coded meanings work within the discipline to create a visual literacy easily read by their target audience. By accepting these as art, it allows them to fit within this canon and legitimizes their function.

Conclusion

Through the utilization of a preexisting, popular medium, the South African Council on Higher Education and The Storyteller Group sought to reach out to the younger population of the country and move them in a way that would be motivating and liberating. I have attempted to show how these comics subverted the institutionalized apartheid ideologies of the National Party government through the positive empowerment of school-aged children by utilizing a familiar and relatable tool: the comic book. By using preexisting, popular

narratives significant to South Africa's disenfranchised population, these comics strike contemporary chords and educate youth on resistance fighters of the past while empowering them to continue the struggle in the present. John A. Lent, a figurehead in the field of comic art, has stated of South African comics, "no country has exhibited the enthusiasm for and the dedication to the use of developmental comics as much as South Africa, especially during the waning years of apartheid…"[97] My analysis of these three comics is just a small sample of the educational comics published in the country at the end of apartheid and after.

Fitting these comics into a larger framework, it becomes clear how comics have been and continued to be used as political tools, representing the underrepresented part of the population. In this sense, these comics subvert the established modes of control exerted by the government and illustrate alternative viewpoints to the government's biased system. Most importantly, they offer the possibility of creating a community of informed young readers who are self-aware and self-determined.

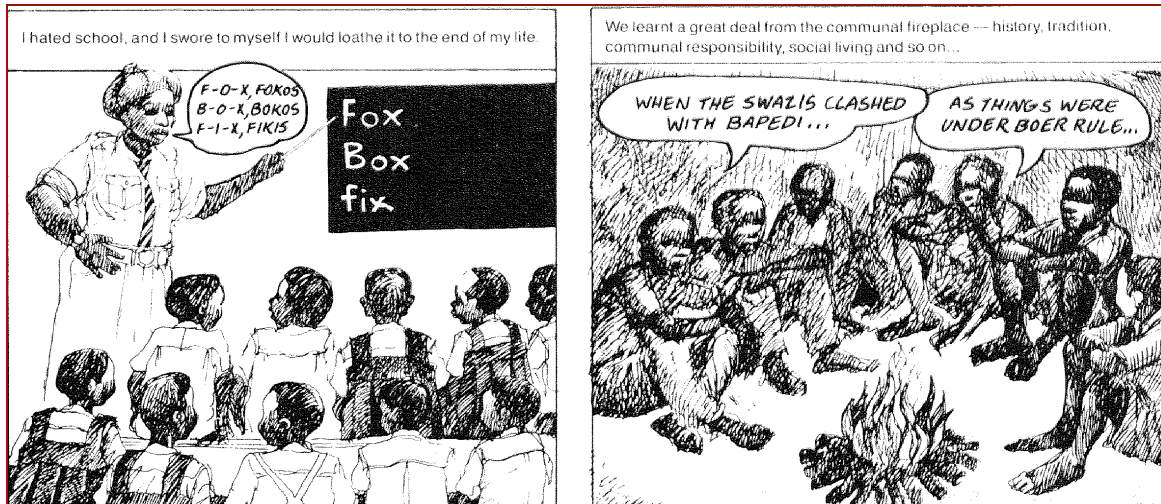
[97] Lent, "Comics for Development," 54.

