

# A Glimpse into Marabastad



Leopardstone Private Press



*The view west along Boom Street into Marabastad on a weekday afternoon in 1970.*

# A Glimpse into Marabastad

Photographs and text by

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and

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## Note

During January and February, 2008 eight draft copies of this book were printed, numbered and distributed. People with past personal experiences of Marabastad, in particular, were asked to respond to *Marabastad: Adversity and Survival* and the photographs, captions and map, with additional information, corrections and comment. The book, in its final form, will be made available from March, 2008 as a Print On Demand (POD) publication.

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*This book is dedicated to all those people who,  
at one time or another, have called Marabastad their home.*

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*This photograph was taken at about midday on a Saturday. The view is in an easterly direction down Grand Street and includes Meintjes Kop and the Union Buildings in the distance. The three fashionably dressed sisters, Devi, Rani and Rajis Naidoo are approaching the intersection of Grand Street and 6th Street. Their home was further down Grand Street close to Steenovenspruit.*



*The changes that have occurred in South African society since 1994 make it necessary to comment on the use of certain names and terms historically relevant to this publication.*

*The south-central part of what was the Transvaal Province, which in turn had been the Transvaal Republic, is now Gauteng Province. The City of Pretoria now falls within the greater metropolis of Tshwane, but the future use of the name 'Pretoria' has yet to be decided upon. What is now generally referred to as Marabastad is in fact the Asiatic Bazaar section of a much larger urban residential area that was known as Marabastad. This residential area and the original settlement which was given the name Marabastad no longer exist.*

*In the Preface and in Marabastad: Adversity and Survival, I have used the old place names and also race classification terms such as 'blacks', 'whites', and 'Coloureds' that were central to apartheid ideology. This has been done for the sake of historical authenticity and accuracy and it is not my intention to be either controversial or disparaging.*

## Preface

Since I was an art student in Johannesburg in the 1960s, I have added to a collection of photographic reference material that I find essential for my creative work in print, pencil, and pastel. These photographs have mainly been selected from the hundreds of photographs I have taken over decades on my travels in southern Africa. Many of the photographs reflect my interest in the history and archaeology of the region. I have never seriously used photography as an expressive medium, rather simply as the means to record. But quite ordinary photographic documentation can acquire heritage value as material culture and social entities change or are destroyed.

In 1970, I began photographing remnants of the older inner city of Pretoria. Part of my interest in old Pretoria stemmed from the fact that my two maternal great-, great-, grandfathers of two immigrant Dutch families, Stiemens and Bergsma, were citizens of Pretoria during its formative years. I was particularly attracted to the old shops in Prinsloo Street. Many of the buildings had survived with few alterations since the 19th century.

During a visit to Prinsloo Street I was approached by Mr. Hassem Keshavjee, who owned the business M. Keshavjee & Co., on the corner of Prinsloo Street and Proes Street. He asked me to photograph his shop and family before they were forced to move - to conform to requirements of apartheid's Group Areas Act.

Mr. Keshavjee's son, Murad, presented me with a book: *The Aga Khan and Africa*. A large section of the book is devoted to the Aga Khan's visit to South Africa in August 1945, and includes photographs of the Ismaili Mosque in Boom Street which the Aga Khan visited. The mosque is in the heart of the Asiatic Bazaar, part of an area generally known as Marabastad. There are also photographs of two of the three local cinemas, the Empire Theatre in Boom Street and the Royal Theatre in Grand Street that were decorated for the occasion.

I had hardly been aware that Marabastad existed until then, but I discovered that close to the centre of Pretoria and a few blocks from Paul Kruger's house there was an almost hidden community that had evolved its own dynamic and colourful character - and been in existence since the 1880s. In general, Pretoria's white population knew little of Marabastad and regarded it as a place apart, or to be viewed with suspicion and fear. Vivien Allen's book *Kruger's Pretoria*, published in 1971, and Lola Dunston's *Young Pretoria 1889-1913* published in 1975, both deal comprehensively with the early history of Pretoria but neither makes any mention of Marabastad. Between 1970 and 1973 I returned to Marabastad with a camera on a number of occasions and I regret that I did not take more photographs while I had the opportunity. By the end of the 1970s, most homes had been demolished and the inhabitants dispersed to segregated townships on the outskirts of Pretoria. I moved on as my interests focused, in particular, on the Kalahari Desert across the South African border. The Marabastad negatives were stored and have, fortunately, survived a leaking roof and various relocations.



*Mr. Hassem Keshavjee standing outside his shop on the corner of Prinsloo Street and Proes Street, 1970. This photograph was taken while he was supervising the closure of the shop in terms of the requirements of the Group Areas Act. In the background is the Munitoria building (later partly destroyed by fire) where many of the politically based decisions relating to Marabastad and other Pretoria communities were made.*

The years since 1994 have seen dramatic changes in almost every sphere of South African life and a revisionist approach to the history of the country has been essential. There has been a strong interest in communities marginalized or destroyed during the apartheid era. Many people in South Africa still hold memories of life before apartheid took hold and whole communities are seeking redress for the damages wrought by forced removals. In 2003 the National Cultural History Museum, located not far from Marabastad, opened an excellent permanent exhibition on the rich cultural history of Marabastad reflecting the valuable research that has thus far been undertaken. When I visited the exhibition I realized that the series of photographs that I had taken in the early 1970s were likely to have historic or heritage value as they offered a glimpse into Marabastad before the destruction of the residential areas of the Asiatic Bazaar and Cape Location. In particular, I thought the photographs might have value for those still alive, who had once lived in Marabastad, and for younger generations who need to know and see how things once were.

I digitized the original negatives and donated a set of photographs to the National Cultural History Museum. But I also wanted to reacquaint myself with what was left of Marabastad and the people who still lived and worked there. It has been an edifying although, also, a somewhat depressing experience. It is now a mostly non-residential area although some of the residents who were evicted have returned - and there are the temporary homes of migrants, refugees and vagrants. The streets of houses in the Asiatic Bazaar and Cape Location areas that I once photographed are now a wasteland. Odd garden and street trees still stand and the outlines of the foundations of houses are visible in the bare earth amongst the

rubbish. Children are seldom seen in Marabastad and taxi ranks, bus depots and street traders dominate. Remarkably, the original character of Marabastad, as I remember it, can still be felt and seen in the old business area situated along Boom and Mogul Streets and parts of Grand Street. I concentrated on taking photographs of places I had visited in the 1970s and recorded the devastation wrought by forced removals and by later neglect. I met past and present inhabitants of Marabastad and I listened to many stories. Older people talked nostalgically of a bygone era with loyalty and pride. People looked forward to what they hope will be a new Marabastad - but some concern was also voiced about the future. It was also clear that, for many thousands of people, the experience of Marabastad had been one of poverty, alienation and humiliation. It could have been described as a community living in a hostile border area. The hated pass law offices were in von Wielligh Street, on the edge of Marabastad, and the backdrop was the urban bastion of Pretoria with a clear view of the Union Buildings on Meintjes Kop, occupied by the leaders of the apartheid regime for over four decades. And yet, there is no doubt that Marabastad, in its heyday, was a vibrant, and in some ways, unique coalescence of cultures, races and religions. I have come to understand that in important ways the residents of Marabastad 'got it right' and there is much to learn from this heritage.

I needed words as well as pictures for a publication. I wrote *Marabastad: Adversity and Survival* as a historical overview offering contextual support for the photographs, not as an attempt at writing a comprehensive and definitive history of Marabastad. I found that the larger context in which I placed Marabastad did not diminish its value or status, rather Marabastad became a microcosm and brought into sharp focus the process of urbanization in South Africa that has had such a profound impact on the lives of millions of people.

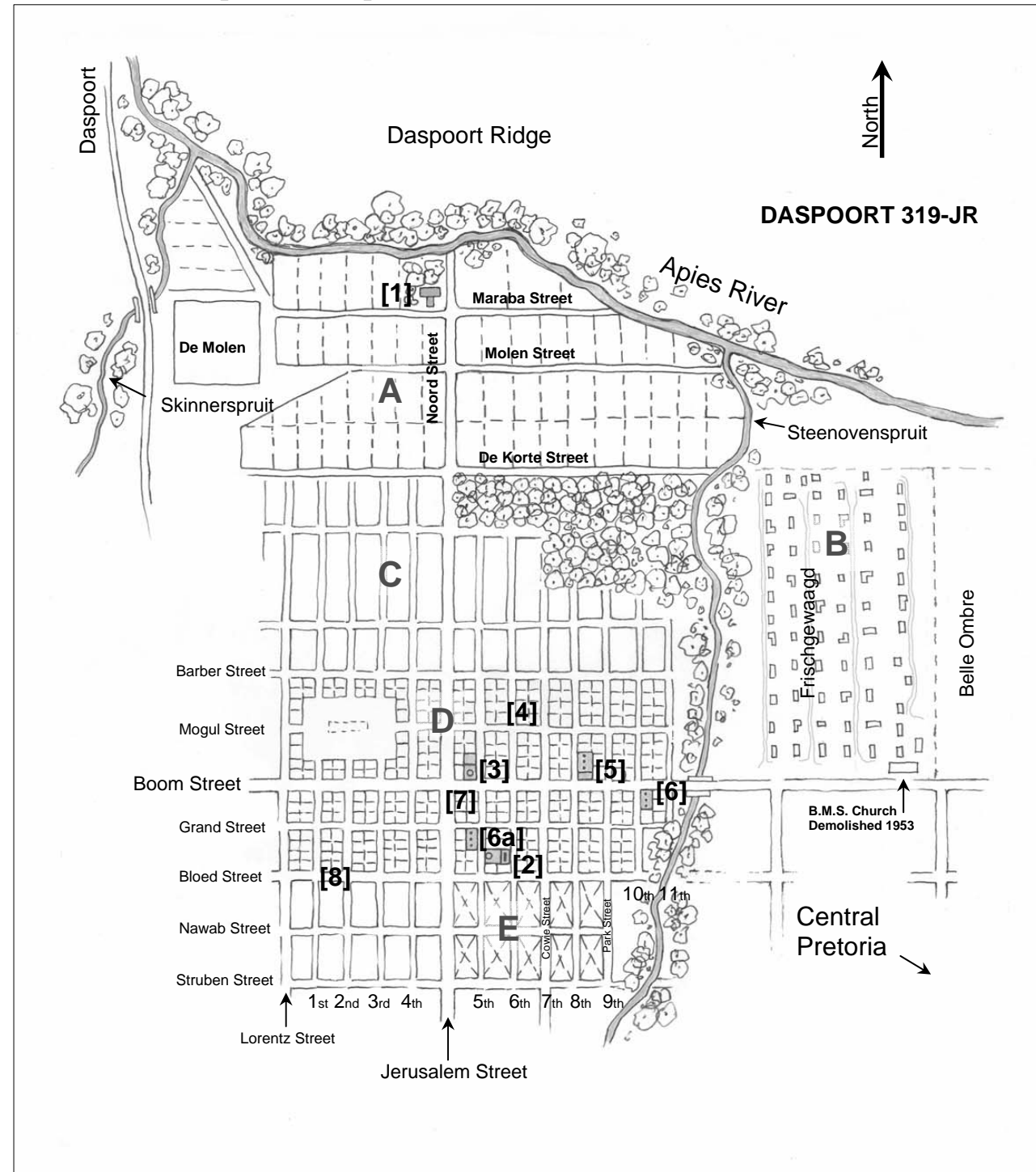
I met Johnny Masilela and Darryl Accone and discovered that they both had childhood memories of Marabastad dating back to the late 1960s and early 1970s. I invited them to write of their experiences of Marabastad and I am delighted with the result. Their stories add an important and enriching dimension to this publication. Behind history writ large are the daily lives of people, as essentially important for an understanding and appreciation of the past. Both writers offer insights into Marabastad life, and their own lives, with humour and love and a perceptive understanding of the context of their childhoods. I wish I could have met Bro Jeff Ntsele, Poppy Moosa, Kwan Kho...

I have also got to know Zwelakhe Mthwethwa and Hussien Mohideen on my visits to Marabastad. Their support for this publication has been invaluable. Both are deeply committed to the past and the future of the area and are, amongst others and in different ways, leaders in the struggle to conserve Marabastad's heritage and once again develop a sustainable community. Since the beginning of its existence plans for the destruction, reconstruction, renovation and reinvention of Marabastad have come and gone. Hopefully, the idea of change that has always been associated with Marabastad will have positive connotations in the future and that Marabastad's full potential will be realized.

JFC Clarke

December 2007

Composite map of Greater Marabastad 1870 - 1975



## Greater Marabastad 1870 - 1975

### **A Old Marabastad**

The original township of Marabastad was surveyed in 1888 and replaced the informal settlement that had developed around the kraal of Chief Maraba on the Apies River. Between 1912 and 1920 the township was slowly demolished as residents were moved to New Location, later renamed Bantule, to the north-west of Old Marabastad. The Daspoort Sewerage Farm now occupies the site of Old Marabastad.

