Chapter 7: Research as an Act of Activist-Intellectual Resistance: Two Case Studies of Oral Histories and Archiving in South Africa

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What kind of activist research?

The one thing that can be counted on when it comes to those who inhabit the "left" side of the political-ideological spectrum is that we engage in lots of disagreement and debate. Although in practice it can, and often has, led to debilitating division, sectarianism and stasis, in principle, such debate and disagreement is not a bad thing; further, this is definitely the case when it comes to interrogating what constitutes "activist research" and who carries it out.

While activist research can certainly be carried out by those in the centre and on the right-side of the ideological spectrum, in general we can agree that most activist research (at least since the start of industrial capitalism) has been carried out by those who identify themselves as being on the left of that spectrum. In other words, those, who in thinking and practice imbibe an anti-capitalism that seeks (non-capitalist) systemic change of the political, economic and social status quo. In the words of Charles Hale, 'the practice of activist research asks us to identify our deepest ethical-political convictions, and to let them drive the formulation of our research objectives' (Hale 2001: 14). Similarly, activist research (as defined above) 'challenge(s) existing social hierarchies and oppressive institutions as well as the truth regimes and structures of power that produced and supported them. Not content simply to critique the status quo, (it) seek(s) to change it' (Isaacman 2003: 3).

However, when it comes to who carries it out, a distinction must be made between the kind of activist research conducted by activist-academics in the academy and that undertaken by activist-intellectuals who are not just outside the academy, but who are active members of the organisations, movements, networks and coalitions that are the "target" of the research.

Much of what has been written about activist research (somewhat) understandably revolves around academics, since most of it comes from the keyboards of those same academics (Choudry 2013; Hale 2017; Piven 2010). The key tropes of what has been written in this regard centre on how left academics

can move beyond the various institutional, ideological, relational and methodological confines of the academy and the specific disciplines within which they operate. This is largely because most researchers who identify themselves as being activists and on the left, are to be found within the academy and its ancillary institutions.

In this regard, Choudry (2013: 130) reminds us that the 'literature' on activist research is 'more concerned with the implications of such work on individuals' university careers and academic disciplines, and its scholarly credibility, than on the considerable research and intellectual work generated from within activist/community organizations on which many movements rely for independent analysis of concerns relevant to them'.

As such, the character, content and impact of this kind of activist research largely emanates from and revolves around, the frame of the academic research terrain. This is the case even if connections are made with and the research can assist, grounded, grassroots activists, organisations and movements struggling for change.

Isaacman (2003: 4) is correct to note that, in general, activist researchers 'are driven by a mutually reinforcing intellectual and political agenda' that simultaneously seeks to: 'render audible the voices and concerns of the powerless ... recover the experiences of the disadvantaged and underrepresented (and) ... support their struggles aimed at ending exploitative practices and dismantling institutions of oppression.' However much such a general agenda represents positive intention and contribution, it is necessarily moulded and bound by where the activist researcher is located and to/for whom, their work is directed. The irrepressible activist-academic James Petras succinctly captures the consequent conundrum: 'the (historical) problem of intellectual engagement is related to the audience to which it is directed' (Petras 1990: 107).

However, the kind of activist research that I am sharing and profiling here is not undertaken by academics housed in universities nor by researchers who are "outside" and not part of, the organisations and struggles which they are researching. Rather, the research is conducted by activist-intellectuals, some of whom might have academic credentials, but are not formally located within the academy, and who are part and parcel, as activists, of the organisation, movement, network, etcetera being researched.

This distinction is important for two crucial reasons. First, because the institutional and/or organisational "location" of the activist researcher directly and consciously shapes the associated power balance around as well as character and content of the links to and collaboration with, the research "subject(s)". Second, because the terrain that frames the work of the researcher also directly and consciously shapes the ways in which the research is purposed and used. As Choudry (2022: 17) states, 'the purpose to which the research is put and how it can be used may be a better indicator of what

constitutes activist research than specific methodologies'.