Figure one: Two panels of education differences.
Nhlabati, Mzwakhe and Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue: The Comic*. Braamfontein;
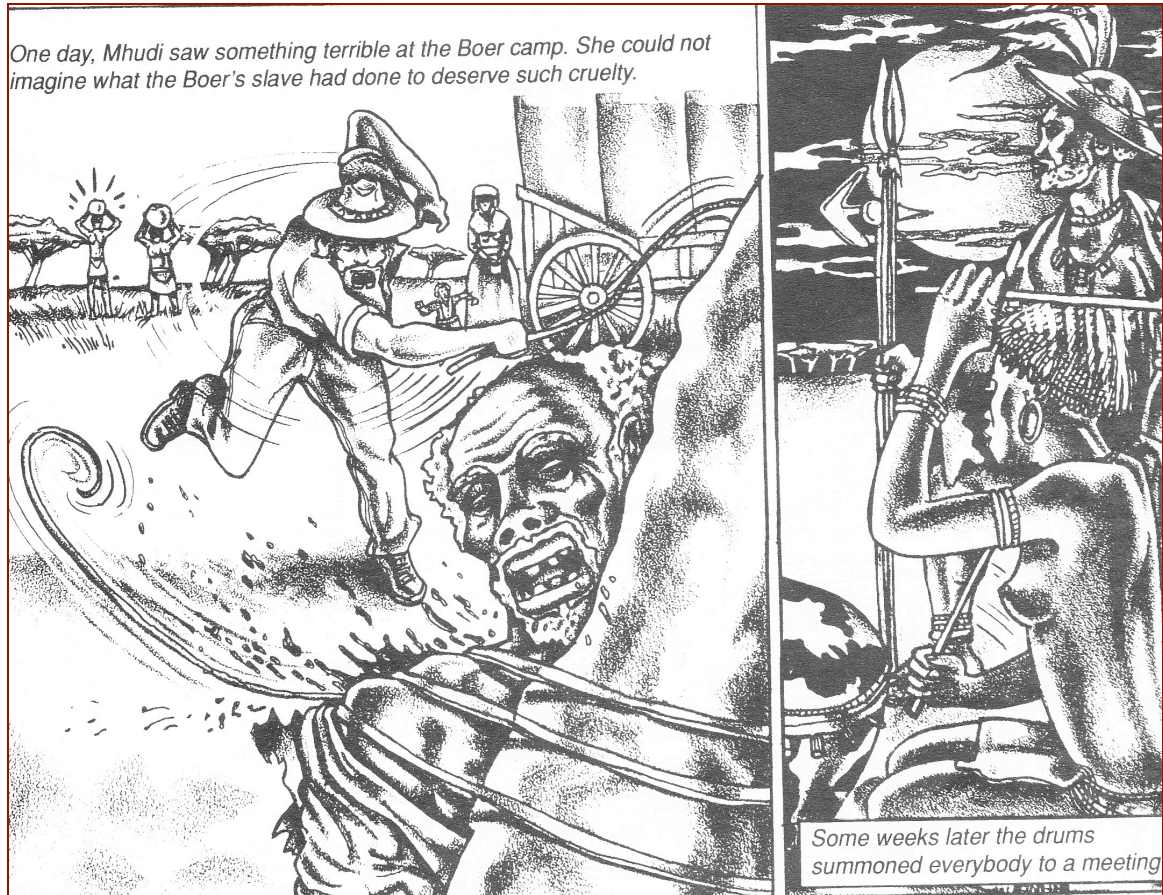Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988, 1.