### **B Schoolplaats**

The Berlin Missionary Society bought the property *Frischgewaagd* in 1870 and established a mission station that included a church and school and catered for about 100 black families. The property was sold to the Pretoria City Council in 1926 and all residents had moved by 1934. The church was demolished in 1953.

### **C New Marabastad**

During the Boer War, 1899 - 1902, black refugees mainly from rural areas were allowed to settle in the area between Old Marabastad and the Asiatic Bazaar. The surveyed township became known as New Marabastad and it soon became overcrowded and there was a constant shortage of water. The situation was aggravated by the relocation of a portion of the Schoolplaats community to New Marabastad in 1934. Atteridgeville was established in 1939 and the majority of New Marabastad residents had relocated to the new township by 1960. Nothing remains of New Marabastad.

### **D Asiatic Bazaar**

Indians first settled in the area between Old Marabastad and Pretoria in the 1890s and the Asiatic Bazaar was established in 1903. Under apartheid in the 1960s and 1970s residents were forced to move to Laudium, although many retained their business interests in the Asiatic Bazaar. Most of what is left of Marabastad can be found between Barber Street and Bloed Street. Originally Grand Street was named Aurungazeeb Street.

### **E Cape Location**

In the 1890s a Coloured community began to establish itself to the south of Bloed Street. This area came to be known as the Cape Location and included a small Malay Muslim community. During the 1960s and 1970s Cape Location residents were forced to move to Eersterus on the eastern side of Pretoria, although many of the Malays chose to move to Laudium. Nothing remains of the Cape Location except a few garden trees.

### **Existing buildings of historical interest in Marabastad**

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Religious buildings</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Old Marabastad church and school room, Daspoort Sewerage Farm;</li><li>2. The Nawab Miriammen Temple, 6th Street;</li><li>3. Ismaili Mosque, Boom Street;</li><li>4. Mosque of the Pretoria Islamic Society, 291 Mogul Street;</li></ol> |
| <b>Cinema theatres</b>     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. The Orient, Boom Street;</li><li>6. The Empire, Boom Street;</li></ol>   |
| <b>Recreation hall</b>     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(6a) Site of The Royal, corner of 5th Street and Grand Street, now demolished;</li><li>7. Columbia Dance Hall, corner of Jerusalem Street and Boom Street;</li></ol>  |
| <b>Shops</b>               | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>8. Makuloo Hopaan, Bloed Street and old shops in the following streets:<br/>Boom, Grand, Mogul, Jerusalem and Lorentz.</li></ol>  |

**Left:** *The composite map includes all the settlements, or townships, that existed from the 1870s to the 1970s, north-west of central Pretoria and south of the Apies River on the farm Daspoort 319-JR. Old Marabastad and New Marabastad were two of five separate but adjacent settlements that were (and are) collectively referred to as Marabastad. The other settlements were Schoolplaats, the Asiatic Bazaar and the Cape Location. Only a section of the old Asiatic Bazaar still remains. The other settlements were demolished between 1912 and 1975. The main east-west axis through the area was Boom Street. The main north-south axis was once Jerusalem Street and it was originally as wide as Boom Street. In Old Marabastad it became Noord Street. Jerusalem Street has diminished in length as first Old Marabastad, followed by New Marabastad and finally the Cape Location and parts of the Asiatic Bazaar were either demolished or redeveloped. Jerusalem Street now only runs the length of three blocks between Bloed Street and Mogul Street.*



*6th Street, Marabastad, 1970*

## Marabastad: A Story of Adversity and Survival

Marabastad has been in existence for over 120 years. It was one of the first of many satellite communities to spring up on the peripheries of towns and cities that were established in the interior of southern Africa during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The history of Marabastad is about change, relocation and urbanization. It is a history of migrants, refugees, job-seekers, entrepreneurs and commuters seeking a new and better life and of people who became the unwilling subjects of a political ideology. As such, Marabastad reflects the history of South Africa's racial, social and economic divisions, of white control of urban centres to the exclusion of other racial groups.

Marabastad was once an expanding township on the edge of the city of Pretoria. It was inextricably linked to Pretoria but, at the same time, it was never allowed to be an integral part of the city. As Pretoria expanded in size Marabastad became surrounded by urban and industrial development. The township slowly diminished in size as inhabitants were forced to move to new racially segregated residential areas that were established outside the city limits.

Pretoria has now been absorbed into a greater urban conglomerate of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. The City of Tshwane falls within the northern sector of the industrial and economic heartland of South Africa that includes Johannesburg, the Witwatersrand and industrial nodes to the east and south. Almost miraculously a remnant of Marabastad, in the form of the old Asiatic Bazaar, has survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and will hopefully be conserved as an important part of South Africa's heritage (many other communities, similar to Marabastad, such as District Six in Cape Town, were destroyed during the apartheid era). Nearby, Bel Ombre, the enormous bus, taxi and train terminus, built within the precincts of Marabastad, stands as a symbol, not only of mass commuting, but also of relocation and change and is a reminder of the struggle associated with South African urbanization and the laws of apartheid.

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For thousands of years people have inhabited the valley where Pretoria is now situated. Hunter-gatherer communities left behind many petroglyphs depicting the wild animals that shared the valley with them. Later Iron Age Nguni and Sotho-Tswana speaking peoples, migrating from the north with their domesticated animals, spread into southern Africa and groups established themselves on both sides of the mountain ridge that was known as the Cashan Mountains and later named the Magaliesberg.

The Sotho-Tswana settlements of the Bakwena (Crocodile People), who populated this region, varied in size, but most of them could be referred to as villages. There were also examples of what could be termed African Iron Age large towns or cities. Archaeologists have identified Kaditshwene and Molokwane near present day Zeerust and Rustenburg respectively as examples of 'mega-sites'. A period of relative stability that allowed these communities to grow and prosper ended some two centuries ago and a period of upheaval in southern Africa known as the Difaqane heralded a state of flux that has persisted to the present day.

The Ndebele, originally from the Zulu kingdom that had come to dominate the southeast coastal plain, invaded the interior plateau of southern Africa in the 1820s, under their chief, Mzilikatzi, and subjugated the Sotho-Tswana and other inhabitants of the Magaliesberg and the surrounding area. The arrival of the Voortrekkers from across the Vaal River in



***Imagined view of Schoolplaats.***

*The above sketch is based on information gleaned from drawings by Hendrik Pierneef and a painting by Frans Oerder. The two artists lived in Pretoria in the late 19th century and early 20th century and made many sketches and paintings of the landscape and dwellings in and around Pretoria. Schoolplaats appears to have been a picturesque village with white-washed or earth coloured thatched cottages surrounded by trees and vegetable gardens. The architectural style of the Schoolplaats houses was similar to that of the very first houses erected in Pretoria around Church Square - as depicted in the earliest known painting of Pretoria, executed in 1857 by Marian Churchill.*

1836 resulted in a series of clashes with the Ndebele. The Voortrekkers were the descendents of European settlers and had migrated north from the Cape, seeking to establish a republic outside the boundaries of the British Empire. By 1838 the Ndebele had been forced to move north across the Limpopo river into what is now Zimbabwe.

The Voortrekkers, as they settled, became known as the Boers and claimed the land vacated by the defeated Ndebele - to the detriment of the previous inhabitants of the area, some of whom had allied themselves with the Voortrekkers during the conflict. Tension and further conflict followed as the Boers increasingly dominated the other inhabitants of the region and expanded territorially.

In 1855 Pretoria was established as the capital of the newly formed Transvaal Republic. The chosen site for the capital was on the south side of the Magaliesberg where a river, named the Apies River, fed by an exceptionally strong fountain, traversed the fertile valley. The streets of Pretoria were laid out on a grid pattern with a church at the intersection of the main axis roads.

To the north-west just beyond the straight streets of Pretoria, near the confluence of the Apies River and a tributary stream, Steenovenspruit, was the kraal of Chief Maraba, head of the local Mashashane clan of the South amaNdebele. Historically, the South amaNdebele were not part of Mzilikatzi's Ndebele, although they probably also migrated from what





*The original Marabastad village was surveyed and laid out along the banks of the Apies river in 1888 (see map on page 12). This church and the adjacent school building (on the western side of the church and not in the photograph) are the only buildings that remain of the settlement. The rest of the original Marabastad village was demolished by 1920. The church is possibly the oldest religious building still in existence in Pretoria.. It stands, disused, in what is now the Daspoort Sewerage Farm. It is not known for certain which Christian denomination built the church. It may have been built by Wesleyan missionaries, the Church of England or the independent African Church. The church may also have been linked to the Berlin Missionary Society at Schoolplaats.*

is now KwaZulu Natal. They were already living in the vicinity of the Magaliesberg at the time of the Difaqane. The first chief of the South amaNdebele was Musi, and his son was named Tshwane. It has also been stated that Tshwane was the chief of a group known as the MaPhuting. In more recent times, the South amaNdebele have become world renowned for their distinctive decorated homesteads and intricate beadwork.

Two residential areas developed in close proximity to Chief Maraba's kraal. It can be surmised that from the early years of Pretoria's existence an informal community began to establish itself around the chief's kraal on the Apies River. Labourers and domestic workers employed in Pretoria would have gravitated to Maraba's kraal to find accommodation and they were probably joined by an ever changing gathering herdsmen, wagon drivers and stable hands employed to tend and manage the teams of oxen and horses essential to the transport system of the time.

In the 1870s, a village-like community with a school and large church that came to be known as Schoolplaats was

established by the Berlin Missionary Society on the property *Frischgewaagd* north of Boom Street and east of the Steenovenspruit. Although the informal settlement around Maraba's kraal already existed, Schoolplaats was the first established residential 'township' for black people associated with Pretoria. The houses at Schoolplaats were laid out in six rows and water was obtained from wells and a water furrow. The residents were able to grow crops and cultivate vegetable gardens. Many members of the approximately 100 families that were accommodated on the property had been *inboekselings*. Their later descendants were known as the *oorlams*. *Inboekselings* were indentured black children, who had either been orphaned or separated from their parents as a result of on-going hostilities between Boers and neighbouring communities. The children grew up within Boer households on farms. They spoke Afrikaans, identified with Boer culture and were used as a source of farm and domestic labour. They also acquired skills and, as adults, adapted readily to urban living on Schoolplaats under the supervision of the Berlin Missionary Society. The daily lives of those within the Schoolplaats community were probably not unlike those of many nearby families resident inside early Pretoria.

As both settlements grew the Berlin Missionary Society impressed upon the city authorities the need for a new formal township. Marabastad, named after Chief Maraba who had been employed by the Landrost of Pretoria as a translator, was proclaimed in 1888. The township was laid out along the south bank of the Apies River between Steenovenspruit and Skinnerspruit, close to Maraba's kraal. This was the first formal township to be directly administered by the Pretoria Town Council and was in some ways a less restricted, easier community to live in than Schoolplaats under the B.M.S. The township grew quickly and developed its own urban character as increasing numbers of work seekers converged on Pretoria.

The first Asian settlers from India established themselves in central Pretoria in the early 1880s near the old market square. In 1903, the Asiatic Bazaar was formally proclaimed in the area west of the Steenovenspruit and south of the original Marabastad. It was intended that the Asian community develop a separate business and residential area away from central Pretoria. Some Asian businesses, such as M. Keshavjee & Co. mentioned in the Preface, were tolerated, at best, in central Pretoria by white officialdom until the late 1960s. The surveyed stands were no larger than 50 by 50 feet - in contrast to the very much larger city blocks of Pretoria. The intimate scale contributed to the distinctive character of the Asiatic Bazaar that is still evident today. The main road through the centre of the Bazaar was a westerly extension of Boom Street. On the western side of the Bazaar, Boom Street joined various tracks and roads that converged on Daspoort, and the Apies River, and fanned out to various destinations to the north and west of Pretoria.

In the 1890s the name Cape Location was given to the residential area to the south of the Asiatic Bazaar occupied by Coloureds, mainly from the Cape. There was also a small Muslim Malay community and a small number of Chinese traders moved into the area.

The name Marabastad was increasingly used to describe the larger urbanized, multicultural and multiracial community to the north-west of central Pretoria. To the citizens of Pretoria, Marabastad was a source of accessible cheap labour. Conversely, the city offered opportunities to people from economically depressed, often rural backgrounds. The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand during the 1880s resulted in a dramatic increase in local and overseas migrants flocking to the newly established Johannesburg, adjacent mining villages and Pretoria. Marabastad grew and thrived, and although demarcated sections of greater Marabastad were home to one racial group or another, its character reflected a coalescence of races, religions and cultures. Close as Marabastad was to the centre of Pretoria it evolved its own distinctive, colourful and vibrant character.

During the Anglo Boer War, 1899-1902, the British military authorities who controlled Pretoria, allowed black refugees to settle in an area between the original Marabastad and the Asiatic Bazaar. After the Boer War, New Marabastad and the original Marabastad merged as the population continued to increase. The water supply and sanitary facilities proved inadequate and the Pretoria City Council, which now controlled Marabastad, decided to demolish old Marabastad and relocate residents to New Location, later known as Bantule. The relocation was completed by 1920.



