Spaces of violence, places of fear:
Urban conflict in post-apartheid South Africa

by

Bronwyn Harris

Paper presented on the *Conflicts and Urban Violence* panel, Foro Social Mundial Tematico, Cartagena, Colombia, 16-20 June 2003.

Bronwyn Harris is a former Project Manager at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

It is perhaps a cliché to suggest that the more things change, the more they stay the same. But, nine years after South Africa's first democratic elections, we still hear of racial polarization and hatred within communities. Inequality, poverty and access to justice remain key obstacles to establishing a human rights culture. High levels of violence continue to mark the society; and mistrust, suspicion and fear define many inter-personal relationships. Contrary to the popular representation of South Africa as a "miracle" nation, high levels of violence testify that a post-apartheid South Africa is not conflict-free.

The more things stay the same, however, the more they also change. This is evident in the many positive changes that separate the new South Africa from the old: the criminalization of racism, an internationally acclaimed Constitution, and systems and institutions that protect and promote human rights. But, alongside these positives, new forms of conflict and prejudice have also emerged, for example, xenophobic hostility towards foreigners, extra-legal vigilante actions of "crime fighting", and socio-economic struggles around issues of land and services. Social explanations, understandings and engagement with issues of violence have also changed with South Africa's transition. In the past, violence was largely framed as "political", both on the part of the apartheid state and through resistance to it. By contrast, violence today is commonly (and simplistically) labelled "criminal" (cf. Simpson, 2001). Such a discursive shift has redefined not only violence but issues of crime, legitimacy and justice. In the process, it has criminalised certain forms of violence but has simultaneously opened a space for – and legitimised - new violent actions (for example "crime fighting").

These new trends and explanations of conflict, together with the persistence of old patterns of violence, threaten South Africa's fragile democracy. They challenge the notion that legislated change and a human rights framework will automatically bring an end to violence within an already violent, militarised society. The persistence of violence within South Africa also highlights what has been termed a "culture of violence" within the country (cf. Simpson, Mokwena & Segal, 1992; Hamber, 1998). Such a culture, wherein violence is upheld as the primary "solution" to daily problems and challenges, necessitates the introduction of individual identity and group norms, as well as structural and material factors, into an understanding of violence during political transition.

This paper explores South Africa's culture of violence; it engages with trends, patterns and expressions of conflict in the post-apartheid nation. Drawing on research conducted by the

Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), an NGO based in Johannesburg, it reflects on some of the continuities and changes in violence over the nation's transition from apartheid to democracy. As such, it is situated within CSVR's general theoretical and research orientation, which is underpinned by the following questions:

- How does the past continue to impact on the trends of violence that define post-apartheid South Africa?
- How has the process of democracy itself created a space for the expression of violence?
- What has been the role of transitional justice institutions such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on contemporary manifestations of violence?
- And how does violence – and the fear thereof – manifest in further violence?

While the scope of this paper is restricted and thus these questions cannot be fully engaged with, it is important that they are introduced as a point of orientation. In addition, these questions are set against the backdrop of urban living, where space is represented as both a reflection of, and a conduit for, violence.[1] They are also highlighted through anecdotes told by members of certain constituencies, namely, foreigners, school going youth, ex-combatants and vigilantes. These particular groupings have been chosen because of their proximity to conflict - either in the past and/or at present.

We still live in the past

The clearly delineated boundaries and racialised spaces created by apartheid geography did not automatically dissolve with the Group Areas Act and related legislation. Rather, space embodies a persistent barrier to creating a deracialised society and promoting a meaningful human rights culture in South Africa. This is because space continues to define access to resources, services and land; patterns of inclusion and exclusion; and relationships of power – both between socio-economic and political 'groups' and within specific communities. Space also shapes inter-personal relationships and factors of identity. Most simplistically, this can be seen through the ways that race still predominates within these relationships, although the less obvious (yet highly visible) 'isms' of apartheid identity -class, gender, nationality and age- also play out in the arrangements of space. Identity represents one way of exploring the high levels of urban violence in contemporary South Africa, both between communities and within them. Gender identity, for example, impacts on experiences of city life in general (through access to resources, safety, opportunity etc.). Speaking of migration to Johannesburg, Palmary, Rauch & Simpson (2003) note that,

> The experience of migration to the city is but one factor in the process of marginalization, a process experienced differently by different groups. For example, the system of pass laws was implemented differently for men and women resulting in gendered patterns of migration. These experiences play themselves out through violent conflicts within and between marginalized communities, rather than just in the explicit conflicts between those in power and those on the margins.