Figure two: Slave being whipped by Boer man.
Plaatje, Solomon Tshekisho. *Mhudi: Sol Plaatje's Classic Tale of Love and War in the time of Mzilikazi*. Johannesburg; Melville: SACHED; Storyteller Group, 1991, 17.
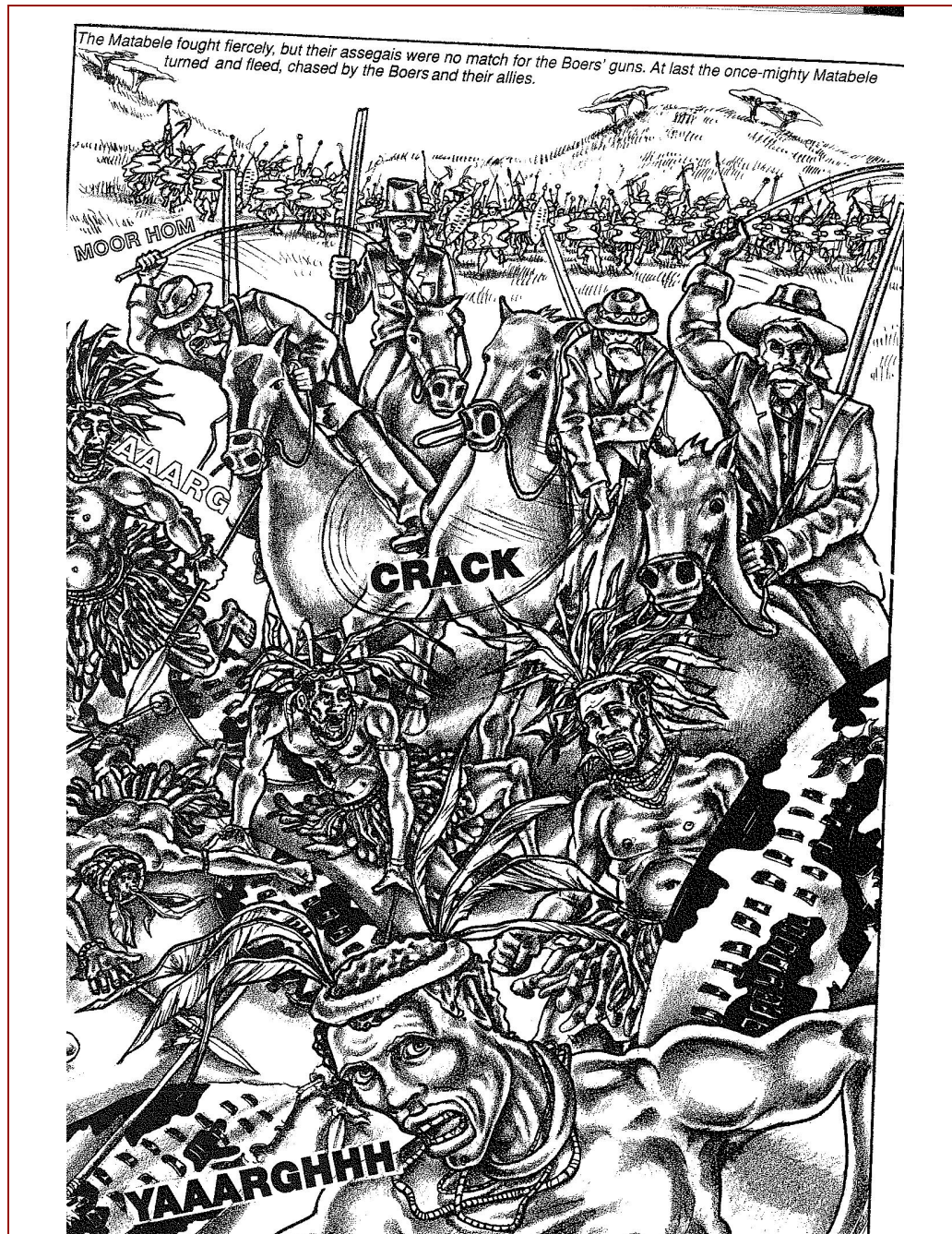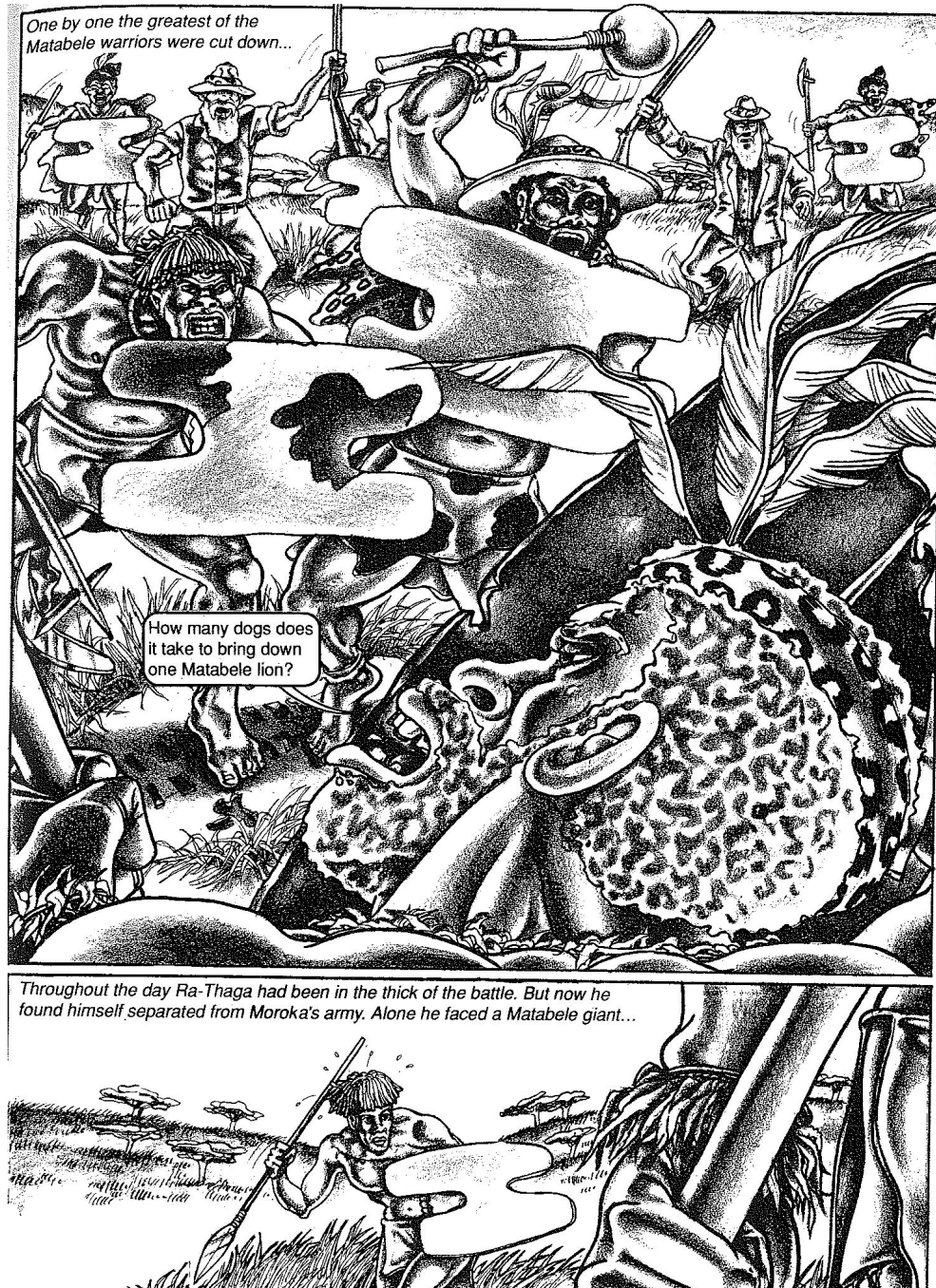
Figure three: Africans pierced by arrows and Boers hunkered with guns.
Plaatje, Solomon Tshekisho. *Mhudi: Sol Plaatje's Classic Tale of Love and War in the time of Mzilikazi*. Johannesburg; Melville: SACHED; Storyteller Group, 1991, 23.