*The old mosque in Mogul Street which was demolished to make way for a new a new religious centre. The Pretoria Islamic Society, which was established in 1917, leased six stands from the City Council of Pretoria and a mosque, Islamic school, library, shops and residence for the Imaam were built and were in constant use for over sixty years. The Rabia Dada Memorial Hall, built in the 1950s, was an important part of the centre. The stands were eventually purchased by the Pretoria Islamic Society after a period of uncertainty regarding the future of this important religious site as the entire community was forced to move to Laudium in terms of the Group Areas Act. The site was enlarged and a spacious new mosque, together with a complex of shops, was constructed.*

*(Reproduced by permission of the Marabastad Development Forum)*

There were justifiable reasons for relocating communities such as 'Old' and 'New' Marabastad due to a lack of space and services but, until the 1980s, it continued to be government and city council policy to relocate the residents of the greater Marabastad area primarily on racial grounds. The 1913 Transvaal Native Land Act heads a long list of racially discriminatory Acts of Parliament with a basic aim to keep inner areas of towns, and cities such as Pretoria, exclusively occupied and controlled by whites.

As the City of Pretoria expanded, and eventually surrounded what remained of Marabastad, pressure increased to remove its inhabitants to segregated townships on the outskirts of the larger city, to New Location, Atteridgeville, Eersterus and Laudium. Indian shops still in the central business area of Pretoria were forced to close and their owners had to move to the crowded Asiatic Bazaar in Marabastad, or to the designated Indian residential and commercial area of Laudium. Eventually the residential area of the Asiatic Bazaar was also destroyed as the inhabitants were moved to Laudium.

It was inevitable that tensions would develop between such a community and the authorities. As early as 1893 Mohandas Gandhi, as a young lawyer living in Pretoria, experienced the indignities of discrimination and began to campaign against



Left: The advertisement for the Empire Theatre included in the commemorative book *The Aga Khan and Africa*, probably published between 1947 and 1950.

Right: The Empire Theatre building on the corner of Boom Street and 10th Street photographed in 2007. The facade is painted blue and the front section of the building is now occupied by shops.

racial and social injustice. He made his first public speech at a meeting in Pretoria called to discuss the poor living conditions that local Asians had to endure. Gandhi was later to write that the year he spent in Pretoria was most valuable in terms of his spiritual development and for the experience he gained in community affairs and legal practice.

The later forced removals and repressive laws made Marabastad, like Sophiatown outside Johannesburg, a base for the liberation struggle. From time to time tensions led to outbreaks of violence. During the 1920s, Peter Matseke of the Transvaal African Congress organized demonstrations in Marabastad against pass laws. Naboth Mokgatle, popularly known as Ntate Mokgatle, became a hero of the liberation struggle. He was introduced to ANC politics at protest meetings in Marabastad in the early 1930s and was arrested and imprisoned many times. He was eventually banned and was forced to leave the country in 1954. He wrote of his experiences in a book entitled *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*.

Religious freedom of expression was respected in contrast to restrictions on other activities. Hindu, Muslim and Christian places of worship were scattered through the township. Schools linked to religious institutions such as the Berlin Missionary Society played an important role in a township deprived of state support. The Hindu Miriammen Temple, completed in 1938, is now a proclaimed national monument and remains a prominent landmark. Unfortunately a number of religious buildings have been destroyed - as have schools.

Despite poverty and many difficulties experienced by Marabastad residents, it was a 'slum with spirit'. As Marabastad developed so did a colourful multicultural street life. The mixture was heady: shops of all kinds, shebeens, schools and homes, together with influences from Asian and African cultures and American music, clothes and cars. The vitality of township life in the 1920s and 1930s gave rise to a new indigenous African urban culture and identity. *Marabi* culture took hold - very likely deriving its name from *Marabastad*. The Columbia Dance Hall was a focal point for *marabi* style and music and had a reputation for wild dancing. In its early years the Columbia Hall was used to show silent movies and later became the home of the U-NO-MES Dance Band. The Marabastad dance hall bands were a mixture of musicians from the local black and Coloured communities. The Africanized and improvised mixture of American-style blues and jazz, original in its sound, spread through the Shebeens and dance halls across the townships of Pretoria and Johannesburg and along the Witwatersrand. The Columbia Hall (now used to house a number of shops) still stands on the corner of Boom Street and Jerusalem Street.

Three cinema theatres (or bioscopes), the Empire, the Royal, and the Orient were built in the Asiatic Bazaar section of Marabastad. The cinemas catered for local residents as well as for people living in Lady Selborne, Atteridgeville and other communities, well beyond Marabastad, who were barred from the whites-only cinemas in central Pretoria. The choice of films was as varied as the character of Marabastad itself - Hollywood 'block busters', American and Chinese action films, traditional Indian dramas and musicals. At Easter each year religious films were popular. The cinemas closed as Marabastad lost its residential population. The Royal Theatre has been demolished, but the Empire and Orient in Boom Street remain and are now used as shops.

In addition to Naboth Mokgatle other writers associated with Marabastad are well known. The internationally renowned writer Es'kia Mphahlele was born in 1919 in Marabastad. In the 1950s, he became the fiction editor of *Drum* magazine and published his autobiographical *Down Second Avenue* in 1959 drawing on his early life experiences in Marabastad. Can Themba was born in 1942 in Marabastad. He moved to Sophiatown, wrote short stories and became one of the 'Drum Boys'. Jayayaman (Jay) Naidoo, born in 1941, grew up in the Asiatic Bazaar section of Marabastad. He left South Africa in 1964 and returned in 1991. He wrote *Coolie Location* in 1990 about his experiences as a boy in Marabastad. Robert Pearce wrote and directed *Die Laaste Supper by Marabastad* which was performed on stage in 1989 as a monologue by the actor Anthony 'Speedo' Wilson. Darryl Accone lived for a time with his family in Marabastad before they were forced to move. In 2004 he published *All Under Heaven: The Story of a Chinese family in South Africa* in which he describes life in Marabastad in the 1960s. Darryl Accone and Johnny Masilela, another well-known author, who spent part of his childhood in Lady Selborne, have written of their childhood experiences of Marabastad for this publication.

Between 1905 and 1913, the artist Hendrik Pierneef made a series of sketches of the houses along Boom Street and at Schoolplaats, but not of Marabastad itself. Frans Oerder, who also lived in Pretoria, completed at least one painting of a street scene in Schoolplaats. The artist Thabang Noto Matseke was born in 1930 in Marabastad, where he lived until about 1950. He was the son of Peter Matseke, mentioned above. As a teacher, art collector and artist, Matseke made a valuable contribution to the development of an indigenous African consciousness through his own work and in his support of other artists. In 1976, Terence McCaw painted the view down 6th Street, including the Nawab Miriammen Temple, from a position very close to where the photograph on page 25 was taken. In 1984, the renowned photographer David Goldblatt captured, in a series of photographs, the experience of travelling on busses, that were part of apartheid's transport system, between the homeland of KwaNdebele and Pretoria (Marabastad terminus). One of his photographs is entitled *2.30am Wolwerkraal, Marabastad Bus, 3 Hours Still To Go, First Passengers of the Day*.

Soccer was a very popular sport and numerous clubs competed with each other with names such as Carlton Yanks, FM Bantus, Thunder and Swaraj. The Mamelodi Sundowns Club, so well known today, grew out of the Sundowns Club, established in Marabastad in 1945.

By the end of the 1970s, most of the inhabitants of Marabastad had been forced to move to other townships and the last buildings in the residential section of the Asiatic Bazaar and Cape Location between Bloed and Struben Streets were

demolished to make way for a proposed freeway that was never built. The era of Marabi jazz, Indian and American films at local bioscopes, American style fashions and the original Sundowns soccer team passed, although echoes were to remain. Decay and degeneration set in although many of the original shops along the main streets of the Asiatic Bazaar business area remained intact and formed the core of a still thriving market and shopping complex. The owners of shops now lived mainly in Laudium. During the 1980s the status of the Asiatic Bazaar was further eroded by confusing and changing legislation at municipal and national levels.

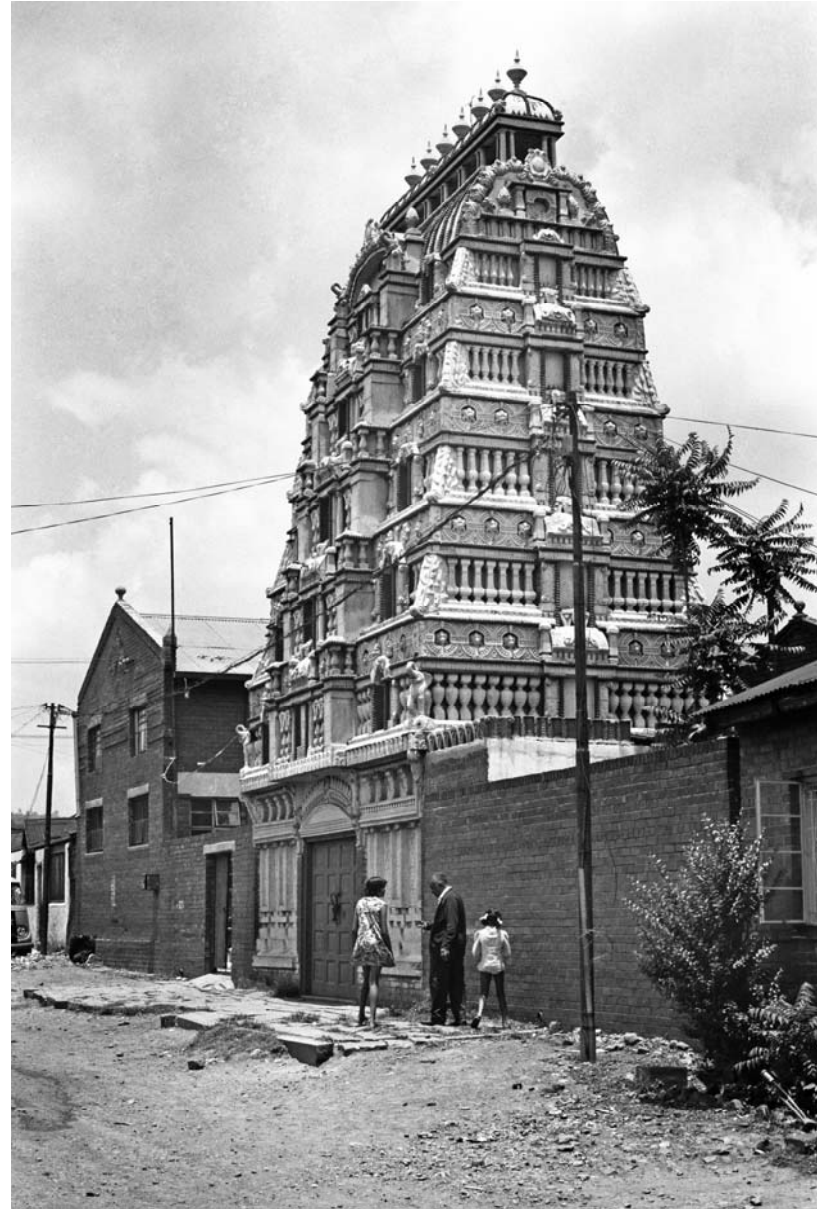
The era of apartheid and white domination ended in 1994 and with it, the resistance struggle of which Marabastad had been a part. Unfortunately, there were those who were opposed to political change. On 25 April 1994, a bomb was detonated in a restaurant on the corner of Bloed Street and 7th Street in Marabastad. Three people were killed.

Since 1994, the Tshwane Metropolitan Council has initiated development and rehabilitation projects for Marabastad to reverse years of urban neglect. Original displaced residents have made land claims and the original 1998 Integrated Urban Design Framework for Marabastad was updated as the Marabastad Project in 2000. However, little of substance or of benefit to past or present residents occurred in the years that followed or indeed, in terms of a heritage site, of benefit to the country as a whole. Squatter settlements that have sprung up in Marabastad in recent years have had to be moved. In July, 2007 at a ceremony attended by the Minister of Agriculture and Land affairs, the Tshwane Executive Mayor and former Marabastad residents, some of the former residents were given back title deeds allowing them to return to their land. It has also been announced by the Tshwane Metro Council that a large inner city renewal project is planned that will include the Bloed Street Retail Park to be built close to Marabastad.

Thousands of commuters pass through the old business section of the Asiatic Bazaar, moving between the business and suburban areas of Pretoria and the concentration of previous homeland residential areas to the north of the city. The former residential areas are now bus depots and taxi ranks or are wasteland partly occupied by the temporary structures of informal shops and hawkers or informal communities of migrants and refugees.