Gender also plays a key role in the experience of violence (in terms of both perpetration

and victimisation patterns). For example, Gear (2002) explains that for ex combatants (drawn from across the political spectrum), notions of masculinity coupled with unresolved trauma, can translate into violence, particularly within the domestic context:

> Ongoing aggression and violence [can[2]] play out in a variety of social environments. Bars and taverns, for example … . But … the most commonly reported site of this aggression is the home or personal environment. [This was confirmed by focus groups with female partners/relatives of ex combatants].

Violent perpetration against their partners and relatives is, for these respondents, tied directly to the experience of demobilization. It is located within South Africa's transition away from a clearly defined notion of masculinity ('with guns and all') to one which is caught up in marginalisation, high levels of unemployment and feelings of betrayal and alienation (but still 'with guns and all') (Gear, 2002). The articulation of domestic violence as a product of and response to political transition (an articulation which is closely linked with attempts to justify violent behaviour, on the part of certain respondents) suggests a complex link between identity ("what it means to be a man"), social discourse (itself in transition) and space (a displacement of violence from the military battlefield to the domestic setting). Spaces – both public and private – are consistently imbued with the 'isms' of transition.

The relationship between urban living, identity and violence is not straightforward. Race, so closely intertwined with class, provides one layer of analysis, but the post-apartheid city is not only about race (and it has never been). However, the racialisation of space frequently dominates the ways in which violence is understood and interpreted. At the same time, race is often rendered invisible in constructions of contemporary urban violence, even in cases where it plays a key role. It goes beyond the scope of this paper to unravel the multiple factors that intersect at a violence-space confluence. However, it is interesting to consider the ways in which race does and doesn't feed into understandings of violence. Consider the following anecdote:

In a recent workshop, CSVR asked Grade 10 Learners (16 year olds) about identity. This workshop was part of our bigger project on citizenship, race and reconciliation in the post-TRC era and we were interested to hear whether there was any engagement with issues of race and history. The learners were drawn from schools across the racial and economic spectrum within Johannesburg. We asked the question: "who are you?", expecting the learners to engage with the general rifts and divisions of the past and present – for example, "I am a boy/girl", "black/white" etc. Instead, all of the learners – from across the schools – focused on issues of safety, violence and fear. The everyday quality of violence in their lives really shocked us:

> "Our headboy was shot in the head on Valentine's day",
> "Four pupils were murdered by gangs last year",
> "A girl in my class was raped when she was walking home from school".

On one hand, the learners were strikingly blasé and unreflective about the extent to which violence was part of their identity: "I am surrounded by violence". On the other hand, however, their response to the question: "who are you?" spoke of fear and insecurity: "I am

afraid", "I am unsafe".

What struck us also – both within the same workshop and across the more detailed classroom interventions that the CSVR race-youth team has been involved with – was the extent to which "the past"[3] is kept exactly there (Makhalemele, Molewa & Valji, personal communication). It is held out as a boring object of history, something which has no bearing on who the learners are or where they hope to go. As Valji (in personal communication) suggests, instead of relating their present day circumstances (including high levels of violence and inequality) to the nation's history, the children, both black and white, located them within personal attributes and individual characteristics, such as "courage" or "failure" (This is in keeping with the individualism of an imported consumerist identity discussed below).

In a workshop deliberately designed to elicit attitudes and opinions on race, racial reconciliation and identity, you can see why it was a shock when none of these issues were directly engaged with. Instead, the 2 discourses that did emerge – those of safety/exposure to violence, and a decontextualised (and by implication, deracialised) sense of history - suggest that we need to think very carefully about the context in which racist violence – and violence in general - is taking place in South Africa, in order to better understand and thereby address it.

This is a complicated context and this paper cannot engage with it in detail. However, it is full of contradictions. On one hand, certain actions – the extremes - are typically labeled as racist violence. This is because they cannot be interpreted as anything else – for example, the recent case of de Wet Kritzinger who, in May 2003, was convicted of murder for his racist killing spree in 2000. He was given 3 life sentences for the murder of 3 black commuters, plus 40 years for the attempted murder of 4 other passengers on a Pretoria bus. "Judge Dion Basson termed Kritzinger's actions racist, unscrupulous and unjustifiable … the judicial system recognized the human dignity and equality of each citizen, Basson said. "You trampled upon these principles by killing people because they were black". Relatives of the victims said they were happy about the sentence" (de Beer, 2003). On the other hand, however, the general context of violence – what could be called a culture of violence - coupled with a particular form of social silence about racism, allows a number of actions to slip through the cracks and resist the label of racist violence, even if that is exactly what they are. These are the 'smaller', everyday actions of prejudice that fly beneath the radar.