My own personal research journey over the last 35 years provides confirmatory testimony. A prime example is the research I conducted on the historical strategy and tactics of the African National Congress (ANC). Initially this was carried out as a PhD student located within the academy. Even though I was also politically active in anti-racist and national liberation solidarity student organisations and my PhD was broadly supportive of the national liberation struggle in South Africa, the research was conducted within the formal methodological requirements of the academy and with the sole purpose of completing an academic degree.

However, once I had re-located out of the academy and become an active member of the African National Congress (ANC) and subsequently a leader in the South African Community Party (SACP—the ANC's alliance partner), the locational, methodological and relational frame as well as the core purpose of the research, shifted dramatically. Besides now being inside and actively part of the organisational "objects" of my research, and in the process generating a range of new and very different political and personal relationships, I was now no longer institutionally part of the academy and no longer bound to its framing methodological and research/degree requirements.

Accordingly, Choudry (2013: 130) points out that:

> relatively little work documents, explicates or theorizes actual research practices of activist researchers in concrete locations outside of the academy in activist groups, NGOs or social movements. Intellectual work, knowledge production, and forms of investigation/research undertaken within activism are sometimes overlooked or unrecognized but nonetheless inextricably linked to action in many mobilizations.

This is particularly the case when it comes to activist research undertaken by those outside the academy (even more so by those directly involved in/with grassroots organisations and struggles) focused on oral histories and archiving involving community organisations, social movements and activist networks/coalitions, that 'encompass a diverse range of materials, approaches and practices' (Choudry and Vally 2018; Flinn 2011). This kind of research not only surfaces and makes accessible the 'wealth of printed, recorded and digital materials' produced but also allows for those materials to act as 'a resource through which to explore and understand radical politics and their histories in ways that inform present and future actions' (Choudry 2022: 14).

These then can act as 'important forms of documenting actions, campaigns, developments and debates, which are otherwise not always visible and accessible to those external to these organisations

and their struggles as well as to newer generations' (Choudry 2022: 14). In short, research becomes an act of resistance; in other words, as a part of helping to create and document a grounded, organic organisational and practical resistance and as part of contesting and resisting intellectual gatekeeping and constructed histories in which the lives and struggles of the poor and workers are used for other purposes, agendas or are simply forgotten.

What follows below are summary examples of two research practices/projects, centred on oral histories and archiving, that I undertook as an activist-intellectual over the last twenty years. The first project was undertaken over a three-year period (2007-2009) and involved community organisations and struggles in which I had been active and in practical solidarity with, for several years. The second project was also undertaken over a three-year period (2010-2012) and focused wholly on the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), of which I was a founding member (since its formation in 1999) and elected leader for close to a decade.

These case studies represent the kind of activist research "within activism" that most often escapes the attention and recognition of those in the academy, but whose character and impact were, and remain, inextricably embedded in and linked to the involved activists, organisations and movements, alongside their ongoing struggles for basic dignity, to tell their "stories" and to effect radical change.

Case Study One: Forgotten voices in the present

Context and purpose

The key impetus behind this research was a desire to contribute to an alternative history of the South African transition. "Alternative" in the sense of offering a different kind of history than that which has constituted the dominant trope of South Africa's historiography since the democratic breakthrough of 1994. As such, the main purpose was to produce a collection of individual oral histories from residents in three poor communities that constituted a meaningful representation (collection of "stories") of South Africa's post-1994 political, social and economic history as lived and experienced by the oppressed and marginalised majority. The three communities were: Maandagshoek—a deep rural community in south-eastern Limpopo Province; Rammolutsi—a peri-urban/small town community in Northern Free State Province; and Sebokeng—a large urban community in Gauteng Province (McKinley and Veriava 2008).