The history and legacy of Marabastad are of immense importance as part of the heritage of Tshwane and of South Africa - as are the remains of its material culture that have escaped demolition. This includes houses, cinemas, shops and places of worship. The history of the movement of millions of indigenous people to urban centres which has characterized life in South Africa for well over a century, is reflected in Marabastad and its history. The potential of a restored and rejuvenated heritage and tourist focal point as well as a business area, is clear. Marabastad should take its rightful place as a symbol of survival in the face of adversity.

*Marabastad 1970 - 1973  
In the vicinity of the temple*



*The Nawab Miriammen Temple in 6th Street between Grand and Bloed Streets, photographed in 1970. The Tamil League was formed in 1905 and the Hindu community built a wood and iron temple structure which was replaced by the present temple, built between 1928 and 1939. The temple was dedicated to Miriammen, goddess of infectious diseases, and is considered a fine example of Hindu architecture. The temple was proclaimed a national monument in 1982 and restored in 1991.*



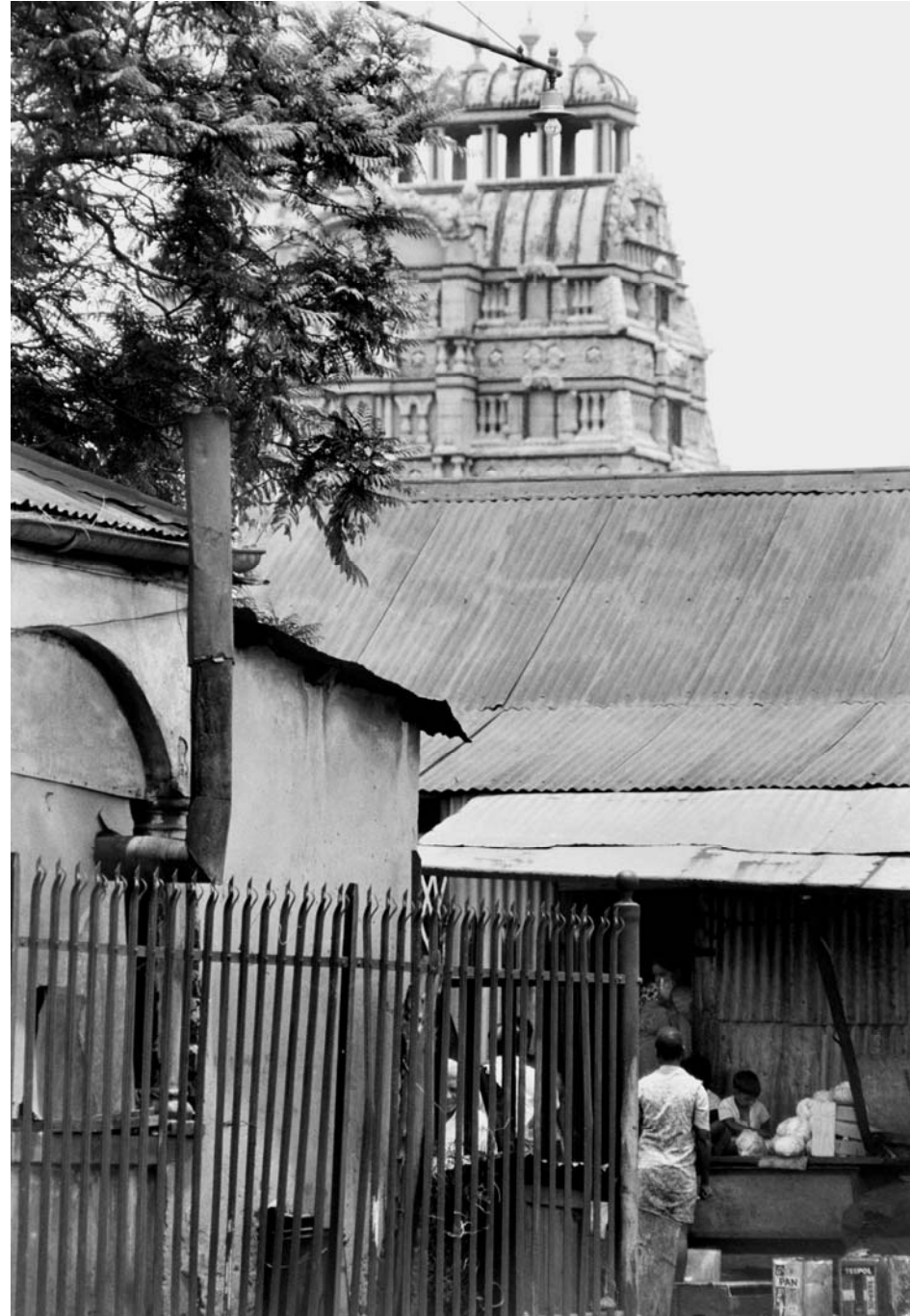


*The south side of Grand Street at the intersection of Grand Street and 7th Street. In the background is the Nawab Miriammen Temple and the high roof and ventilators of the Royal Cinema Theatre on the corner of Grand Street and 5th Street.*

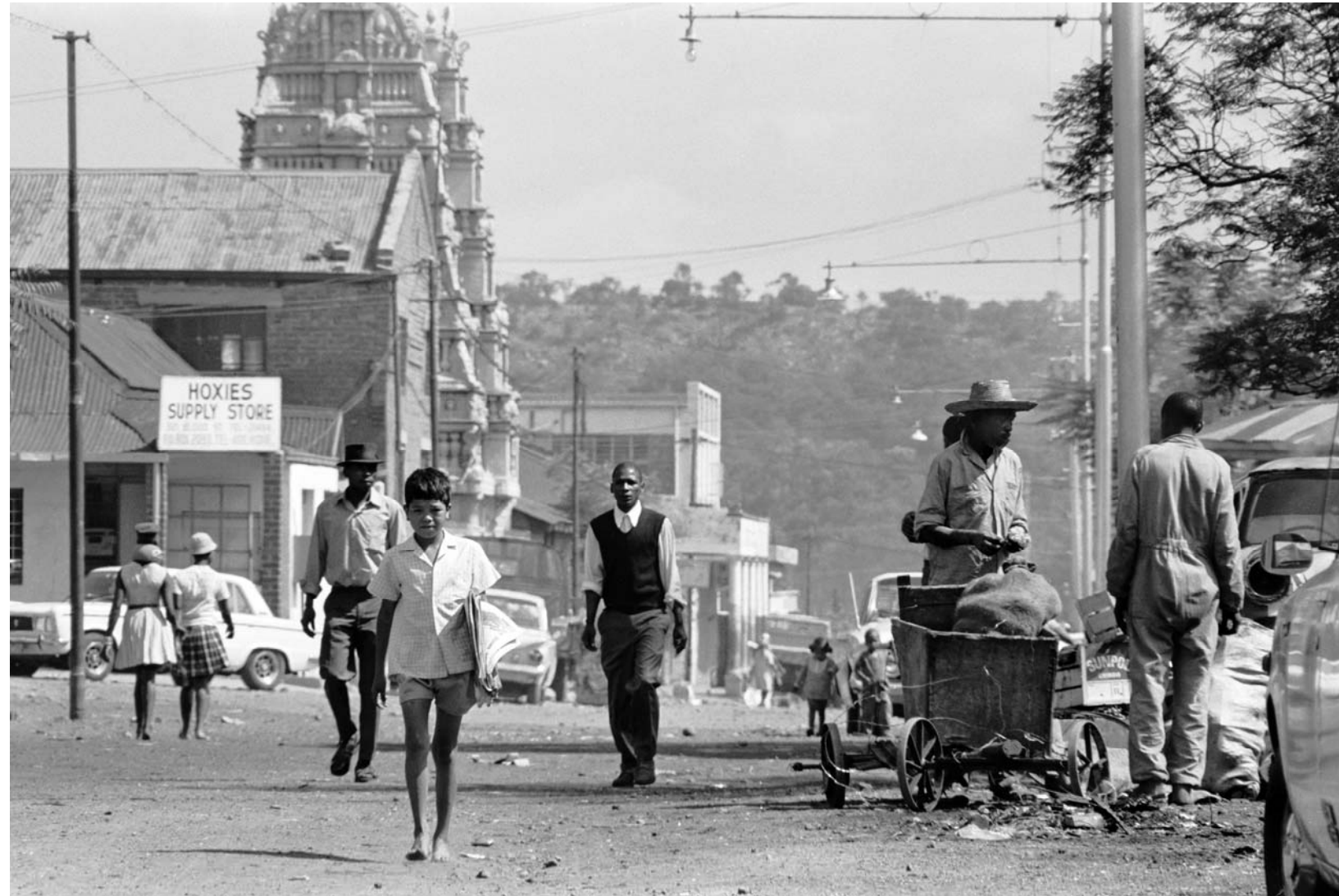




*The view south along 6th Street. The building on the right at the intersection of 6th Street and Grand Street, consisted of three shops and remains very much as it was in the 1970s. Beyond the Nawab Miriammen Temple, on the south side of the intersection of 6th Street and Bloed Street was the residential section of Marabastad known as the Cape Location which was demolished in the 1970s and is now used as a bus depot.*



*A closer view of the houses on the corner of Grand Street and 7th Avenue with the temple beyond. There was a small pavement shop under an extended roof selling fresh vegetables.*



*Sunday morning in Marabastad. The view north along 6th Street towards Boom Street with Daspoort Ridge in the distance. Hoxies Supply Store, on the corner of Bloed Street and 6th Street, was established in the 1937. Initially the shop stocked fresh fish, cashew nuts and other produce from Mozambique. Hoxies is still based in Pretoria and has expanded to become a major supplier of frozen food products. The girl on the left, in front of Hoxies Supply Store, is wearing a traditional Southern Ndebele neck ring. Charlie Moja, on the right, with his homemade push-cart, was one of the bottle and scrap collectors of Marabastad. The boy carrying the Sunday newspapers has been identified as Trevor Ah-Dong.*

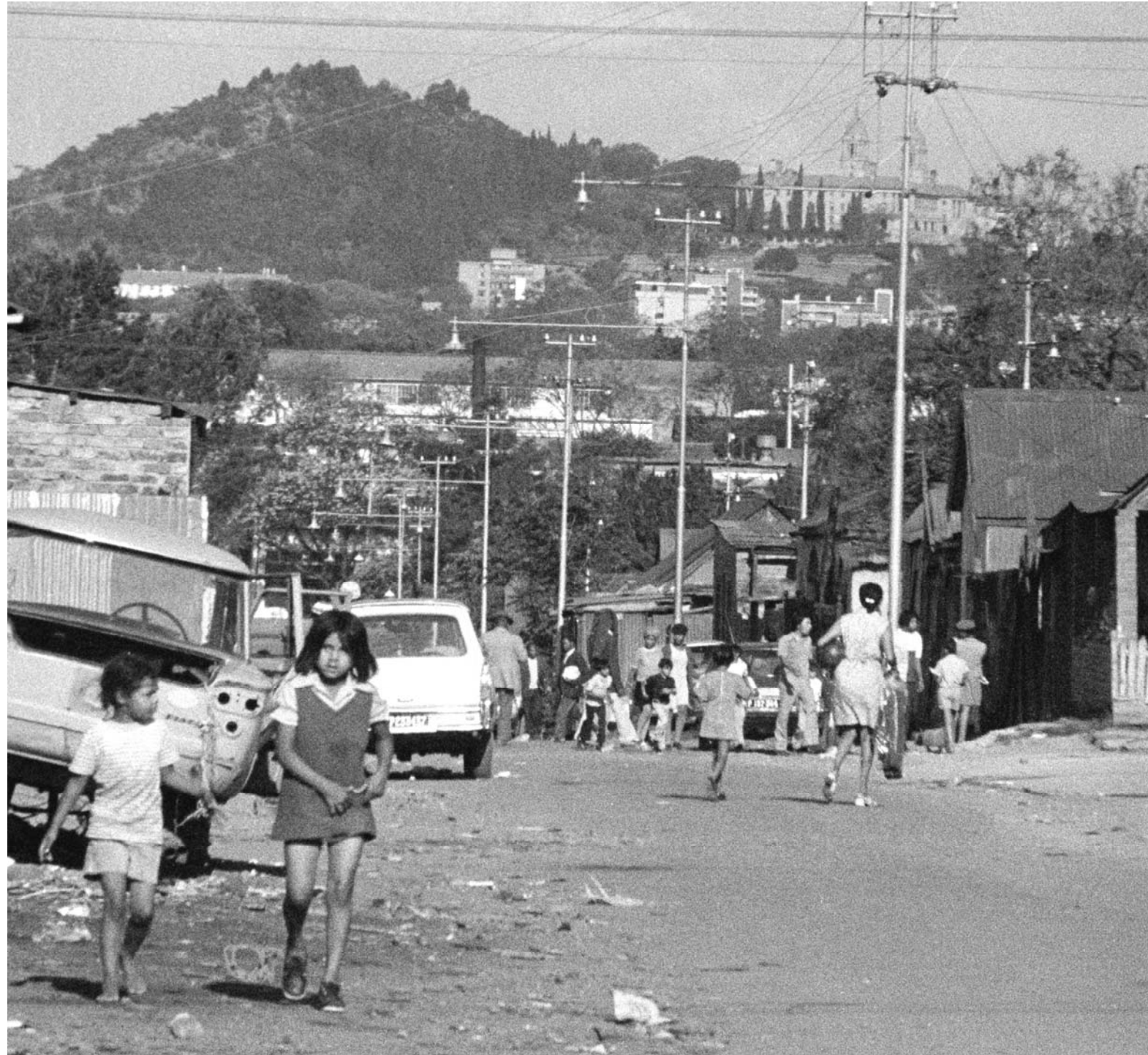


*The alley leading off 5th Street next to the tailor shop, between Grand Street and Bloed Street. The woman in the photograph may have been employed in the laundry business that occupied the back of the building on the right side of the alley. There was also a number of families living in rooms behind the tailor.*



*A tailor and laundry business on the east side of 5th Street wedged between the back section of the Miriammen temple and the large building, now occupied by Impala Printers, on the corner of Grand Street and 5th Street. The small building which housed the tailor shop still exists, clearly visible in the 2006 photograph of the same section of 5th Street (see page 62).*





*The view east along Grand Street with Meintjes Kop and the Union Buildings in the distance.*

# Of Dust and Dreams

Darryl Accone

Dust. Sometimes red, sometimes brown, ever present. Heaping thin invading lines along the skirting boards of the long parquet passage of the semi-detached house; blowing into net curtains, stealing their newly washed whiteness and fading it quickly into sickly grey. Nowhere is safe: bookcases, wardrobes, sideboards, cupboards, shoes just polished, hair just washed. Hanging forlornly on the line in the tiny yard outside the kitchen, washing tries to stay free of masala streaks and paprika hues insinuated by even the ghostliest of breezes.