At the same time, many other forms of violence are represented in race terms even although they are not labeled in black and white vocabulary. For example, "the hijacker", commonly means "the young, black, male criminal" in white suburbia. Although there is a deliberate omission of "race" from this discourse, the experience of violence and crime are represented in racialised terms none-the-less. Sometimes, crime and violence are given a more overtly racialised interpretation. For example, certain of Gear's (2002) former white conscripts today "perceive crime to be structured along racial lines, and consider Whites to be the primary victims … . For them, violent crime represents the most powerful component of a broader assault against the white population, and particularly white males". While this is a perception that can fuel a reactionary and racist agenda, it can be difficult to separate "race" from "crime" in certain cases. For example, in their interviews with young black gangsters ("Amagents"), Segal, Pelo & Rampa (2001) explain that:

> Many of the Amagents' narratives give vent to a deep bitterness and resentment about racial injustices in South Africa. In the minds of most interviewees, the line between the haves and have-nots is still a racial one. Most are unapologetic about their racial attitudes and feel that white people are getting what they deserve if they are victims of crime.

In a context where race has, for so long structured relationships, created and sustained social divisions, and informed interpretations of violence, a key challenge for tackling racist violence is how to speak about it. Indeed, how to recognize it? In a way that is meaningful. This is a challenge as much for the direct victims of racist violence, as the society at large, because along with the many other complications, race has that peculiar "invisible" quality, particularly in a changed social order that outlaws overt racism. In a sanitized "politically correct" form it is difficult to pin down. This quality can make it difficult to articulate for someone who is a victim. A related challenge for a legal framework intent on tackling racist violence, is how to prove that racism was the motivation behind a violent act (cf. Harris, upcoming). More generally, the links between space, race and identity need to be carefully thought-out, given the shifting and creative nature of racism, as well as racially motivated violence, itself.

Temporary spaces

Within South Africa's urban centres, there has been some migration between the formerly designated "black", "white", "Indian" and "coloured" neighbourhoods, but this has been restricted. Spatial transgression of racialised areas is more commonly a temporary or transitory phenomenon, with people moving into and out of their schooling or working spaces, and back to their racialised living zones, on a short term (daily) basis. This temporary desegregation of space has initiated certain forms of conflict, for example, schools, as spaces of urban "integration", have been marked by racial polarisation and sometimes violence. The transmission of discrimination (generational and spatial), at times with violent expression, suggests that victimisation patterns can reinforce old lines of social division within new spaces of social interaction. As such, vigilance is needed to identify the new opportunities that integration (and, inadvertently, democratisation) offers to prejudice and violence. Similarly, beyond the direct confines of the schoolyard, learners report racialised harassment at the hands of community members, as they move in and out of their schooling environment:

> "Go back home. We don't want you in our area" (black school children, waiting for public transport after school, told to leave coloured suburb, RRP focus groups – Molewa, in personal communication)

Refugee children, particularly those from other African countries, report similar levels of hostility from their "host communities", as well as their school mates and teachers. Many do not even attend school, primarily because of xenophobic attitudes and misunderstandings of the law on the part of educators, who deny refugees and asylum seekers their right to education. Their experiences, coupled with those of South African school children who move – geographically and thereby "racially" -between school and home suggest that racism in South Africa is a complex phenomenon; it cannot be reduced to "black and white" issues alone.

Youth stories also give insight into the complexity of violence perpetration. For example, interviews with young hijackers testify to the importation of a consumerist global order, along with a particular set of identity criteria (flashy cars, designer clothing, gangsta-culture) (Segal, Pelo & Rampa, 2001). Together with factors such as high levels of unemployment, socio-economic exclusion, community marginalisation, and eroded family relationships, this expression of identity, commonly associated with gang membership, has, for certain young South Africans, resulted in the valourisation of crime and the adoption of a "fast living" lifestyle (Segal, Pelo & Rampa, 2001).

Moving Spaces

It is also important to recognise the potential for violence along the routes that carry people between spaces of 'integration'. Dugard's (2001) analysis of the minibus taxi industry within the Western Cape suggests that there was an increase in violent taxi practise over the period 1987-1999. For example, in 1991, there were 123 recorded deaths and 156 injuries, in 1996, 312 deaths and 616 injuries, and in 1999, 258 deaths and 287 injuries (Dugard, 2001). This pattern, she explains, is a consequence of various factors, including the process of political transition:

> Prior to 1994, these taxi wars were relatively few in number and were predominantly linked to state-orchestrated violence. Since then, however, taxi violence has become more widespread, decentralised and criminal in character. Behind this shift are changes in the organisation of the taxi industry that broadly reflect the evolving relationship between state and society in post-apartheid South Africa (Dugard, 2001).