The fact is that South Africa's post-1994 history has been largely constituted as a 'history from above', created and told from the perspectives and experiences of a small and powerful minority. It is a history that predominately emanates out of the institutional frameworks and processes within which elites operate,

constantly being told through the voices and agencies of those who possess political, economic, social and cultural power and position. Effectively then, it is a "history" of, by and through an elite that relates mainly to state and corporate institutions, elitist societal processes and macro-nationalist narratives. Its telling has, and continues to be, constantly refracted through the lens of the pre-1994 past; that is, the "liberation struggle", the negotiations process and/or leading figures and movements in them (Ballard et al. 2006; Bond 1997; Desai 2002; McKinley 2003).

The counter-desire inherent in this research is to provide a "history from below", an alternative to this elitist construction and telling, a history that can capture a strong representation of individual and community perspectives and experiences of most South Africans who are politically marginalised, economically oppressed and socially forgotten. It is an attempt to give "direct voice" to those who have been marginalised and/or excluded from the production and telling of South Africa's post-1994 history. Here, those voices are not solely seen, heard and told as the tick-the-box responses of the poor to practical exigencies (as has been the dominant case since 1994), but come directly and voluntarily from the very space and place within which such voices are themselves constructed, experienced and related.

However, it is not only South Africa's post-1994 "history" that is problematic. On a more theoretical and analytical note it would appear, if available research and literature is anything to go by, that South African "history" itself is presumed to be something that relates predominately to the pre-1994 era. It is as if 1994 drew a line across the "map" of historical discourse/narrative and understanding, that the "new" South Africa does not belong to the country's overall exegesis of history since it is a "story" that is unfolding and whose only "identification" is its beginning. Analytically, the post-1994 period, since it remains fluid and "contemporary" (in the classical historical sense), is thus seen as having no end and therefore, no basis for enjoying historical status.

Further, and in specific relation to oral history, the serious lack of post-1994 oral history studies and research, and more especially emanating from the terrain of activist research, points to a serious gap in the theoretical and practical approach to, and understanding of, oral history itself. In other words, it is as if oral history is something that only can apply/be applied to the "forgotten" past, with the method of orality being the mechanism to revive and tell that "forgotten" history.

While there is a sizeable literature dealing with the political, social and strategic character and struggles of various social movements and organisations in poor communities in the post-1994 period, none of this can be seriously classified as falling under the methodological rubric of oral history. Much of this literature derives from advocacy and academic work by those outside of such movements and organisations, is predominately analytical in content and relies heavily on written "histories" (Ballard et al. 2006; Ballard et al. 2005; Barchiesi et al. 2003; Bond 2004; Pillay 1996). It should also be noted that

the "targets" of this literature are politically and socially active individuals, movements and community organisations who are engaged in active social and political struggles, mainly centred around the delivery of basic services such as water, land, housing, education, health etcetera. What this clearly reveals, is the general dearth of research that would provide sustained comparison with the purpose, approach and content of this project.

All of this raises several fundamental questions: Where does more recent history (in this case, South Africa's post-1994 social, political, cultural and economic history) fall in relation to the telling and capturing of history itself? Is history not a "thing" that becomes history as it happens and is thus, best understood, shared and has impact, not as something that has already happened, but that remains in motion, from one "history" to the next? Can oral history be solely applied (as a methodological tool) to an "alien" or "forgotten" past that can likewise, only be resurrected and told through the oral genre?

What about contemporary memory and experience counting as history and being related through oral testimony/stories as a means of ensuring that it does not become (generically) "alien" and is not "forgotten"? If the poor are not encouraged (and facilitated) to tell their stories as they have been/is happening, does this not point to an inherent desire to create a "history" that can then be "told" at a later stage, when it has no impact other than as an act of, and exercise in, academic memory recording and societal remembrance?

At the heart of the kind of activist research that this project represents, is the direct recording and "telling" of how those whose voices are mostly marginalised and often ignored, make their own truths and their own meanings of history, wherever and whenever that history is to be found. In this sense then, the nomenclature associated with such research becomes central to its source and character. This is especially the case in relation to poor communities in the post-1994 era, where the human and social relationships engendered by marginalisation and poverty create a popular, individual and collective "public" memory of life—a "living heritage". This research does not suffer from the problem of filtering and forgetting precisely, because the history recorded and "told" is derived and presented from the source as well as being lived in very meaningful and practical ways.