Dust whispering all around you. Dust you smell in the dry winter and the oven-baked heat of summer. Specks of it you taste on food or drink carelessly left unsheltered, and feel scratchily on bedspreads, pillows and the mosquito nets of summer.

It is from the Motlana bus rank across the narrowest of ways – a misnomer called Third Street – that the dust drifts, wafts and drives, sent up in eddies and swirls by passengers embarking and disembarking, and by the relentless departure and arrival of the grey, leviathan-like buses. There is some sanctuary. In shocking abundance, a golden shower creeper covers the twelve-foot-high chicken-mesh fence that nominally makes an enclave of our house, 151 A Third Street in Asiatic Bazaar, that province within that republic of dust and heat, those few square miles of humanity, hope and equality that are Marabastad in 1960.

Days after being born in the Marifont maternity hospital in Pretoria on 28 February 1960, I came to Marabastad. I left nine-and-a-bit years later, not knowing then what I learned only long afterwards: that it was a forced removal. Chinese, like the black, Indian, and so-called Coloured residents of Marabastad, had to go. My parents protected me from the cutting knowledge of that indignity and helplessness, but they could not protect themselves, could not resist eviction from a house, a home and a community that they loved. Nearly 40 years on, I recall and appreciate that world with equal wonder and love.

As the 1960s drew to a close, the National Party and the Pretoria City Council moved determinedly to rid the city of its last remaining so-called black spot: Marabastad, the Sophiatown of the north, the District Six of Pretoria. I was too young – and too sheltered – fully to understand the inhumane social engineering of the time. But I had not been sheltered from the many moments of Marabastad life, and the unique gifts of the place: a non-racial, multi-racial and multi-cultural haven whose people lived in shared humanness. Even today, in the new South Africa, 13 years after Apartheid's (official) end, I have not experienced the likes of Marabastad. I fear that I may never live in a community where the gradations that seem to mark the world – nationality, race, ethnicity, mother tongue, culture, colour, creed – are not divisive but cohesive; not feared but appreciated; not misunderstood but explored.

As a teenager, living far from Asiatic Bazaar, I read a lot of Gerald Durrell. His botanical and zoological universe was self-contained, an idyllic refuge from the cares of the wider world. Slowly I realised that for his Corfu, I had my Asiatic Bazaar, my Marabastad. Indeed, for each of the Corfiot and Greek people and places that Durrell captured so well, I had my equivalents, and more. Our neighbours, in the adjoining semi, 151 Third Street, were the Noors, an Ismaili family, who were also our landlords. I spent many long afternoons and mornings playing with their children. Mrs Noor would often call across the trellised partition between the respective entrances to the semis with the succulent news that she had a curry

which she'd like us to have. It was a tradition begun on my parents' first night in 151A, when Mrs Noor had welcomed them with curried fish.

Ismaili hospitality and the company of the Noor children made me curious about other aspects of our neighbours' lives. So it was that I would often walk, with either my father or mother, south (a very short way south) from our house, until we came to the corner of Third and Boom streets. Boom is the great trunk road that runs from the National Zoological Gardens in the east to Von Wielligh Street, west of Marabastad. Turning left at the corner, a further stroll would bring us to the mosque of Ismaili Khoja adherents, whose chief imam is the Aga Khan. To this white building with its elegant minaret the Ismailis of Marabastad would bring food every day, to be distributed by the imam to the needy and the hungry.

Right across the street was a piece of South African football history in the making. Soccer crazy, Poppy Moosa and his sons founded Sundowns, today still among the country's top teams. But it was as much for his work as a commissioner of oaths, which brought him into contact and kept him in touch with the people of Marabastad, that Poppy is remembered with huge affection.

Our other immediate neighbours, in a free-standing but low-roofed house, were a Chinese family. Their father, Kwan Kho, ran a *fahfee* game but was altogether more intriguing for me because of his dimensions. Seated behind the wheel of his white saloon car, his head rose up enormous; not for nothing was his nickname *Makulu Kop*, Big Head. But it was his tummy, which brushed the steering wheel, which most drew my amused attention. On top of his stomach, Kwan Kho always placed a handkerchief to prevent the rim of the wheel incising a mark on his shirt. There was (and is still today) another large Chinese entity in the area. Makuloo Hopaan – derived from *makulu* (big) and *hoppaan*, the Chinese ginger beer brew, a sort of fake alcohol – a remarkable emporium, with everything imaginable, from gramophone needles to *knobkerries*. On school day mornings, I'd walk with my mother up to Makuloo Hopaan. There I climbed into a small blue Ford driven by Henry, kind and moustached (and now that I think back, straining, so-called Coloured), to go to school with other Chinese children, including Hilton, the son of King Biu, who ran the shop. If now I can't remember what King Biu looked like it is because as a child I saw not the man but his defining feature: a leather apron which, though tough, seemed to grow a little softer and smoother with each passing year.

Right: *Darryl Accone standing outside the gate at 151 A, 3rd Street, Marabastad, September 2007.*

*'It has been thirty eight and a half years since I stood at this exact spot, looking west over Third Street towards the bus rank. That was in February 1969, when I stood in front of the driveway gate to our semi-detached home before we left it for the last time, on our way to a different house and another life.*

*So much has changed about the old house, 151 A Third Street. The chicken-mesh gate has been replaced by a keep-in and keep-out corrugated iron one. What used to be a roof garden that ran the length and breadth of our semi and the neighbouring 151 has been reduced to make way for the set of rooms that you see behind the 'discount' sign and running along the edge of the building.*

*Virtually all that seems to remain of the old house is the front wall and window, though the latter is much larger than the standard-size double window of my parents' former bedroom, which looked out on to the pathway leading to the front door. That entrance is now part of the interior of the building, further along the cement slope that is visible in the photograph running from street level into the building.*

*I'd forgotten how narrow the street is. It's even narrower today – not because as an adult I'm taller (not by much) but as a result of the street vendors on the opposite side. Their stalls obscure the view of Poppy Moosa's house and that of the fishmonger Sharief and his family. Sharief would visit Chinese and Catholic households on Fridays to let them know what fresh fish he had in stock.*

*Things are dusty as ever, but the smells are more pungent, even rank. Maybe that's to do with the woman selling tripe and other offal at the edge of the bus rank. Maybe it's that I've grown out of the comfortable familiarity of the aromas – and stench – that were the olfactory signature of Marabastad. One smell I miss is that of bread rising at the African Baking Company, ABC, run by Ramtula, who married Sherine, the second-oldest daughter of our neighbours in 151, the Noors'.*





Right: Darryl and his mother Jewel Accone outside the house at 151 A, 3rd Street in 1961.

*(Reproduced by permission of Jewel Accone)*



Nearby stands the Miriammen temple. I went inside once, with my father, but what an occasion that was: a Hindu wedding, the floors strewn with flowers, the aromas of a feast scenting the air. That day is impressed on my memory as one of colours and textures, aromas and tastes sweet and savoury, cool and spicy hot.

On Saturday 1 September 2007, the first day of spring, I visit Marabastad with my wife and John Clarke. It is probably 40 years since I was inside the temple, but in the circularity and symmetry of fate, a wedding and wedding banquet have just concluded in the Miriammen. The bride and groom – she South Asian, he Caucasian – are walking in the street near the temple. A mixed-race marriage would not have been legal in the South Africa I grew up in, I recall with a start. But then I remember that as a child, Asiatic Bazaar and Marabastad formed a palette of people colours that I saw without being conscious of colour. As we walk back to Boom Street from the splendidly repainted and well-preserved Miriammen temple, the past whispers to me, engendering memories.

Down along Boom Street are the Empire and the Orient: cinemas my parents and I walked to on sweltering summer evenings and mild spring and autumn nights (in winter my father would relay my mother and me on the back of his motorcycle). Unlike the temple, their glories are gone; no longer places of dreams, they peddle ordinary consumer goods.

So too with 151 and 151A Third Street. Gone are the golden shower and the mesh fence, the built-in flower bed and the adjoining steps leading to the front door of 151A. The trellis, through which the Noor girls used to peek and wink, and the boys smile or pull faces, is dust, if that. The two semis have been converted into one clothing shop. Stepping inside, I try to find the contours of rooms that once were: the bedrooms, the lounge where I used to listen to long playing records, the dining room where the round table my mother still has used to sit, decked with fine food. Gone, all gone – not even, curiously, any vestiges of the bathroom and toilet.

But, at the corner of Third and Boom, there is a clothing shop whose owner recalls my parents, my father's motorbike, and our boxer dog, Russ. This man and I may even have played together; we are roughly age-mates. Looking out from the shop across the street, I see back across the years too, to an eight-year-old boy and his father. They walk past cycle shops selling gramophones, gramophone needles and records, and basic bicycling essentials. From within stream the sounds of *maskanda*, jazz, and penny whistle.

The boy and the man stop at a corner café further down the road for a Coke and a *samoosa* – “Don't tell Mom you had one” – oozing delicately minced meat and spices. Asiatic Bazaar and Marabastad will never die, because the idea of them lives on, in the boy's memory and of others, all once boys and girls in those days of dust and dreams in the golden age of Marabastad.

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\* Darryl Accone is the author of *All Under Heaven: The story of a Chinese family in South Africa*. 2004. Cape Town: David Philip



*Hussen Mohideen and Darryl Accone in conversation with Geerish Manga outside his fashion business Liberty Stores in Boom Street, near the corner with Third Street.*

*“I remember your father and his motorbike, and the dog,” says Geerish. It turns out that Geerish and I grew up in Marabastad at roughly the same time. His father, who established the clothing shop, apprenticed Geerish in the family business. Younger siblings went to Wits University and excelled in medicine and other professions.*

*Although Geerish professes himself “not a learned man” I think the opposite, and say so. He has a gentle, wise demeanour and his humanity seeps through as we talk of Marabastad’s heyday. Bustling Saturday mornings, bicycle shops and the music that flowed from them, the three bioscopes, the grand old tea room building, now just a façade that seems in danger of crumbling into Boom Street.*

*Pointing towards the counter inside, Geerish mentions that his daughter will soon be off to university. I see a young woman in relaxed conversation with an older woman, possibly her mother. This might be the last generation of the Manga family to run this stalwart business, which has clothed, shoed and hatted so many thousands of people in the past fifty years. I thank Geerish, say goodbye and walk away, and then turn back to steal a last glimpse at the beautiful window display of shirts, jackets, shoes and hats. It’s those snazzy hats that most recall the sharp, exuberant style of the Marabastad I know and love still.*

*Marabastad 1970 - 1973  
On the streets*



*Looking east along Bloed Street from the intersection of Bloed Street and 6th Street. Bloed Street was the southern boundary of the Asiatic Bazaar. By 1975 all the buildings in this street had been demolished.*



*The view west along Grand Street. The façade of the Royal Cinema Theatre is visible on the left at the intersection of Grand Street and 5th Street. The house opposite the Royal Theatre is still standing.*



*This photograph was taken in a motor vehicle workshop situated near the corner of Grand Street and Jerusalem Street. The motor mechanic, known as Shower, now lives in Atteridgeville. There are still vehicle workshops in this part of Marabastad.*