Dugard (2001) posits that state deregulation of the taxi industry has solidified and/or challenged old patterns of economic privilege and social control through the formation of new taxi associations called "mother bodies". "As the state's control over the economy and society has weakened in the course of South Africa's transition, taxi associations have developed as informal agents of regulation, protection and extortion". She explains that "much of the taxi violence in the [Western Cape] has related to feuds between new rival mother bodies". It goes beyond the scope of this paper to explore minibus taxi violence in detail. Rather, this form of violence has been introduced as a reminder that spatial movement itself can be affected by changing forms of violence. And violence, in turn, is linked to changing political and socio-economic patterns.[4]

Living spaces

Suburbs where racialised living barriers have broken down similarly hold the opportunity for the emergence of new forms of conflict. These include racist tensions (and sometimes clashes) between old and new residents and new forms of prejudicial discourse around "declining services" and "standards". (This is not to suggest that rural areas, small towns and unintegrated urban spaces do not also suffer from similar discourses and tensions, however.) High levels of violence have also sustained and encouraged the laager (fortress) mentality of colonial and apartheid South Africa. Fortified living continues to impact on the shape of violence within the country. Much of this is unregulated and falls outside the ambit of the state and the law. The private security industry, for example, has grown substantially.

Estimates suggest an increase "from R141 million (US$15 million) in 1978 to R8 billion (US$1 billion)" in 1999 (Schonteich, 1999, quoted in Hamber, 1999). "There are at least twice as many security guards as policemen in the country" (NIM, 1997, quoted in Hamber, 1999). "Many of these guards are poorly trained and armed, and the security industry is poorly regulated" (Hamber, 1999). In certain cases, former apartheid security force members have moved into the private security industry. This has resulted in a transposition of punitive and violent policing methods from the old order, into a new form.

In communities that cannot afford the services of formal private security companies, vigilantes claiming to "fight crime" are common.[5] Ranging from organised groups in certain communities to more spontaneous "membership" in others, vigilantes threaten the rule of law in South Africa; they undermine due process and commonly deploy violent methods as judge, jury and (often) executioner rolled into one. Historically, vigilantism is not a new phenomenon in South Africa. Incidents of "mob justice" occurred with regularity throughout colonial and apartheid South Africa (cf. Haysom, 1986). Harris (2001b) notes that while vigilante methods have generally remained consistent across the period 1980-2000, what has changed are the definitions and explanations of what constitutes vigilante violence. Before the country's democratic elections in 1994, vigilantism was generally associated with political violence. In the 1980s, it was a label that described political actions conducted in support of the apartheid state, and was thus closely associated with conservative, right-wing activity (cf. Haysom, 1986; Bruce & Komane, 1999). Between 1990 and 1994, vigilantism was still applied to politically motivated violence but it expanded beyond purely conservative actions to include violence that was otherwise "unexplainable" at the time (cf. Jeffrey, 1992; Coleman, 1998). By contrast, vigilantism post-1994 has (largely) been described with reference to crime – particularly 'crime-fighting' – instead of politics. In the past, vigilantism was framed in political terms; in the present vigilante violence is typically presented as a response to fighting crime. It is justified (by vigilantes themselves) as a response to a failing criminal justice system (CJS) and 'legitimised' as "filling a policing gap" (Harris, 2001b).

Real and perceived challenges that face the criminal justice system in post-apartheid South Africa include high levels of mistrust between communities and the police/courts, limited resources, inefficiency, corruption and ongoing abuse of power (including torture and physical violence). There is also a popular perception that "criminals have more rights than law abiding citizens" and that the criminal justice system is seen to "protect" criminals, at the expense of crime victims (cf. Harris, 2001b). This perception is commonly reinforced by political statements and "crime fighting" rhetoric, from high profile public figures to community-based organisations. These send out contradictory messages about the value of due process and actively feed a culture of impunity.

Criminal justice system "fact file"

Please note: Because of a government moratorium on the release of crime statistics, the most recent official figures are dated September 2001 (with some to March 2002 and a few generalised "trends", which have been bandied about in parliament).

