

COMMUNITY HOUSE HERITAGE SITE DEVELOPMENT: COMMEMORATIVE ART INSTALLATIONS

INVITATION TO ARTISTS TO SUBMIT PROPOSALS

COMMUNITY HOUSE INVITES ARTISTS AND ART COLLECTIVES TO SUBMIT PROPOSALS FOR THE PROJECTS BELOW.

BACKGROUND

Community House, a site of activism from the mid-1980s, has been declared a provincial heritage site. While the building continues to house NGOs and trade unions, the tenants have raised funds to develop a labour and community history museum precinct, centered around the Trade Union Library [TUL] and its archive. Our objective is to ensure that Community House's reasserts its identity as a vibrant, forward-looking centre of debate and action – a worker and community resource for reflection, knowledge production and self-organisation.

The first phase of this development is underway and will be completed by June 2011.

This work includes a number of permanent art installations:

- **Six commemorative art installations** memorialising those people commemorated in Community House's foyers and halls, namely Elijah Loza, Jeanette Curtis, Ashley Kriel, Neil Aggett, Imam Haron and Wilfred Rhodes. [Storey Mazwembe installation excluded from this brief.] [See attached biographies]
- A large-scale **outdoor mural** that reflects the significance and symbolism of the site. [See attached photo]

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

- Proposals may be submitted by individuals or collectives and can be collaborative works.
- The installations should reflect the vision and ethos of Community House. [See attached]
- Short biographies of those commemorated are provided with this brief. Further biographical information, documentary sources and oral histories will be provided upon selection.
- Community House is a functional working environment. All areas identified for art installations are in daily use – halls, foyers etc. The proposals must take this into account and utilize the identified spaces without hindering access and visitor flow OR motivate why this should occur.
- The installations must be site specific, informed by the space in which they will be located. Site photographs are available on request. Site visits can be arranged between 20 and 27 August.
- Proposals in a range of mediums are encouraged incl. audio-visual, textile, mosaics, murals.
- Artists must work within the timeframes for delivery – installation in April/May 2011.
- Artists must be prepared to work in close collaboration with curators and architects.

SUBMISSION AND SELECTION PROCESS

- A 1/2 page proposal plus sketches [optional] to be submitted by 1 October 2010.
- Artists can submit more than one proposal.
- Proposals must include a cost breakdown for materials.
- Selection will take place in early October.
- The selection panel includes the Community House Board, curator, architect and 3 visual artists.
- Each artist will be notified in writing of the outcome of the selection process by 15 October.
- Please submit proposal electronically to gcheminai@gmail.com & lynns@acgarchitects.co.za or hand deliver to ACG Architects - The Circle (398 Albert Road), Salt River Circle, 021 448 6615.
- Please request an acknowledgement of receipt on delivery of proposal.

FEE

- Each artist or arts collective will be paid fee of R 20 000.
- The materials costs will be allocated from the production budget.
- The installation will be the property of the Community House Consortium

BRIEFING AND SITE VISIT is scheduled for 9.30 on Thursday 9 September. Please contact Gaby at gcheminai@gmail.com or on 083 752 2785 to confirm attendance or for further information.

CONCEPT DOCUMENT COMMUNITY HOUSE HERITAGE SITE

The vision, goals, objective and ethos below will guide and inform all work for the site development between June 2010 and May 2011. This work will include:

- Oral history programme.
- Archival research.
- Trade Union library [TUL] archive and library development.
- Commemorative art installations.
- Exhibits, signage and other displays.
- Public programming including youth education.

COMMUNITY HOUSE HERITAGE SITE: VISION

Community House serves as a site of memory and living heritage that acknowledges and propagates the role of the labour movement and the struggles of working class communities for a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa.

Community House celebrates and communicates the diverse and contested voices that comprise and contribute to the ongoing social and political histories of Community House.

In doing the above, Community House will continue to provide a sustainable site of activism for our ongoing struggles for a just and equitable society.

COMMUNITY HOUSE HERITAGE SITE: GOALS

- To promote the progressive political values and traditions of the past and present.
- To highlight the historical, social and political significance of labour in shaping our history and the history of the site.
- To ensure that labour and community participation remain significant and relevant to the youth now and to future generations.
- To state and promote the ideas that sustained the struggles of the past and to use this history as a resource to build organization in the present.
- To commemorate the struggles and sacrifices of organisations and individuals.
- To build a living working community carrying forward the work of defending the rights of marginalised peoples.
- To promote a space where all organisations involved in social transformation can come together.
- To consolidate Community House as a safe environment for labour and community organisations based there.

COMMUNITY HOUSE HERITAGE SITE: OBJECTIVE

To ensure a resourced site that reasserts Community House's identity as a vibrant centre of debate and action – a worker and community resource for reflection, knowledge production and self-organisation.