*A Southern Ndebele girl wearing a beaded neck ring. The photograph was taken in the vicinity of 7th Street (in a southerly direction 7th Street became Cowie Street) close to the intersection with Bloed Street. The domestic workers in the Asiatic Bazaar and the Cape Location homes were traditionally women and girls from the 'Mapogga' or Southern Ndebele community. The Southern Ndebele were the inhabitants of the area when Marabastad was first established and there still are shops in Marabastad that supply beads, copper bands and other materials to women who make their traditional accoutrements.*



*The house on the south-west corner of Grand Street and 7th Street. The woman in the photograph is Ayesha, wife of Amie Tabla. The architectural style is typical of many of the houses which were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the Asiatic Bazaar and Cape Location sections of Marabastad. No houses of this kind remained after the forced removals and demolitions of the 1970s.*





*One of two horse carts, owned by Shorty Bedhisi, parked on the corner of Grand Street and 7th Street. They were used for transporting fruit and vegetables and also for general cartage in Marabastad. Motor vehicle wheels and tires replaced the original wooden-spoke wheels. The horses were taken down to the Apies River to be washed and brushed and then left to graze in open veld north of Boom Street in the Schoolplaats area.*



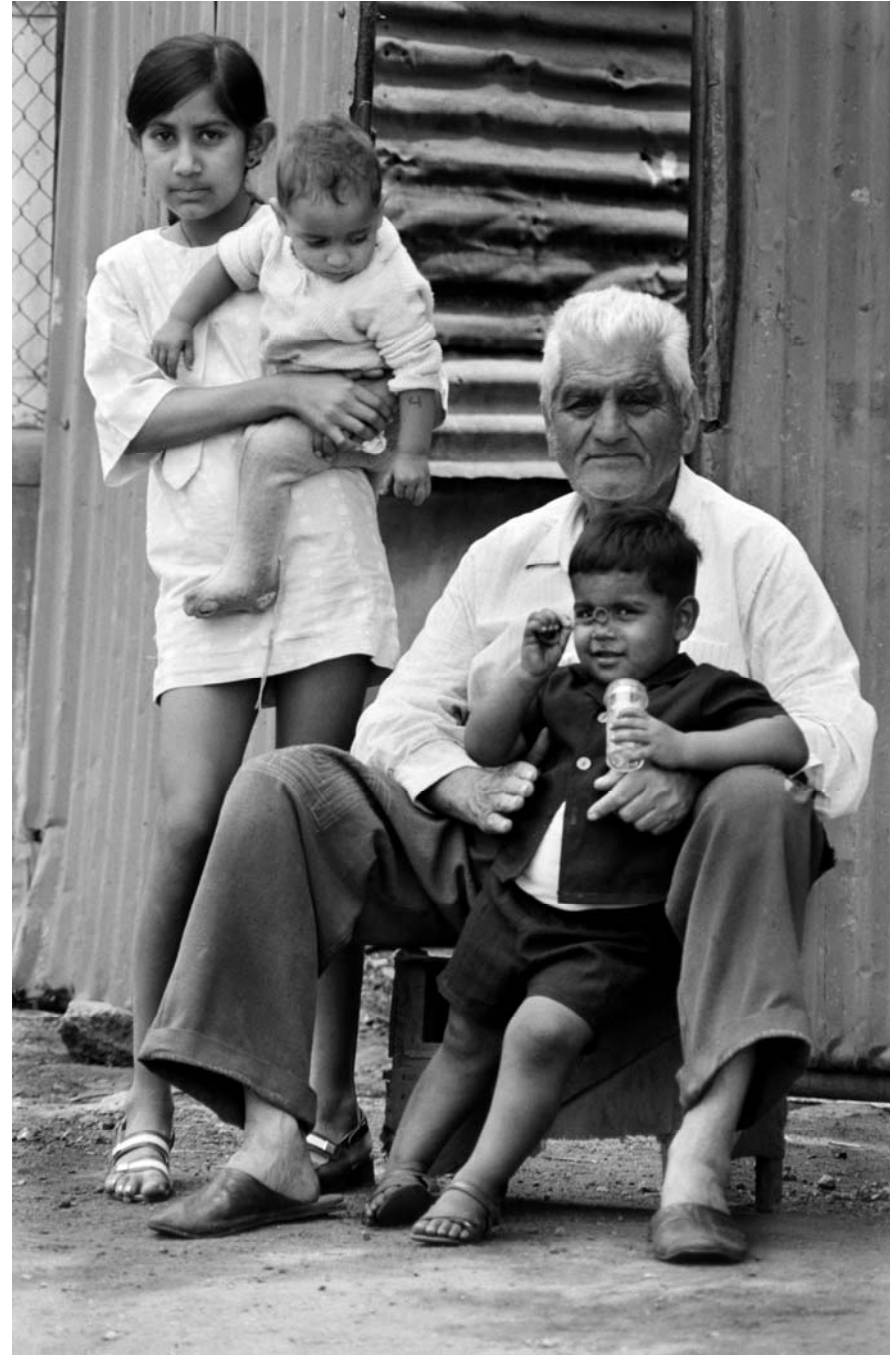
*A family group outside the front door of their home. It has not been possible to identify the street where this photograph was taken. The number 27B painted on the building on the right indicated that it had been marked for demolition in terms of the Group Areas Act.*



*Three generations: a woman having her hair braided.*



*Grandfather and grandson, Saturday afternoon in 8th Street.*



*Mohammed Adam Bhajee with his grandchild Farhad and Anila, who lived nearby, holding his other grandchild Shaheen, outside his home at 418, 8th Street, between Grand Street and Bloed Street.*





*Two children in the Cape Location, Marabastad.*



*Saturday afternoon street scene, looking east along Nawab Street in the Cape Location section of Marabastad. Lorna Roodt and her young companion walk towards the intersection of Nawab Street and 10th Street.*





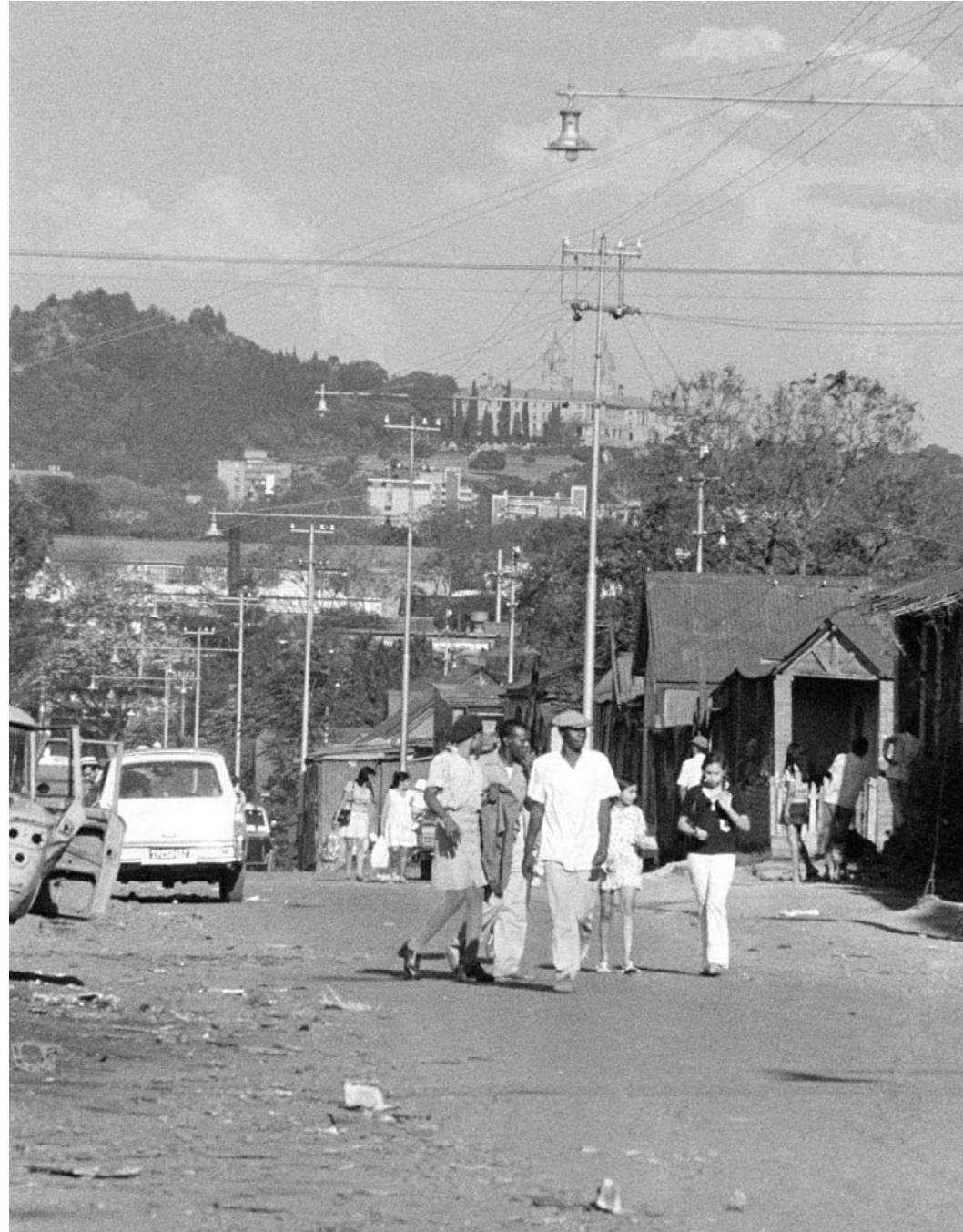
*Saturday afternoon, a group of boys in either 7th Street or 8th Street between Grand and Bloed Streets. The boy on the extreme left has not been identified, but the other four are, from left to right, Rodrick and Nolan Leyds, Tavener Hartzel and Darren Leyds (see photograph on page 68).*



*Girl at the window of a wood and iron house, Marabastad, 1970*



*This photograph was taken at the Marabastad bus terminal between 1st and 3rd Streets and intersected by Mogul Street. The busses of the Motla Bus Service can be seen in the background. The couple in the foreground appear to be engaged in a business transaction buying and selling beer. At the time, in terms of the law, only whites were allowed to buy alcohol at 'bottle stores'. Alternative ways of trading in bottled beer, in particular, were devised. Social venues known as Shebeens, where illegal drink was sold, thrived in all the townships. A woman can be seen carrying a heavy load on her head—a less common sight on the streets of present day Marabastad.*



*The view east down Grand Street with Meintjes Kop and the Union Buildings in the distance.*





*The Ratjiepane bus stop at the bus terminus on the north side of Boom Street. Thousands of commuters moved through Marabastad from the city to townships north of Pretoria. Men appear to have been more fashion conscious than they are today. A well dressed man's attire was considered as 'McCoy'. Popular brands of men's clothing were imported from the USA and were sold in shops such as Imperial Outfitters, P.Lala and Bob's Outfitters in the Asiatic Bazaar section of Marabastad.*



*Afternoon traffic, the view west along Boom Street into Marabastad, 1973.*



*The Marabastad bus terminus in 1973 - and more than thirty years later it remains a major bus terminal. Light trucks were used to transport fruit and vegetables into Marabastad at night from outlying suppliers and were then parked to become street stalls during the day. The building in the background housed the Impala Printers which later moved to Grand Street. The building, with the chimney, is still standing (see photograph on page 73).*



## Aristocrat from the Slum

Johnny Masilela

For the boy in Jack-and-Jill shoes the Marabastad of the late sixties was encountered in tow (from) behind man-about-town Bro Jeff Ntsele.

An elegant dresser of fine-tailored suits, two-tone shoes and Stetson hat tilted to the side, was Bro Jeff.

For a while the boy and his divorced mother moved in with Bro Jeff and his wife, Ann, who was the sister of the boy's mom. They lived in a three-roomed apartment adjacent to Ismail's Barber Shop in Lady Selborne, a largely flotsam and jetsam African location from which the Indian business community of Marabastad drew their clientele.

Bro Jeff's apartment living room was furnished with a timber table and chairs, a record player, and a piano under which lay a couple of golf clubs. On the wall near (against which stood) the piano was an ancient-looking canvas scroll on which were written the words:

*I do my thing*

*And you do yours.*

*I have not come to this world*

*Up to your expectations*

*Nor you up to mine.*

*You are you*

*And I am I.*

*If by chance we meet*

*It's beautiful.*

*If not*

*It can't be helped.*

Now wait a minute. These words, and the deep meaning thereof, did make the boy wonder. But the little one never asked who wrote them, where and why. Wasn't this, perhaps, how Bro Jeff conducted himself: the friendly twinkle in the eye but still jealously guarding his aristocratic space.

He was so different from his contemporaries, in that he held what was then a better job as a senior clerk at a cable manufacturer in downtown Pretoria. The boy remembers how Bro Jeff was one of the very few relatives who interrogated and took issue with certain aspects of African culture. He had a senior matric education at a time when on average the supposedly most learned went about with a junior certificate.