Crime Statistics

Reported crime increased by 1% to 2 515 808 incidents across the period April 2001-March 2002
Violent crime increased by 33% across the period 1994-2001
South African Police Service (SAPS) claim that crime levels are "stabilising"
Murder rates decreased by 18% from 19 772 in 1994 to 15 045 in 2001
Over 21 000 people were killed between April 2001 – March 2002
In 1998, South Africa had the highest murder rates (59 per 100 000) on Interpol's country list
(Masuku, 2003)

Prison Statistics

South Africa's current prison capacity is 110 874. By end May 2003, there were 187 748 prisoners – 71% overcrowding.
Awaiting trial prisoners account for 30% of the prison population.
Between 1996 and 2002 the number of prisoners serving sentences increased as follows:
Life: from 2 951 to 5 505
20 years: from 1 885 to 7 885
15-20 years: from 2 660 to 8 355
10-15 years: from 6 168 to 18 956
2-10 years: from 61 181 to 68 418
Natural deaths in prison have increased from 1.65 per 1000 prisoners in 1995 to 7.75 per 1000 in 2002; primarily due to HIV/Aids (Minister of Correctional Services Budget Speech, 2003)

Guns

October 2002: 3 654 434 firearm licenses
On average, 2 000 licensed firearms are stolen or lost per month (Gun Control Alliance, available online)

While there are real and practical failings within the criminal justice system, Harris (2001b) explains that vigilante violence is not one singular phenomenon and it cannot be explained solely with reference to the law. There are a number of factors - beyond failings within the criminal justice system (CJS) – that might underpin vigilante violence. On factor is the role of the country's political transition itself, which has generated a "gap" (easily filled by vigilantes) between oppressive, heavy handed policing in the past and the (attempted) implementation of a human rights culture today. The transition has also created high levels of expectation about democracy, which, when not met, have translated into frustration and disappointment (another gap that vigilantes commonly fill) (Harris, 2001b).

Fear in the city

Vigilante violence pivots on fear and frequently creates a silencing effect within communities (Harris, 2001b). Vigilantes may interpret and exploit community silence as

tacit support for their actions, but interviews with affected community members suggest that fear of victimisation (at the hands of vigilantes) is a more likely silencer (cf. von Schnitzler et al, 2001). In the short term, fear (of vigilante punishment) may contribute to a decline in crime within a specific area. However, this is usually highly localised and it serves to displace crime to surrounding neighbourhoods. In the long term, it may also result in the return of crime – but this time more violent in nature - to the initially affected area.[6]

Vigilante practices highlight perceptions about the criminal justice system and expectations about democracy. In addition, vigilantism and revenge violence also point to the destabilisation of old patterns of privilege and the emergence of new sites of conflict. In October 2001, more than 800 Zimbabweans fled from the Zandspruit informal settlement in Johannesburg, after their homes were burnt (at least 112 were destroyed) and their belongings looted (Ndaba & Kalideen, 2001).

> Zandspruit residents … said the community had agreed to chase away the Zimbabweans and burn down everything that belonged to them. They said the community were angry that the Zimbabweans were employed, while hundreds of local citizens were jobless. They also claimed that Zimbabweans were involved in a series of armed robberies, rapes and muggings (Ndaba, 2001, available online)

In May 2003, two men, one of whom was a Mozambican citizen, were rounded up and necklaced to death (on the accusation that they were "criminals") by a large crowd in Braamfischerville. In December 1998, health worker Gugu Dlamini was stoned and beaten to death by "a mob who accused her of degrading her neighbourhood by disclosing that she [was HIV positive]" (Kortjas & Msomi, 1998). Vigilante targets – still "criminals" in some cases but "outsiders" coupled with prejudice, in others - reflect the creative strategies of both violence and prejudice within South Africa's period of transition.

Outsiders and newcomers

Democratisation has introduced "new comers" in the form of refugees and asylum seekers, to South Africa's major cities. Refugees in South Africa are urban based, unlike their counterparts who live in camps in many other countries. The urban nature of asylum has brought particular challenges to a country that is ill prepared for dealing with/welcoming refugees. These include manifestations of xenophobia on the city streets, mostly at the hands of police and other public officials (Harris, 2001a). Refugees commonly cite harassment, bribery and the destruction of documents, as well as more extreme instances of physical violence, by those intended to protect them. In addition, members of the public, it seems are united in their dislike of foreigners, particularly black Africans. Represented as bringing chaos and disease, seen as competitors for jobs, refugees are often targets for violent clashes with street vendors and community members in general (Harris, 2001a).

For foreigners, residential patterns of living in South Africa are largely connected to issues of safety and security (Sinclair, 1998; Morris, 1999) The general climate of xenophobia is reflected in "clusters" of nationalities within certain areas, particularly inner city spaces, such as Hillbrow and Berea in Johannesburg (Morris, 1999). Sinclair (1998) points out that living-space-clusters serve not only to ease the social transition for foreigners, they also

function as a defence against the hostility and crime that vulnerable newcomers face. However, Harris (2001a) explains that such "clustering" can paradoxically attract violence and crime, because South Africans generally know where to find vulnerable foreign victims; as a police officer explains: "Hillbrow is the ATM of South Africa" (Harris, 2001a).