History, and more particularly recent history, is a contested concept and reality. In whatever way it is conceptualised, accessed, told and recorded, there are universal questions and challenges. How and why are certain individuals chosen/not chosen to tell their stories (gender, race, class)? Can there be a separation of personal stories from the broader socio-economic and political narratives and histories that might be dominant at the time of telling? How might the positionality and purpose of those doing both the recording and telling, inform the character of the subsequent interaction and content of what is told? There might also arise the issue of negative past experiences with researchers and how this affects the ways in which stories are shared and told.

Approach and scope

The first phase of the research involved a "scoping" exercise. This consisted of on-site visits to each of the three selected communities to identify and liaise with community organisations, activists, structures and some residents, as well as choose a community activist as project liaison. This activist then assisted in identifying a cross-section of community activists and residents and organising interviews, including, when necessary, simultaneous translation during the interview.

In the second phase, much longer on-site visits were made to each community to conduct in-depth interviews (all of which were recorded both on a digital audio recorder and on a DV-camera) as well as to capture additional video footage of the community and its surrounding areas. Besides ensuring there was formal consent for both audio and visual recording, the narrators were able to do the interview in the language of their choice.

Interviews were conducted using the "Life History Method". This method seeks to conduct the interview more as a conversation, with any specific, directed questions put to the narrator flowing from the general conversation and/or issues the narrator raises. Within the context of the narrator's post-1994 lived history, this allowed the narrator to better define and shape the story being told. Where narrators gave interviews in a language other than English, such interviews were later transcribed into English from the original audio recording. Over the course of an eighteen-month period, a total of 55 interviews were conducted.

A third phase was then given over to a second round of interviews with selected individuals from the first round, to have more in-depth conversations related to key issues raised. A fourth phase involved a brief return visit to each community where all of those interviewed (and in some cases family members) were provided with a hard copy of their interview and shown a draft version of the video documentary alongside selected audio-visual excerpts from their interviews. A feedback discussion ensued which then informed the final (fifth) phase of production of both the research publication and the documentary.

This research does not "run away" from the crucial questions and challenges as raised in the previous section. While acknowledging the ever-present challenge related to relations of power, both between researcher and research "subjects" and amongst the research "subjects" themselves (Choudry 2015), from the beginning, we were completely open and upfront with all involved about who we are, what we were trying to do and why we were doing it. Indeed, many of those in the three "target" communities who assisted and participated in the interviews/conversations were fellow activists and residents involved in the same affiliated umbrella movement and activist struggles as the researchers. The research makes no claim to represent the full panorama of post-1994 lived experience and views of the poor majority in South Africa. Likewise, it makes no claim that these life stories constitute a particular historical "truth",

but simply that they are living "voices" that have largely been "forgotten" and which form part of a history that has been so selectively constructed and told.

There are, and will always be, competing interests, perspectives and experiences and thus, histories told even when it might appear that those sharing and telling their histories are more socially and economically homogenous, that is, within a poor community. As such, those interviewed in each of the three poor communities represent a variety of voices from within that community and cut across age, gender, social status, work situation and political organisation affiliation. Such a representational cross-section of "voices" from poor communities provides a parallel representation of rural, urban and peri-urban realities that encompass differing, but key historical, geographical and socio-political "characteristics" of the post-1994 period.

Those "characteristics" include, but are not wholly limited to, issues of: land (its ownership, distribution, usage and associated relations of production); basic services (availability, affordability and provision); social, productive and representational relationships with the state and the private sector; levels and content of political and social activism (vis-à-vis the dominant political trends and activities in both pre- and post-1994 South Africa) and, geographical location and ethnographic make-up. Underlying all of these is the larger issue of the ways in which the development of the specific community has been affected? by the dominant (macro) post-1994 political and socio-economic trajectory and how this development is linked to the pre-1994 character of that community.