And so against the backdrop of blaring marabi music, screaming babies, barking dogs and the vroom-vroom of the police kwela-kwela pick-up vans, Bro Jeff's place became a rendezvous for pretenders to aristocracy who came to appreciate the genius of John Coltrane and George Frederic Handel's sacred oratorio. They would descend on Bro Jeff's apartment with tilted Stetsons; tapping two-tone shoes on the Sunbeam-polished floor, muttering "hoor net daar" (listen to this).

The Long Play albums, and magnificent collection of literature, had the covers rubber-stamped with Bro Jeff's hallmark:

*Jeff's* BRILLIANT CORNER  
YOUR FAVOURITE LIBRARY

Words, words, words. Now wait a minute. There is subtle resistance here. Was Bro Jeff daring the System to get lost. Was he somewhat saying: Me, I am not a victim of apartheid. I am my own man. I am not going to allow anyone to get me down. I'll resist my own way.

Late at night, when the aristocrats of Lady Selborne had left, Bro Jeff would continue to play records, often waking up the boy from slumber to listen to the "genius" of ... yes, yes, yes. Frank Sinatra's "My Way".

Oftentimes when the record player was off, the boy would still be woken up to savour a passage from the verse of William Butler Yeats or Frederick Forsythe.

But then, to be smart in Lady Selborne was to be seen in the streets of Marabastad. A pair of Flosheim shoes at Ocean Taylor. Jazz at Steeve's Record Centre. A motion picture at Orient Cinema. And a good read from Chiba's.

Come Saturday morning, Bro Jeff – the boy in tow – flags down a Pontiac or Chev cab to Marabastad. The driver would turn down Stevens street into Hercules, the working class Afrikaner suburb. Here the boy would ogle at pipe-smoking white men and knitting wives relaxing on the front stoep, looking oh so important.

Besides the whites and their kids on colourful bicycles, Hercules was also a place of armed white cops (with fire-arms), and their black underlings with batons pounding the sidewalk barefoot. In the cab to Marabastad there were hushed but resentful remarks about the dompas and shebeen raids. Bro Jeff would have his face buried in a book, seemingly oblivious of the chit-chat. Guarding his aristocratic space?

In Marabastad, Kashmiri Restaurant was the boy and Bro Jeff's first port of call for breakfast of curry-and-rice. Here the boy observed with a measure of pride as patrons envied the ease with which Bro Jeff engaged the Indian restaurateur about such important matters as the Rivonia Trial, in good English, nogal. Also, as everybody else ate with bare hands, Bro Jeff and the boy used fork and knife, napkins tucked to the collar.

After settling the bill, Bro Jeff would lead the way around the corner into Jerusalem Street, to Steeve's Record Centre. An astute but charismatic records and FM radio shop-owner was Mr. Omarjee Vally. He would often break his engagement with a customer, his eyes lighting up, to shake hands with Bro Jeff.

"This man Jeff collects good jazz," Mr. Vally would often tell those who cared to listen. "Yes, you over there, how can I help you ... Hell, Jeff you remember how I used to sell records placed on an upturned apple-box, right here in front of this shop ... And folks were saying I need to set up a proper record shop ... Ha! Ha! Ha!"

And the two of them, Bro Jeff and Mr. Vally, would chat about the latest jazz, blues and Negro Spirituals, and another of Bro Jeff's passions: theatrical musicals (captured on Long Play), in particular the work of township impresario, Gibson Kente.

Chiba's Book Shop was situated opposite Empire Cinema on the corner of Boom and 10th Avenue. Here Bro Jeff had largely hushed and intense discussions with Mr. Chiba about available and banned literature, in terms of the Publications Control Act, as amended. The boy had a suspicion the two men exchanged what was obviously prohibited material.

Bro Jeff's literary tastes, if you happened to ask the boy, were varied and wide-ranging.

There were titles on the history of jazz and Negro Spirituals, Also Yeats, John la Carre, Morris West, and John Steinbeck.

Ah, Jeff's Brilliant Corner – Your Favourite Library!

From Chiba's Book Shop Bro Jeff and the boy rounded off the Marabastad experience for a motion picture at the Orient Cinema, because of the classics screened there, such as 'The Sound of Music' starring Julie Andrews.

You'd never know with Marabastad. The other day down Boom Street Bro Jeff and the boy saw a scuffle in the vicinity of Chiba's book Shop. Screeching tires. Whistling. Barking dogs.

"Pas!" bellowed a young police officer with a red moustache. The boy looked up. Let there be no doubt there was a flash of resistance in Bro Jeff's eyes. He pulled the dompas from his hip pocket and handed the damn thing over to the cop, his face turning to look the other way. When the men of the law proceeded to chase men bolting in different directions, Bro Jeff took the boy by the wrist and flagged a cab back to Lady Selborne. Did Bro Jeff try to hide the horror of it all from the boy?

He dared not. For in Lady Selborne they say a white man in a safari suit had delivered an "amptelike" letter declaring the locals had to move en masse to give way to bulldozers in terms of the Group Areas Act, as amended. The news threw a blanket of what can only be described - for lack of better language - as graveside gloom. Even intellectuals like Bro Jeff lost the spring in their step, dragging their two-tone shoes in the gutter.

A group of men were seen hand-cuffed in pairs and being frog-marched down Stevens Street. The mothers whispered that the men were caught singing "ons dak nie ons phola hier", which means "we are not moving from here". But, to borrow from Alan Paton, the deep meaning of it all cannot be translated into any other language.

Even the boy was prohibited from witnessing the deep meaning of the ultimate destruction. For before the bulldozers moved in, the boy was taken away to live with Grandma in the rural Northern Transvaal.

The boy rejoined his Mother a year later in a place called Mabopane north of Lady Selborne. Bro Jeff and Aunt Ann had relocated in Mamelodi, east of Marabastad.



*Johnny Masilela and Omarjee Vally standing outside Steeve's Record Centre in Jerusalem Street in 2007. Johnny Masilela, today a well known journalist and author, is holding one of Jeff Ntsele's records that Jeff bought from Omarjee years ago. Omarjee Vally was born in Marabastad and once taught at the local Indian High School (since demolished) before opening Steeve's Record Centre in this building in 1971.*

In Mabopane nostalgic memories of Marabastad were to be rekindled when older boys boarded the Putco bus to go to the movies at Empire, Orient and Royal. It was clear that even when people had been forcibly removed from these places, they would return.

Indeed the boy himself was terribly tempted when boyhood friend Voli suggested the two save money in a disused Gold Cross Condensed Milk tin so that one day they could run away to Marabastad. Enough money for the fares was raised, but the boy changed his mind on the Putco bus doorstep. Voli left for Marabastad never to return.

And as Voli vanished like that, the boy heard stories that the white man in the safari suit arrived in Marabastad's Malay Camp. For here too the people were to give way to the bulldozers in terms of the Group Areas Act, as amended.

Years later in Mamelodi Bro Jeff fell very ill. The boy, who had grown into a vibrant young journalist, was one of those who visited the sick-bed.

The drummer with the internationally acclaimed Malombo jazz band, Julian Bahula, returned from self exile in Great Britain to, among other things, check on his ill jazz mentor, Bro Jeff . On seeing his beloved Bro Jeff in this state of ill health, the boy hears that Julian Bahula choked and sobbed.

Photojournalist and jazz collector extraordinaire in his own right, Walter Pitso, visited and quipped: "Jeff, do me a favour, don't die". Bro Jeff retorted: "No, I can't afford to perish, Walter. There's still a lot of writing to be done".

That very evening Bro Jeff held Aunt Ann by the hand and drifted away.

We thank him for shaping our own lives.

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\* Johnny Masilela is the author of *We Shall Not Weep*. 2002. Cape Town: Kwela Books.

**STEEVE'S RECORD CENTRE**  
**251 JERUSALEM STREET**  
**A. BAZAAR.**  
**PRETORIA. TEL. 21962.**

*The name and address Omarjee Vally stamp-printed on the covers of the long playing records he sold.*

*Marabastad revisited 2006 - 2007*

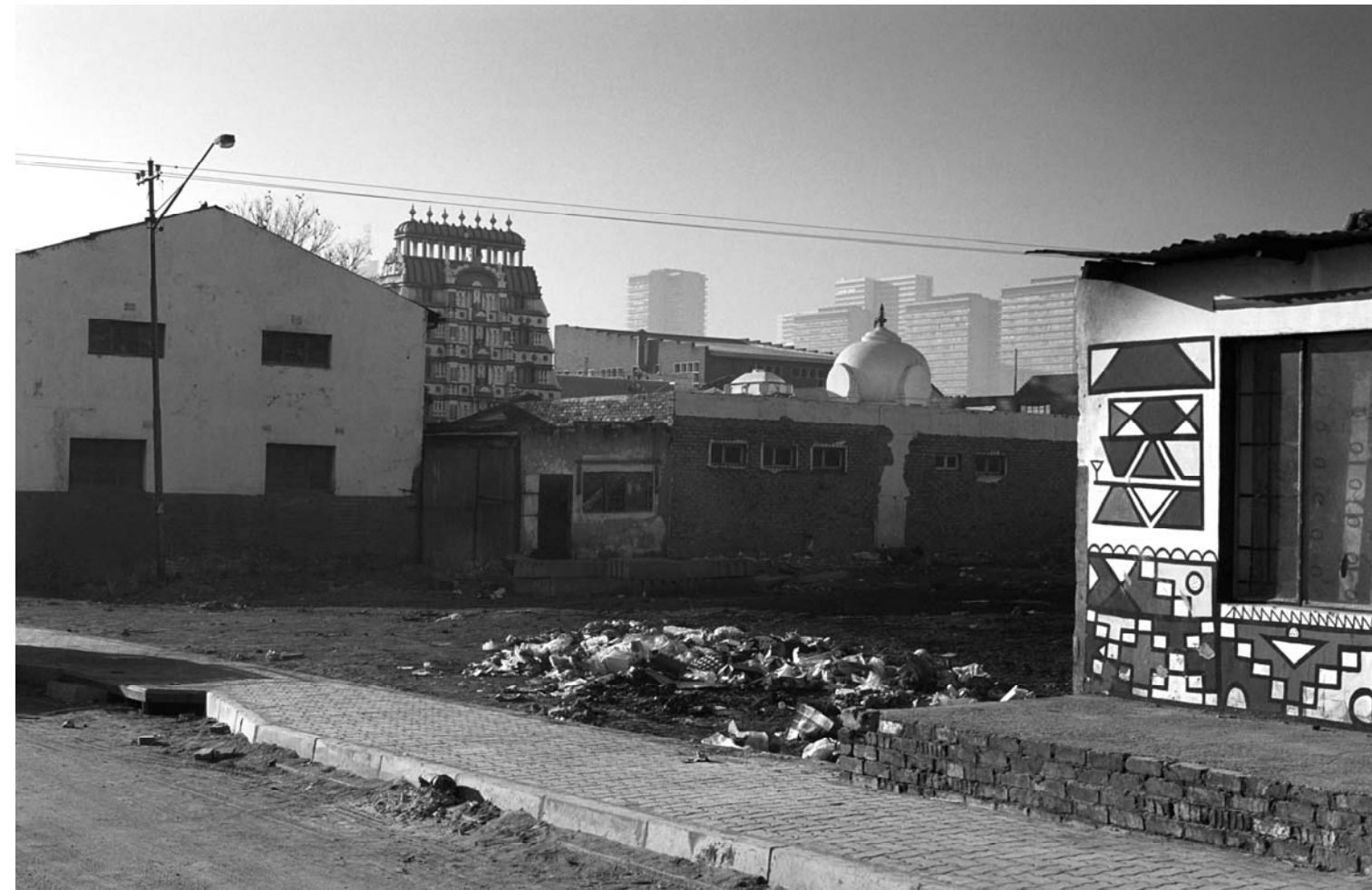


*The intersection of Boom Street and Jerusalem Street. On the left hand (northern) side of Boom Street, between Jerusalem Street and 5th Street, is Mohideen's Restaurant and the Ismaili Mosque. On the southern side of Boom Street, on the corner, is the old Columbia Dance Hall (under the Jerusalem Street sign).*



*The Nawab Miriammen Temple in 6th Street, photographed in 2007. The trees that surround the Gopuran are a welcome buffer between the temple and arid wasteland that was once the southern residential area of the Asiatic Bazaar section of Marabastad. The high steel palisade security fence in front of the temple is an indicator of how circumstances have changed.*





*The Royal Theatre stood on what is now the rubbish-strewn vacant lot on the corner of Grand Street and 5th Street. In the background is the Gopuran and Lotus Dome of the Nawab Miriammen Temple. On the right is a building housing a traditional healer. The mural designs which cover the facade of the building are typical of Southern Ndebele culture. The inhabitants of the area 120 years ago under Chief Maraba were Southern Ndebele people and their presence is still clearly evident. The small building to the left of the rear facade of the temple once housed a tailor (see photograph on page 29).*



*The view in a southerly direction over the vacant land between 5th Street and Jerusalem street where the Royal Theatre used to stand. The trees in the photograph are close to the corner of Bloed Street and Jerusalem Street and may once have been part of a domestic garden. The old military tent is erected daily near the taxi rank by street vendors selling clothing and food.*