Refugees' experiences of xenophobia at the hands of the South African Police Service (SAPS), as well as members of the public, suggest that prejudice is still rife – both institutionally and individually. Most victims of xenophobia are black Africans, who are identified by crass physical features, such as skin colour, inoculation marks and dress code (cf. Minaar & Hough, 1996; Morris, 1999). This arbitrary, unsophisticated form of xenophobia suggests that racism has found new victims in a post-apartheid South Africa (Harris, 2001). At the same time, it also allows for old patterns of racist harassment and abuse to subsist beneath the 'new' targets and perpetrators. For example, in March 2001, The Star newspaper ran the headline 'Too dark' teacher to sue for arrest (Monare & Feris, 2001). The article tells of a woman who was arrested, detained and assaulted by black policemen on the grounds that she was "too dark" to be a South African citizen. Flanked by a large picture of the victim with blood streaming down her face, the report explains that she was apprehended for being an illegal immigrant because of "her complexion, facial appearance, accent and her style of dressing". The woman, a South African citizen, was beaten with "something blunt" on her forehead, and charged with "resisting arrest and being an alien".

Along with the experience of xenophobia, another consequence of close urban living for refugees is the violence of exile, i.e. the transposition of violence from the home nation, to the host South African city. This is a fairly under-explored and delicate topic in South Africa. However, the nature of urban living, particularly inner-city, high density living, when coupled with the 'nationality cluster' "protection" factor, facilitates certain forms of conflict relating to the home nation (as opposed to the South African context). A small but consistent number of refugees have reported encounters with "enemies" from their home nation. This has translated into kidnappings, assaults and disappearances (cf. Harris, 2001a).[7]

Spaces of trauma

Refugees and asylum seekers face the trauma of war, forced migration, and the violence of exile. Ongoing exposure to xenophobia compounds the impact of already complex-trauma and this 'trauma-conglomeration' presents many challenges to trauma-related work in the South African context. Similarly, ex-combatants from South Africa's own struggle history also reveal a range of post-traumatic stress responses. Their experiences of the past are commonly impacted on by current manifestations of violence, as well as a range of other factors, including socio-economic-, political- and identity-related issues. The notion of trauma itself in transition is thus crucial to developing a victim empowerment strategy that can accommodate complex trauma, "new" victims and a context of consistent but changing patterns of violence.

Ex combatants from across the political spectrum express feelings of abandonment, isolation and betrayal from various layers of the South African society – the state,

communities, family members - today (Gear, 2002). These feelings are reinforced by the stereotypical portrayal of ex-combatants as "security threats" and perpetrators of violent crime in the new South Africa (Gear, 2002). Gear (2002) notes that,

> This kind of attention typically militates against any meaningful engagement with the various daunting challenges soldiers face as they make the transition from a military to civilian life. And such attention will ultimately, very likely feed more of what it supposedly seeks to prevent - by producing or reproducing exclusionary and conflictual relations.

The impact of unaddressed trauma and a violent culture also emerge through soldiers' attempts to reintegrate into South African society. Given the breadth of experiences captured beneath the label "ex combatant", reintegration has been a fairly uneven process, ranging from high profile political and economic "integration", to very marginalised groups, with little access to the state and resources. Many soldiers did not even fall into the formal structures of either the apartheid defence force or the liberation movement armies. Instead, they occupied less formal but highly regulated positions as members of localised defence units in different parts of the city. Their experiences of violence were thus shaped by local community dynamics and urban apartheid geography. This has impacted on the process of 'reintegration' and acceptance within the community. In some cases, they have been accepted because of their "protective" role in the past:

> More than anything else [ex-Thokoza SDUs] perceive themselves to have been fighting for their communities, and in the present, do feel a certain amount of appreciation from community members. They also contemplated the end of the violence with fewer immediate expectations than many other ex combatants. More often, it seems, feelings of resentment or betrayal have been generated in relation to initiatives aimed at ex-SDUs (or started by SDUs themselves), which have taken place since the cessation of hostilities (Gear, 2002).

In other cases, victims and perpetrators continue to live side-by-side within communities, in a state of hostility and fear.