Outcomes

As far as I am aware, this research project produced, for the first time in the post-1994 era, a formal and open archived collection of such oral histories, housed (in written, video and audio formats, both in hard copy and electronically/online) with the South African History Archive (SAHA). For over a decade this has been available for researchers, policymakers, academics and ordinary South Africans. This archive represents a unique but modest contribution to contesting and supplementing the existent "history" of the South African transition and provided a foundation upon which further and activist linked advocacy, research and oral history work can be pursued.

Besides the collection at SAHA, a 167-page hard-copy publication was produced to provide a more popular and accessible representation of the full archive. In the publication, excerpts from the collection of interviews were organised according to each "target" community from which they were taken and further highlighted by reference to key subject matters, alongside an index which provided a more easily referenced guide to "accessing" these subject matters. Besides all those involved in this

project, the publication was made available (in both hard copy and DVD formats where applicable) to key government departments at various levels in South Africa, non-governmental organisations, research institutes, libraries, resource centres, individual researchers, activists, social movements and other community organisations.

Further, a half hour documentary was produced as well as a DVD containing all the interviews. Written versions of the oral histories recorded can undoubtedly contribute significantly to the history of the South African transition being made today, and to the ways in which the activists, organisations and residents involved imagine and understand themselves and their struggles.

There is, however, much that written histories foreclose in their re-presentation of oral histories, having limited choices available in terms of the act of writing permits. Recent activist and popular education experience has illustrated how other forms of media, such as video, often allow for information and experiences to be much more accessible and to be shared amongst much wider audiences, with greater appeal and effect (specifically in relation to ongoing struggles and activist approaches) and often serving to complement the written word. This is especially the case in respect of poor communities where literacy rates amongst older adults remain low. Video records not only serve as a "living" archive of events and ideas, but also provide a space through which histories may be crafted and interpreted to speak differently in and to the present.

The documentary brings together key components of selected interviews, alongside additional footage, as another way of "telling" the stories recorded. It provides a powerful alternative visual history of the transition that can counter mainstream versions which tend to silence, sensationalise, or criminalise "voices" of the poor and of those critical of the project of nation-building and reconciliation. Likewise, it can be a means through which people can interact with their own histories as collectives and use these visual representations for their own purposes of mobilisation, strategising and critical reflection and debate.

Case Study Two: Transition's child, The Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF)

Context and purpose

What the 'Forgotten Voices in the Present' research confirmed was the need, and indeed imperative for activist-intellectuals to record and archive the post-1994 stories/histories of activists, residents and organisations in poor communities. It is within such a context that the parallel need for a more specific focus on organised, community-based, social movements that emerged in the post-1994 era as a direct

response to the political and socio-economic conditions, within which poor communities found themselves, was identified (McKinley 2012).

Many such movements had, by the time this research project got underway, been in existence for years, produced a large amount of organisational and campaign/media material and had a significant amount of mostly academic research and analysis as well as journalistic writing focused on them. Yet despite this, no formal archives of such movements and their community components nor corresponding written and oral histories existed.

The APF, like most of South Africa's post-apartheid social movements during the early 2000s, was an organisation that cut across all three dominant models/categories used to classify social movements; namely, "old" movements which directly challenged the state seeking reform or revolution, the notion of "new" movements based on identity-oriented concerns whose target was less concerned with the state and more about society, and social change, more broadly, or the "new-new" global movements which together challenge a unilaterally imposed understanding of and pathway for, globalisation (Ballard et al. 2006). Indeed, the APF did not fit neatly into any one of either the dominant analytical schema or assigned categories that constitute the main components of social movement theory emanating (largely) from the academy.