Figure four: Boers on horses.
Plaatje, Solomon Tshekisho. *Mhudi: Sol Plaatje's Classic Tale of Love and War in the time of Mzilikazi*. Johannesburg; Melville: SACHED; Storyteller Group, 1991, 24.

Figure five: Africans fighting one another.
Plaatje, Solomon Tshekisho. *Mhudi: Sol Plaatje's Classic Tale of Love and War in the time of Mzilikazi*. Johannesburg; Melville: SACHED; Storyteller Group, 1991, 25.

Figure six: School strike and burning school.
Nhlabati, Mzwakhe and Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue: The Comic*. Braamfontein; Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988, 6.

Figure seven: Student protest of Bantu Education Act.
Nhlabati, Mzwakhe and Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue: The Comic*. Braamfontein;
Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988, 11.

As soon as I settled down in Nigeria, I finished writing *Down Second Avenue*. I breathed the new air of freedom.

Figure eight: Mphahlele in Nigeria.
Nhlabati, Mzwakhe and Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue: The Comic*. Braamfontein; Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988, 12.

Figure nine: Slave tied to pole and whipped in front of young Equiano.
Andrew, Rick, Joyce Ozynski, and Harriet Perlman. *Equiano: The Slave who fought to be Free.* Braamfontein; Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988, 5.
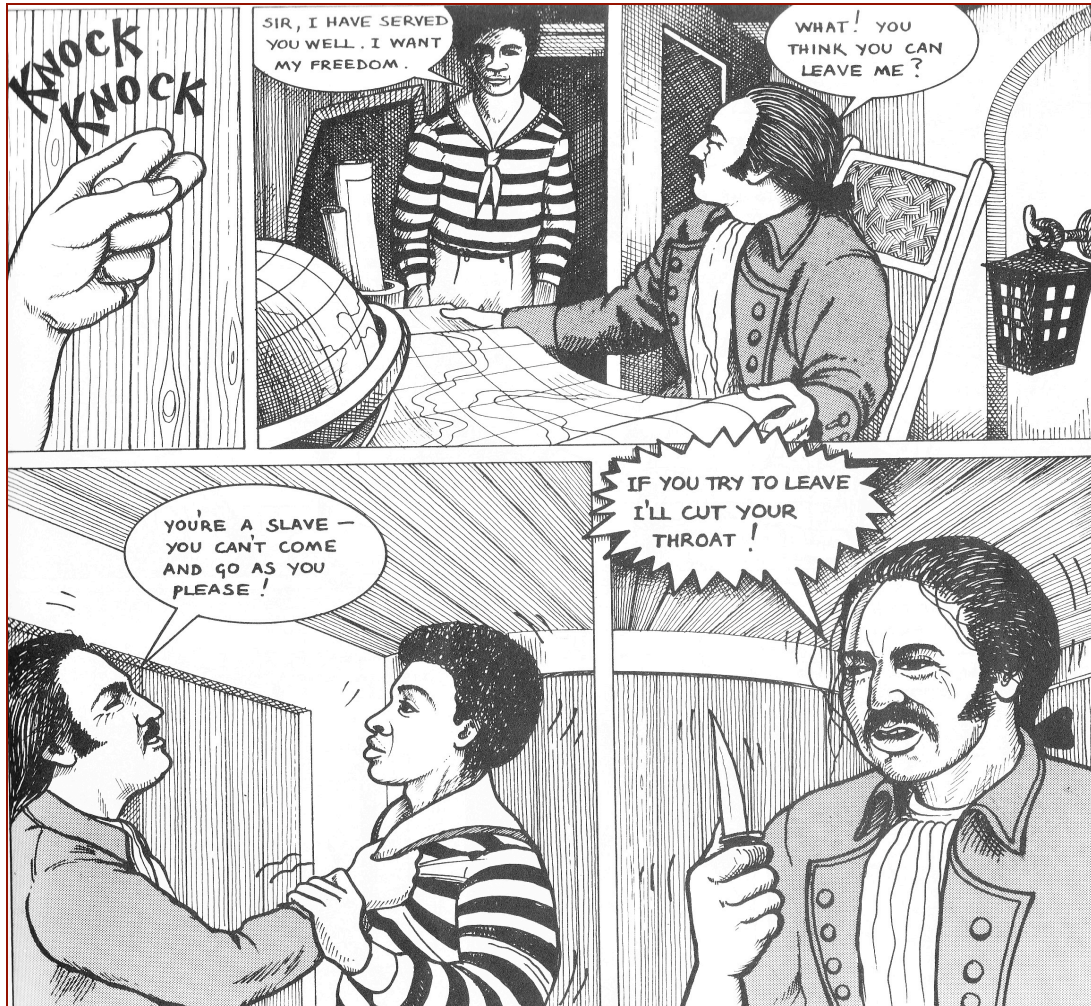
Figure ten: Four panel encounter with Captain Pascal.
Andrew, Rick, Joyce Ozynski, and Harriet Perlman. *Equiano: The Slave who fought to be Free.* Braamfontein; Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988, 15.
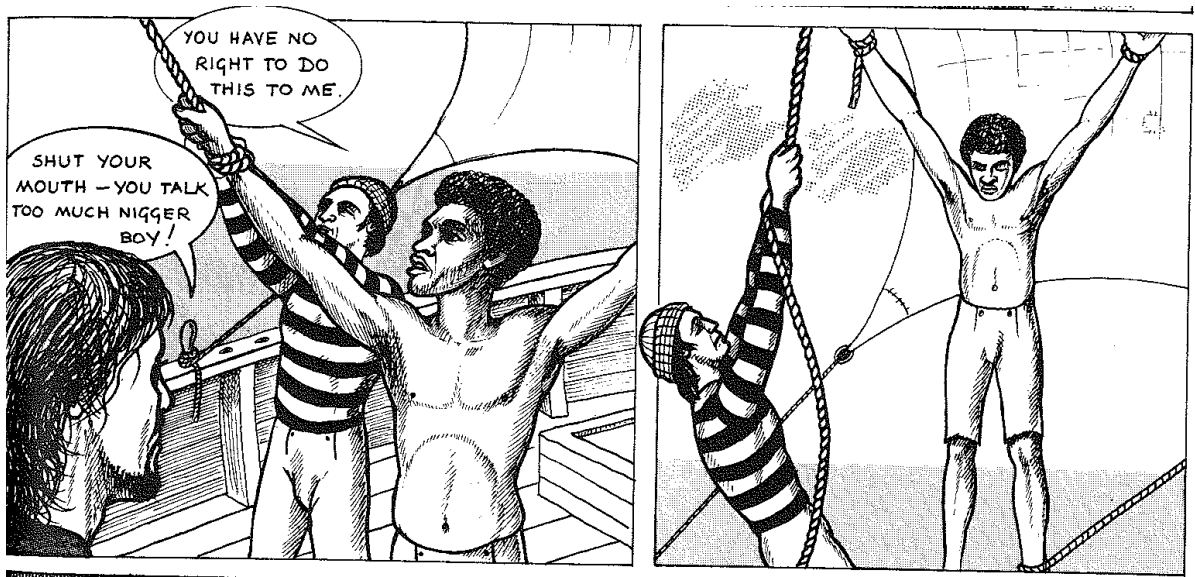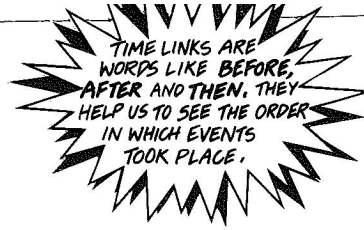
Figure eleven: Equiano strung up as torture/to avoid leaving ship after freed.
Andrew, Rick, Joyce Ozynski, and Harriet Perlman. *Equiano: The Slave who fought to be Free*. Braamfontein; Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988, 27.