According to Gear (2002), many members of the more-formal structures, such as the SADF and MK, feel distanced and unable to relate to their "communities". This sense of alienation is, for some, induced by the disjuncture between the political identity and ideology of being a "Soldier" within a changed political order. For example, Gear (2002) notes that "many ex-SADF soldiers who were thoroughly schooled in the ideologies of the old South Africa have a sense of being left behind from the rest of society, being relics of something now forgotten as a result of the politics they too were fed".

Feeling "stuck in the past" ironically allows these ex combatants to articulate an identity that locates them "within the present". Although this is an identity of exclusion, it is one that redefines them today: part of who they are, is to be an ex combatant. Identities of inclusion and exclusion offer one way into exploring potential sites of conflict within South Africa. These sites can occur at different levels, ranging from organised political groupings to marginalised individuals. They also point to victims (for example, victims of forced land removals) and, importantly, perpetrators of violence (for example, violent perpetration at the hands of the right white, who overtly "explain" their actions as a result of exclusion

from the formal political arena).

In many ways, exclusion is at the heart of what are now being called "new" social movements in the country. These span a range of issues from the Landless People's Movement to the Treatment Action Campaign, which has consistently challenged the government's policies on HIV/Aids and access to anti-retroviral medication. There are many other movements and, as Cock (2003) notes, not enough solid research and information on group membership, motives and issues. However, one worrying trend has been for the South African state to respond negatively and oppressively to criticism from civil society. This is even more worrying in light of the mooted anti-terror legislation, which will curtail individual rights and offers the state an opportunity to marginalise and crack-down on progressive social movements.

The process of marginalisation, itself in transition, reflects some of the continuities and changes in violence, just as it shapes victims and perpetrators. Instruments of transitional justice, for example, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) have also played a role in recreating identities and generating discourses for speaking about the past and the present. Indeed, the continuities and changes in violence over South Africa's period of transition offer insight into issues of governance, transitional justice, reparations, human rights and reconciliation. Instead of keeping these issues separate, or in binary opposition, from violence, it is important to recognise that they are deeply entwined. It is only by looking at the nature of these relationships, and learning from other societies in transition, that existing mechanisms of violence prevention can be evaluated and new strategies developed for better dealing with violence in transition.

Notes:

[1] Please note that an 'urban-rural' divide is commonly collapsed by violence, which moves across and between space. For example, patterns of revenge violence play themselves out between hostels in urban Johannesburg and rural areas (e.g. Qunu) in the Eastern Cape. That said, to speak of 'urban violence" is an artificial but useful way of conceptualizing the intersections of space, identity and violence in South Africa.

[2] Gear (2002) stresses that not all ex combatants engage in violence or aggression when they return to civilian life. Her report debunks the myth that ex combatants are "violent" simply because of their ex combatant status and she cautions against the perpetuation of such stereotypes, not only because they are inaccurate but also because they fuel feelings of betrayal and alienation amongst ex combatants.

[3] This "past" relates to both the apartheid past (16 year olds today would have been 6 or 7 years old at the time of South Africa's first democratic election in 1994) and also the Truth and Reconciliation Commission era (i.e. much more "immediate" history).

[4] The movement of migrants and refugees across South Africa's borders and into the cities is similarly an opportunity for violent action (Harris, 2001a). Harris (2001a) situates this form of violence within an "economy of movement … [which] rotates financially around the movement of foreigners across the region into South Africa. Within this economy, there is a demand for movement from foreign travelers, many of whom, contrary to popular

xenophobic myth, are relatively well-financed and resourced. There is similarly a supply of movement from a range of agents, who engage in both legal transactions (e.g. bus and train fares) and illegal activities for money (e.g. clandestine border crossings and the illegal issuing of visas). Exploitation is also a solid feature of this economy. It exists as crime and sometimes, violence, en route (e.g. theft, extortion of money, aggression and physical abuse to elicit extra-payment)".

[5] Although such groups are by no means the exclusive domain of 'the poor'. They may straddle socio-economic divides through 'membership fees', which range according to financial status, as in the case of Mapogo a Mathamaga. Ironically, this group, through its violent methods, has gathered the support of South Africans from across the racial and socio-economic spectrum, suggesting that violence is a common area for the expression of racial unification and "reconciliation" within South Africa.

[6] Vigilantism represents once example of 'violence breeding violence'. Other expressions can be seen in the longer term effect that increased security measures have on the nature of violence: the higher the walls and more sophisticated the security equipment, the more violent the means of committing the "same" crime.

[7] Valji (in personal communication) reports that threats, assaults and cross-border abductions appear to be on the increase within the Zimbabwean refugee community living in South Africa.