Similarly, the APF was a movement whose creation, subsequent development and ongoing practical engagements and struggles did not conform to any particularistic (social movement) theorisations of formation, mobilisation and/or activity. While sharing many of the macro stimuli and characteristics (for example, neo-liberal globalisation and societal shifts from the realm of production to consumption) of more recent social movements all over the globe, the APF was fundamentally shaped by its uniquely South African condition/experience. This included apartheid-inspired constructions of race and class, the post-apartheid political dominance of a multi-sided liberation movement which has included "old" social movements (such as unions) and the exigencies of specifically crafted neo-liberal social and economic policies in the context of extreme socio-economic inequality and the energetic pursuit of a deracialised capitalism.

As such, the APF's social movement character and "status" was driven by a mix of structural, distributional, and identity pressures/characteristics. In this sense, the APF was neither theoretically exceptional nor common in respect of the sources and corresponding explanations of its origins, development and activities. In the words of Ashwin Desai (2002), South Africa's 'movements of the poor must be celebrated for being what they are: relatively small groupings of awakening antagonism in a sea of political apathy, nationalist ignorance and informal repression'.

Indeed, the APF's relevance (and thus, also the research project undertaken from "within") stemmed

from the reality of the ANC state's betrayal of the broad working class, inclusive of the underemployed and unemployed, both organisationally and politically. Its very existence was a direct result of this and the accompanying capitalist neo-liberalism that was subsequently pursued. The movement's role was to (partially) fill the organisational and political/ideological vacuum that had been created, to offer a new avenue for the voices and struggles of the poor and a means to impact on the most basic needs of the poor majority through mass mobilisation, action, organisational coherence, political engagement, educational initiatives and the creation of a new consciousness of the possibilities of radical change.

My own direct and close activist involvement as a founding member and then elected leader over a ten-year period, provided a unique set of practical experiences, organisational relationships and overall insight into/of the APF. Not only did this ensure unique access to the full panorama of the APF's documents, materials etcetera, but also to past and (at the time) present leaders and community affiliate activists. In turn, this allowed for a much more organic understanding of and relationship to, the organisation which in turn, created unique avenues for associated impact and use of the research.

Approach and scope

The overall scope of the research was threefold:

First, to collect and produce a formal electronic and hard-copy archive of all available material from within the APF and its community affiliates, from those networks and coalitions of which the APF was initiator or member, as well as all research, analysis and commentary on and about the APF from outside the movement, inclusive of that produced by other activists, organisations, academics and the media. This material also included paraphernalia, for example, t-shirts, posters, stickers, banners etcetera.

Second, to produce a formally archived collection of oral histories, in both audio and written formats encompassing both personal and organisational/movement components, from selected APF and associated community affiliate leaders, activists and members. The research was conducted with the support of the South African History Archive, which became the repository of the entire archive.

Third, to produce a brief written history of the APF consisting of a critically informed paper, based on the collected archive along with selected excerpts from the oral histories recorded.

> What this allowed was a space for personal reflection and analysis and, the raising of critical and crucial questions and issues deriving from the collected archive as well as from my own activist experience and journey in the APF.

Methodologically, the research was framed by the following components:

Preparatory meeting

A preparatory meeting was held with APF's elected leadership (the office bearers) to explain the content and character of the project to ensure that there was a full understanding of it, and "buy-in". This was followed by a summary presentation of the research project to the APF's "Coordinating Committee" which consisted of five representatives of each of the APF's (at the time) twenty-plus affiliate community organisations. In both instances, many questions were asked and there was extensive discussion on the purpose, scope and potential use and impact of the research "products", all of which helped make the project a more collective, participatory endeavour.

The collection of materials

All documents, both original and copies as well as various paraphernalia and audio-visual materials, were collected over a two-year period in the following ways: a) through the APF's own office files and records; b) through individual leaders, activists and members both at the APF and community affiliate levels; c) through my own substantial personal APF archive collected over a period of twelve years as a founding member, activist and elected leader; d) through individual academics and activist-intellectuals both within and outside South Africa and e) through desktop research and physical research conducted at university and public libraries.