Slavery in South Africa

In South Africa two hundred years ago, thousands of black children were captured and sold. Below is the true story of a young boy, Mozane, who was captured in Natal and sold to a boer farmer in the Transvaal. The time links in this story are missing. Choose the correct ones from the list. Use each one once only.

TIME LINKS ARE WORDS LIKE BEFORE, AFTER AND THEN. THEY HELP US TO SEE THE ORDER IN WHICH EVENTS TOOK PLACE.

In 1839 the boers defeated Dingaan and his people and took all their land. (a) _____ the battle Mpindo and her three children Mozane, Nzunzu and Lutika hid in a cave in the mountain for three days. (b) _____ day a group of boers appeared. They captured the children and took them to the town of Ohrigstad in the Eastern Transvaal. (c) _____ they arrived Mozane was sold to a man called Mr Gerrit Schoeman, who lived on a farm just outside town. Mozane was only eight years old. He remained a servant for Mr Schoeman for the next seventeen years.

There were many slave children who lived in and around the town. (d) _____ the day they had to work for their masters, but at night they came together to dance and sing. (e) _____ the sun rose each day they had to sneak back, so their masters didn't catch them.

Mozane hated being a servant. One night, in 1850 he ran away. But it wasn't for long because (f) _____ he was caught and sent back to Mr Schoeman.

Mozane was over thirty years old when he was finally given his freedom. Five years (g) _____ he moved on to a farm owned by a boer landlord. He looked after this farm, and in return he was able to cultivate some land.

DURING
AFTER
SOON AFTERWARDS
BEFORE
LATER ON THE FOURTH
WHEN
AS SOON AS

This story comes from a book called, 'The land belongs to us' by Peter Delius (Ravan Press, 1983).

(g) later
(f) soon afterwards (e) Before (d) During
(a) After (b) On the fourth (c) When

Mpindo and her children hid in a cave in the foothills. They remained there for three days without food.

Figure twelve: *The Land Belongs to Us* worksheet. Andrew, Rick, Joyce Ozynski, and Harriet Perlman. *Equiano: The Slave who fought to be Free.* Braamfontein; Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988, 39.

4. Create your own character

Create any character you wish. Choose a person, an animal, a creature from outer space or someone who has strange and wonderful powers. You may even use yourself as a character!

- What does your character look like?

- What personality does your character have? Is he or she brave or cowardly? Serious or silly?

Writers often put their characters in difficult situations. How would your character behave in these situations?

- Draw a picture of your character.

- Give your character a name.

- Give your character a life history. Where does your character come from? Johannesburg? America? Another planet? How old is she/he/it? Has your character had any exciting experiences?