*The eastern end of Bloed Street near Steenovenspruit looking south-west over the area, between Bloed Street and Struben Street, that was known as the Cape Location (see photograph on page 47). It is now little more than a wasteland occupied during the day by vendors of motor tires and exhaust systems.*



*The view east over the large taxi rank occupying wasteland south of Grand Street between 4th Street and 5th Street. In the background is the Nawab Mariammen temple and the buildings of central Pretoria to the right. The foundations of houses that were demolished in the 1970s are visible in the foreground between the taxis.*





*Martin Davids was born in Middelburg in the old Transvaal province on 25th November, 1930. In the late 19th century his grandfather, Johannes April Pietersen, lived in the Cape Location section of Marabastad and worked in stables belonging to the family of President Paul Kruger. In 1948 Martin moved to Lady Selborne, a freehold residential area west of Pretoria that was established in 1905. By 1970, Lady Selborne had been demolished to make way for a whites-only suburb named Suiderberg. Martin Davids was relocated to Eersterus on the eastern side of Pretoria where he still lives with his family. He trained as a motor mechanic and established his own business in Marabastad in 1954. During the 52 years he has worked in Marabastad he has relocated his business five times and now has a workshop at 468 Grand Street in what was once part of the residential area of the Asiatic Bazaar.*



*Hassen Mohideen standing in front of the house at 248 Jerusalem Street in which he was born on 3 April, 1956. In the foreground are the shadows of people standing in a taxi queue and behind Hassen is the dome of the Ismaili Mosque. On the right is Mohideen's Restaurant and Take Away on the corner of Jerusalem Street and Boom Street. Hassen attended the Indian Primary and High Schools in Marabastad. The business was started by Hassen's father and uncle in 1955. In 1972 the family was forced to leave their home in Marabastad and moved to Laudium. Mohideen's Restaurant continued operating and was taken over by Hassen in 1988.*



*In December, 2006, more than thirty years after the original photograph was taken (see photograph on page 48) Nolan Leyds, Rodrick Leyds and Tavener Hartzel returned to Marabastad and were photographed together again, this time in Jerusalem Street outside Mohideen's Restaurant and Take Away.*





*Essa Vally Omar, known as Steeve Omar, standing in front of Steeve's Radio Service in Jerusalem Street, next door to Steeve's Record Centre, owned and managed by his brother Omarjee Vally (see page 58). Steeve's Radio Service has been closed for a number of years. Steeve Omar was born in Marabastad where he has a home. In recent years he has represented the interests of former residents of the Asiatic Bazaar section of Marabastad who were dispossessed of their land by the apartheid government.*

Zwelakhe Mthwethwa was born in 1978 and grew up in the coal-mining town of Newcastle, in Osizweni, in the northern part of Kwazulu-Natal. He remembers, while writing his matric exam, looking out at the view of the Drakensberg mountains and saying to himself that he wished one day that he could go over those mountains and see what is on the other side, especially, because he was about to leave for his tertiary studies. When he was presented with the choice between Cape Town and Pretoria he chose the former without knowing that the latter would be his destination. Zwelakhe has made Marabastad his focus and his home since 1997 and has a vision for the future of the area. He is the chairperson and cofounder of the Sakhisizwe Business Association and has committed himself and a band of enthusiastic like-minded young men and women to the redevelopment of Marabastad as part of the capital city.

## *Problems and Possibilities*

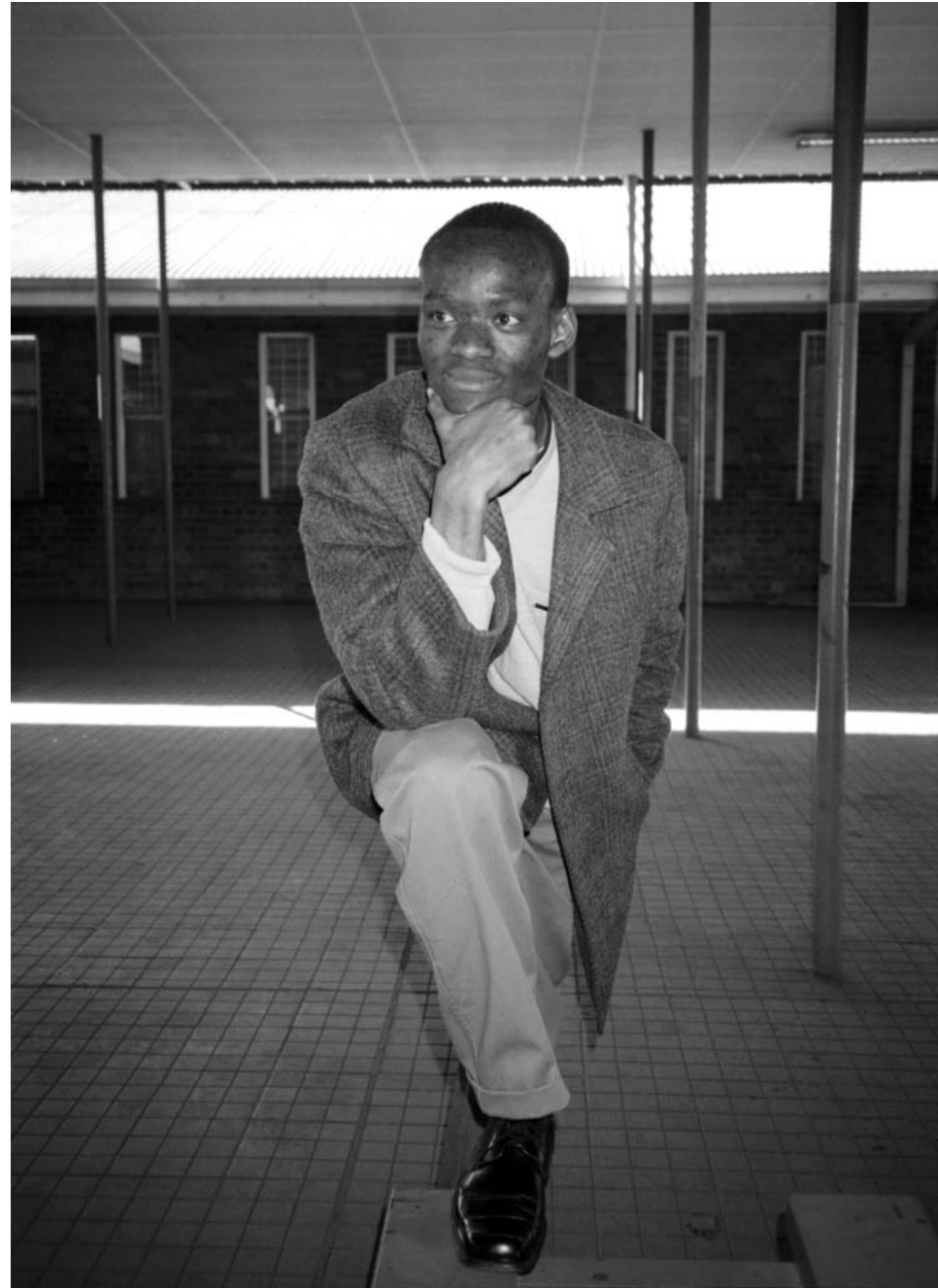
*Our country is in the process of redressing the imbalances of the past and Marabastad is, and must be part of this process. Currently, it reflects the aftermath of underdevelopment, a legacy of the old regime. From 1966 until 1994 all forms of development in Marabastad were banned. No wonder that degeneration found a perfect environment to manifest itself.*

*Since 1994, Marabastad has continued to be a home to many people and the municipality has attempted, with little success, to improve the areas with heritage potential like Marabastad. When I first visited Marabastad in 1997, and again in 1999 when I returned, I found the area in a tumble-down state, densely populated, with formal and informal businesses and informal settlements. When I decided to interact with the people, I found that there was an intangible heritage that kept people, young and old, together. Moreover, to some, Marabastad is the place of their birth, and it is used as a point of reference and remembrance of, and about, the life they used to have. Marabastad remains the custodian of the history of forced removals that were part of the apartheid government's plan for separate development in terms of race and tribal classification.*

*In 2002, we missed the opportunity to display Marabastad as a model for integrated and sustainable development during the World Summit on Sustainable Development. We need to find a way of making Marabastad desirable as a place and a space for people to interact through the medium of language and culture. Since Marabastad is well known as a place of congregation and full of rhythm we need to create an African precinct that will become a fitting memorial reflecting the times, the lives, and the presence of those who suffered in what used to be the headquarters of apartheid.*

*Such a precinct could be the focus point for residents, commuters and tourists alike with an infrastructure for business, transport, recreational and cultural activities. It would, however have the primary purpose of reparation, of giving back to Marabastad what had been unjustly taken away. I envisage that in a future modern African capital it is important that there be balance and a place where the numerous facets of African heritage can be made apparent. The past physical conditions cannot be restored but Marabastad could preserve valuable memories in many different forms. Once Marabastad is seen to succeed, I believe it could influence decisions regarding the future development of other South African cities. The reason why I persist is that we all have heritage and memories that we treasure. But for reasons that are clear as to what our country has faced much has been omitted in our living spaces. I would like Marabastad to become a model for homegrown development trends and to inspire others who are living conditions of the area.*

Zwelakhe Mthwethwa, 2007



*Zwelakhe Mthwethwa photographed in the old Department of Native Affairs building in von Wielligh Street on the western boundary of Marabastad. Queues of people used to stand for hours in this courtyard in front of the windows waiting for their passbooks to be stamped. The building is now used as offices and studios for a number of voluntary organizations under the auspices of the Sakhisizwe Business Association.*



*The last remaining section of Lorentz Street, which formed the western boundary of Marabastad. The original shops in this part of Marabastad, close to the main road north through Daspoort, were owned by some of the first migrants from India who settled to the west of the center of Pretoria from 1881 onwards. These shops were burnt out in 2003 and are likely to be demolished.*



*The south side of the bus terminus at the intersection of Mogul Street and 2nd Street in 2007. The building in the centre background once housed the Impala Printers that later moved to Grand Street (see photograph on page 54). The building is now occupied by a number of shops including the Bus Stop Take Away and Bus Stop Butchery.*

## Sources

The book *The Aga Khan and Africa*, presented to me by Murad Keshavjee in 1970, was an initial source of inspiration and information. It was compiled by Habib V. Keshavjee and printed by the Mercantile Printing Works, Durban. There is no publication date in the book but it was probably published between 1947 and 1950.

I referred to the following books and theses when writing *Marabastad: A Story of Adversity and Survival*:

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Bonner, P., Esterhuysen, A., Jenkins, T. (ed.) 2007. *A Search for Origins*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Carruthers, V. 2000. *The Magaliesberg*. Pretoria: Protea Book House.

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Dunston, L & T. 1975. *Young Pretoria 1889–1913*. Pretoria: Private publication.

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Kennedy, R.F. 1967. *The Catalogue of Pictures in the Africana Museum*. Johannesburg: Africana Museum.

Paulsen, M.M. 2005. *The Malay Community of Gauteng: syncretism, beliefs, customs and development*. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg. Unpublished MA.

I have collected a number of newspaper articles about Marabastad which were published in: *The Pretoria News*, *Beeld* and *The Sunday Times*. I found the article entitled 'City land claims delve into tangled settlement history', *Pretoria News* 17 September 1997, particularly informative. This article incorporated information taken from an article by R.C. de Jong entitled 'The need for total removal', published in *Research* by the National Cultural History Museum, Vol. 4, 1995.

The Internet has also proved to be most valuable and I was able to glean information from various websites. In particular, I found *Integrated Urban Design Framework for Marabastad* which can be viewed at [www.tshwane.gov.za/marabastad](http://www.tshwane.gov.za/marabastad), to be an important publication. It was compiled by Aziz Tayob Architects Inc. and Meyer Pienaar Tayob Architects & Urban Designers for the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality and was published in a revised and final form in 2002. *Part A* of the publication includes a chapter entitled *The History of Marabastad*. This is a well researched and comprehensive historical account with photographs and maps. In the Preface of the *Urban Design Framework* mention is made of the research on historical buildings of Marabastad by Prof. Schalk le Roux which was incorporated into the publication. The website at [www.sahistory.org.za](http://www.sahistory.org.za) includes sections on Schoolplaats, Marabastad and the Southern Ndebele.

My main source of information for the captions of photographs has been past and present inhabitants of Marabastad. The permanent exhibition on Marabastad at the National Cultural History Museum in Pretoria is interesting and informative and well worth a visit - especially before a first visit to Marabastad. A number of maps of old Pretoria in the National Archives also gave insights into the development of early Pretoria, Schoolplaats and Marabastad.





### A note on the making of this book

Layout and design by JFC Clarke using Adobe Photoshop Elements and Microsoft Office Publisher.  
Typeface: Bookman Old Style.

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The original black and white photographs were taken using a 35mm Asahi Pentax Spotmatic reflex camera  
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