Acknowledgements

This paper is based on the general methodology and research orientation of the Violence and Transition Project at CSVR, under the guidance of Graeme Simpson and Piers Pigou. Thank you also to:
Members of the Race and Reconciliation Project -Oupa Makhalemele, Brian Molewa and Nahla Valji;
Amanda Dissel and Gareth Newham (for supplying the statistics), and Louis Greenberg and Sasha Gear (for editorial input and support).

References

Bruce, D. & Komane, J. (1999). Taxis, cops and vigilantes: police attitudes towards street justice. *Crime & Conflict*, 17, 39-44.

Cock, J. (2003). Input at CSVR Content Strategic Planning Session, 08-09 May. De Beer, E. (2003). Kritzinger kills in cold blood, rules judge. *Independent Online*, May 02.

Dugard, J. (2001). *From low intensity war to Mafia war: taxi violence in South Africa (1987-2000)*. Violence and Transition Series (5). Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

Gear, S. (2002). *Wishing us away: challenges facing ex-combatants in the 'new' South Africa*. Violence and Transition Series (8). Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

Gun Control Alliance. Available Online: http://www.gca.org.za

Hamber, B. (1998). Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde: Violence and transition in South Africa. In E. Bornman, R. Van Eeden & M. Wentzel (Eds.), *Violence in South Africa*, 349-370. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

Hamber, B. (1999). *'Have no doubt, it is fear in the land': an exploration of the continuing cycles of violence in South Africa*. Paper presented at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation seminar, 27 May 1999.

Harris, B. (2001a). *A foreign experience: violence, crime and xenophobia during South Africa's transition*. Violence and Transition Series (5). Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

Harris, B. (2001b). *As for violent crime that's our daily bread: vigilante violence during South Africa's period of transition*. Violence and Transition Series (1). Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

Harris, B. (upcoming). Untitled (research on racially motivated hate crime). Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence an Reconciliation.

Haysom, N. (1986). *Mabangalala: the rise of right-wing vigilantes in South Africa.* Occasional paper 10. University of the Witwatersrand: Centre for Applied Legal Studies.

Kortjas, B.B. & Msomi, S. (2001, December 27). Mob kills woman for telling truth: health worker stoned and beaten for confession, Sunday Times.

Makhalemele, O., Molewa, B., & Valji, N. (personal communication) Based on Race and Reconciliation project Team meetings and discussions (2003).

Masuku, S. (2003). *For better and for worse: South African crime trends in 2002*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.

Minaar, A. & Hough, M. (1996). *Causes, extent and impact of clandestine migration in selected Southern African countries with specific reference to South Africa.* Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council.

Minister of Correctional Services Budget Speech (2003).

Molewa, B. (personal communication). Based on Race and Reconciliation project Team meetings and discussions (2003).

Monare, M. & Feris, M. (2001). 'Too-dark' teacher to sue for arrest. *The Star*, March 12.

Morris, A. (1999). Bleakness and light: inner-city transformation in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Ndaba, B. (2001, October 21). Raging mob evicts Zimbabweans, burns homes, The Star.

Available online: http://www.iol.co.za/

Ndaba, B. & Kalideed, N. (2001, October 24). More shacks belonging to Zimbabweans burnt, The Star. Available online: http://www.iol.co.za/

Palmary, I., Rauch, J. & Simpson, G. (2003). Violent crime in Johannesburg. In R. Tomlinson, R.A. Beauregard, L. Bremner, & X. Mangcu (Eds.), Emerging *Johannesburg: perspectives on the postapartheid city*, 101-122. London: Routledge.

Segal, L., Pelo, J, & Rampa, P. (2001). Into the heart of darkness: journeys of the amagents in crime, violence and death. In J. Steinberg (Ed.), *Crime Wave: The South African underworld and its foes*, 95-114. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Simpson, G. (2001). Shock troops and bandits: youth, crime and politics. In J. Steinberg (Ed.), *Crime Wave: The South African underworld and its foes*, 115-128. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

Simpson, G., Mokwena, S. & Segal, L. (1992). Political violence: 1990. In M. Robinson & A. Rycroft (Eds.), *Human rights and labour law handbook*, 1991, 2, 193-219. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Sinclair, M. (1998). Community, identity and gender in migrant societies of Southern Africa: emerging epistemological challenges. *International Affairs*, 74 (2), 339-353.

Valji, N. (personal communication). Based on regular CSVR team meetings and discussions on issues of xenophobia, racism and history (2002-2003).

Von Schnitzler, A., Ditlhage, G., Kgalema, L., Maepa, T., Mofokeng, T. & Pigou, P. (2001). *Guardian or Gangster? Mapogo a Mathamaga: A case study*. Violence and Transition Series (3). Braamfontein: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.