Being whipped

Confronted by lions

GRRRR GRRRR

Figure thirteen: Difficult situations worksheet.
Plaatje, Solomon Tshekisho. *Mhudi: Sol Plaatje's Classic Tale of Love and War in the time of Mzilikazi*. Johannesburg; Melville: SACHED; Storyteller Group, 1991, 40.
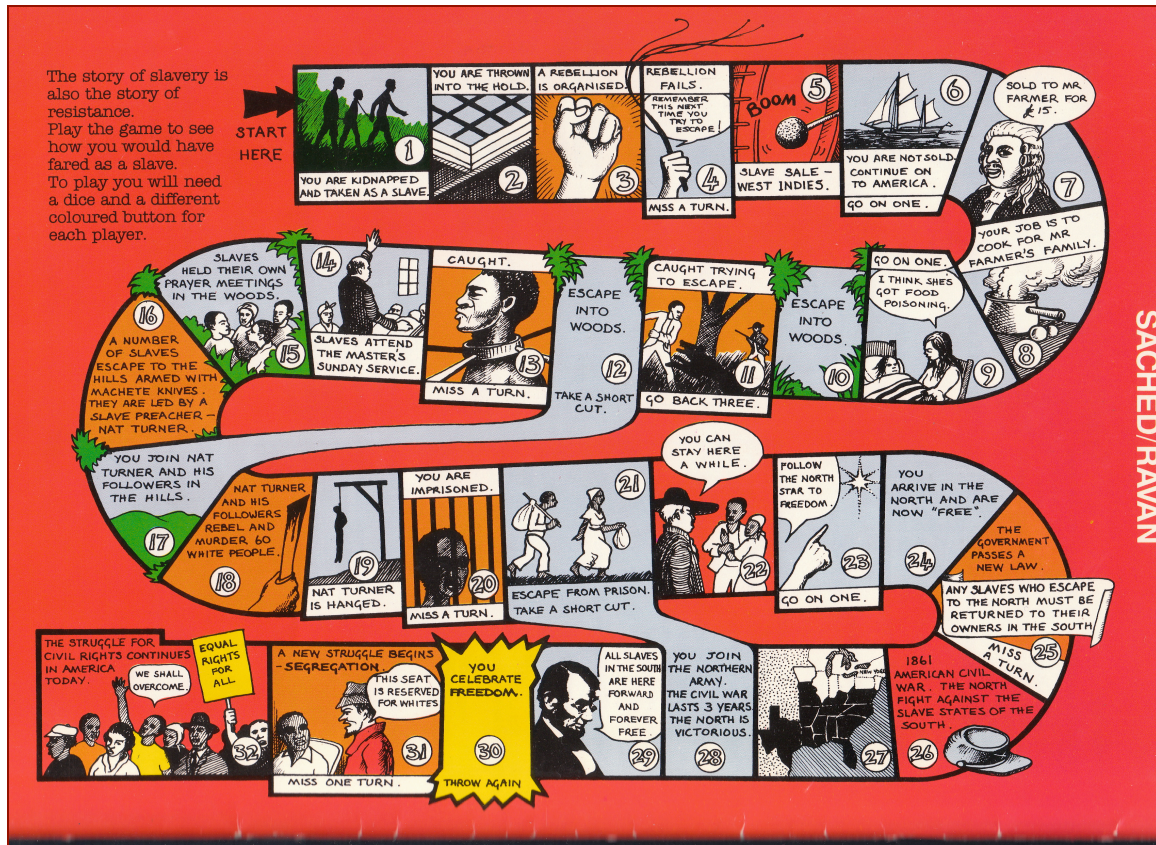
Figure fourteen: Board game.
Andrew, Rick, Joyce Ozynski, and Harriet Perlman. *Equiano: The Slave who fought to be Free.* Braamfontein; Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988, back cover.

Why demolish houses?

The Marabastad residents were going to have their houses demolished. And yet at that time (between 1942 and 1945) thousands of people began to move into the towns from the rural areas. This was because there was an increase in industry during the Second World War — gold mining and steel production expanded; South Africa started producing arms and ammunition; new factories were built to produce more food, drink and clothing. The factories needed labour and so the pass laws were relaxed. But there was not enough housing for these people. The government did nothing to improve the housing shortage or to upgrade the townships.

Can you name 7 things in this picture which the government could have improved?

Why do you think the government removed the people of Marabastad rather than upgrading the township?

What do you think of people being forced to live in certain areas?
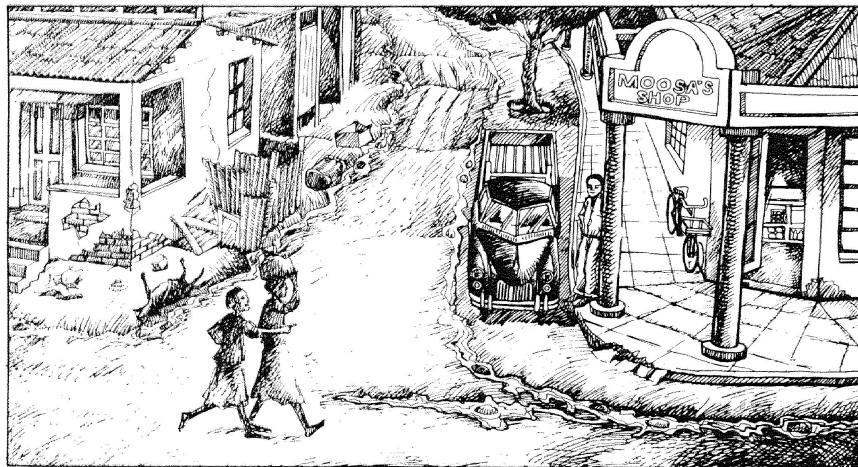
* Check your answers at the bottom of this page.