Identification of interviewees

All key APF activists and leaders, both past and (at the time) present, who held elected positions of leadership, had been responsible for various sub-committees and specific projects in the APF and/or had been active over a period in the APF and with its struggles, were identified for interviews. In relation to APF community affiliates, a cross-section of affiliates from each of the four APF regions and representing different "types" of communities (for example, formal township residents, shack settlements, urban flat/warehouse dwellers) were selected. Past and present elected leaders and key activists of these affiliates were then identified for interviews.

Conducting of interviews

Two general questionnaires were drawn up, one for APF activists and leaders and the other for community affiliate activists and leaders. Each interviewee was asked general questions regarding several broad categories related to personal as well as organisational and political history, practical struggles, challenges, problems and personal experiences and perspectives. Where possible, questionnaires were provided to each individual interviewee prior to the interview taking place. There was no specific time limit set for any interview with the lengths ranging from less than one hour to over four hours. Each interview was recorded on a digital (audio) recording device. Each interviewee was asked to sign a consent form and all agreed (the consents form part of the archive). All interviews were conducted in English and transcribed into written documents.

Besides the more "straightforward" task of collecting and recording various materials of, and about the APF, the approach to gathering oral histories was designed to cover the following areas and issues: general personal and APF movement/community organisational history; basic demands and issues engaged; organisational strategy and tactics; responses from the state; relations with political parties and other social movements and/or community organisations; levels and content of political and social activism and, key problems, challenges, failures and successes both organisationally and politically. Underlying these was the larger issue of the ways in which the history and development of the APF and/or its community affiliates had been shaped and effected by the dominant (macro) post-1994 political and socio-economic trajectory in South Africa.

Once all the above had been completed, hard copies of the 112-page research publication accompanied by a DVD of the same were provided individually to all interviewees, while further batches were distributed to all affiliates.

Outcomes

Similar to the 'Forgotten Voices' project, this APF research was (at the time) a first. In other words, the first time such an archive of materials and oral histories (by an activist-intellectual from within the movement) was collected, organised, distributed, housed and made publicly accessible. The various component outcomes ('products') of the research consisted of:

- A material archive containing all available materials and documents of the APF and its community affiliates, alongside materials produced (for example, from news/media outlets, independent sources and through academic research) on the APF and its affiliates was collected, collated,

organised and filed into a formal archive housed at SAHA. These materials include: organisational, political and administrative reports, minutes of meetings, research reports, discussion documents, press statements, interviews, academic and other research articles and essays, media articles, pamphlets, paraphernalia, as well as organisational and outside video and audio productions and raw footage.

- An oral history archive derived from interviews with selected APF and community affiliate leaders, members and activists. All interviews were digitally (audio) recorded in English and transcribed into a written format. The interviews, both in written and audio forms, were then collated, organised and placed in a formal archive housed at SAHA.
- A written history (publication) as well as a DVD of the same. Utilising the archival materials collected, alongside excerpts from the oral histories, a hard copy publication as well as a DVD were produced. They included the brief history, extracts from the interviews as well as the interview lists, forms and questionnaires, while the DVD also included visual representations of selected materials collected. Two launches of the publication and archive were held, one internal to the APF and the other public.

By way of conclusion

One of the difficulties that animated both research projects was choosing "research subjects", both at the community and individual levels. The three communities chosen in the oral history project are objectively, however, not directly representative of those whose voices have been "forgotten". As such, there are inherent limitations therein, to the full panoply of stories of the poor and working class. Also, even though my own organisational and activist positionality and example allowed for a more organic and horizontal process and engagement, the realities of racial and class differentiation were, even if recognised, real.

Regardless, on a cumulative basis, the two research undertakings provide unique activist framed, comprehensive, multi-form storytelling and histories, of some amongst the "forgotten voices" as well as of one of South Africa's key post-1994 social movements. The formal, multi-form, historical and archival repositories produced are, in parallel, important and positive contributions to the thinking and work of social movement researchers, activists, community residents, academics, politicians and government officials. As such, they go some way in contesting "outsider" and purely academic and analytical "histories" as well as organisational and struggle perspectives of social movements.

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