Answers

Here are some suggestions on how the government could have improved Marabastad: They could have tarred the roads; made pavements with gutters and drains; installed electricity; planted trees and grass; installed running water inside the houses; built toilets in the houses; fenced the yards; removed the litter and sewerage frequently from the streets; built new houses for homeless people.

Figure fifteen: Improving townships worksheet.
Nhlabati, Mzwakhe and Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue: The Comic*. Braamfontein; Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988, 24.
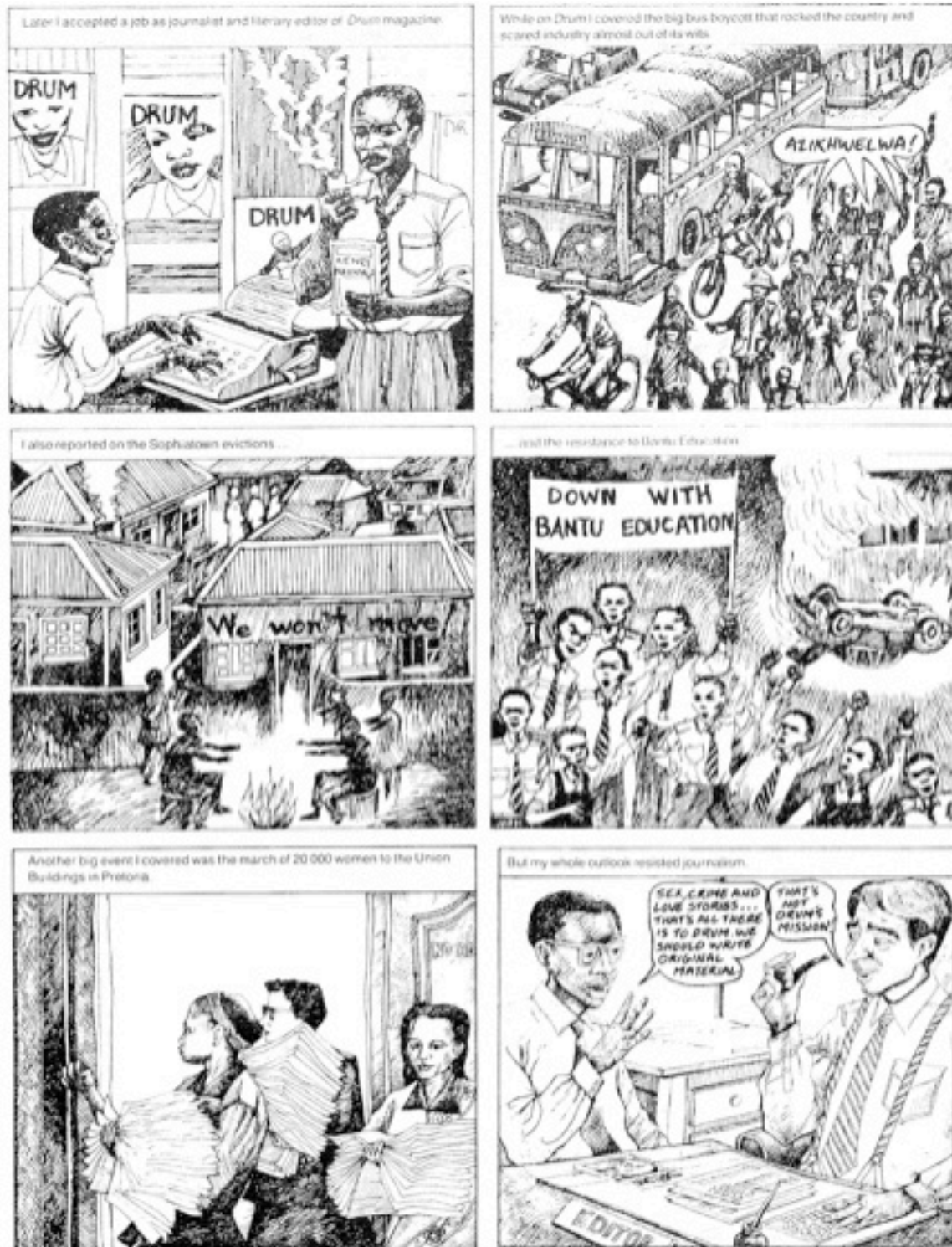
64

Figure sixteen: *Drum* magazine panels.
Nhlabati, Mzwakhe and Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue: The Comic*. Braamfontein;
Johannesburg: Ravan Press; Sached Trust, 1988, 11.

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