Specifically the heritage project should:

- Strengthen the day-to-day work of the tenants and the communities they serve.
- Provide a key resource to workers, the labour movement, activists working for social change.
- Create space for organisations to build and record histories
- Serve to educate children/youth, especially those in the local area, re past and present struggles

COMMUNITY HOUSE HERITAGE SITE: ETHOS

- Forward looking, educational, inspirational and stimulating ongoing struggles.
- Marrying the past, present and future.
- Non-sectarian and enabling diverse and contesting interpretations.
- Enriching the cultural, educational and intellectual life of workers and their families.
- Interpreting relationships between all elements of working class lives/activities.
- Prioritizing resources for the labour movement and local working class community.
- Promoting community participation
- Efficient and sustainable.

1. SITE OF LARGE-SCALE OUTDOOR MURAL



SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THOSE COMMEMORATED AT COMMUNITY HOUSE

as drafted in the Community House Conservation Management Plan of 2009.

ASHLEY JAMES KRIEL 1966-1987

"Ashley James Kriel is recognised as the quintessential representative of student and youth leadership of the 1980s from the Cape Flats in the Western Cape".¹ The Ashley Kriel Funeral Committee press release notes: "Ashley Kriel was born on 17 October 1966, he was to die on 9 July 1987 as the first cadre of Umkhonto we Sizwe from the Coloured community, to die on this soil of the Cape Flats."

Ashley Kriel grew up in Bonteheuwel, a working class township on the Cape Flats. Bonteheuwel was established in the 1960s to house those classified as coloured who were forcibly removed from their homes, in particular from District Six.

Ashley was the only son and youngest child of the Kriel family. His father was killed when he was six and from an early age Ashley did part-time work to supplement the meagre family income.

Ashley Kriel attended primary school in the area and Bonteheuwel High for most of his school career. Here he excelled in maths and science. Criminal gangs are a feature of life in Bonteheuwel and in the early 1980s Ashley and two friends established the GAP brotherhood, providing a positive alternative for youth in the area. *"As the name also suggested, it opened up a gap for young people to escape the pressures to become cool cats rather than criminal gangsters and thereby forging a different, positive identity"*².

Kriel was actively involved in a number of youth and student movements in the area. At the age of 14 he joined the Bonteheuwel Youth Movement, BYM, (an affiliate of the Cape Youth Congress, CAYCO) and was a founder member of the Bonteheuwel Inter-Schools Congress (BISCO), which was formed to coordinate the activities of the student representative councils of Arcadia High, Bonteheuwel High and Modderdam High Schools. Actively involved in civic issues as well as workers struggles in his community, Kriel assumed leadership responsibilities and was renowned throughout the Western Cape as a charismatic public speaker. Kriel was involved in the establishment of a paramilitary, revolutionary

¹ www.ijr.org.za

² www.ijr.org.za

group, the Bonteheuwel Military Wing (BMW). The group, which embarked on a programme of violent resistance, had the endorsement of the United Democratic Front and Umkhonto we Sizwe operatives provided them with arms and training.³

Kriel and his family were under the constant surveillance and harassment by the Security Police who would frequently enter and raid their house at night. At times he went into hiding. The last time his family saw him was on Christmas Eve in 1985 - a week after this they were informed by one of his comrades that he had left the country. Their nightly harassment and threats of the security police continued until his death in 1987.

Upon leaving the country in late December 1985, Kriel joined the ANC and underwent military training in Angola. He infiltrated the country in April 1987 and was living at a house in Hazendal, a small working class suburb near Athlone.

On 9 July 1987, WO Benzien of the Terrorism Detection Unit and Sergeant AD Abels went to the house in which Kriel was staying. They allege that Kriel opened the door holding a pistol concealed beneath a towel and a scuffle broke out during which Benzien shot Kriel in the back with his own weapon.

However witness testimony and forensic evidence contradicts the police version of events. The TRC Commission established that the incident had been planned in the Athlone police station. Blood was found in the bathroom and on the floor between the bathroom and kitchen door and the bullet entrance wound indicates direct contact with the skin as opposed to passing through his clothing.

Zubeida Jaffer in her memoir, *Our Generation*, notes:

"He was loved, not only by his family but also by many of us who saw in him the embodiment of all our hopes. He was young, from an impoverished background but held his own on public platforms with veteran leaders such as Alan Boesak and Oscar Mpetha. Watching Ashley made me conscious of his commanding presence offering assured leadership. The youth of the Cape had somebody they could admire, who had transcended all boundaries⁴."

JEANETTE EVA CURTIS: 1948 – 1984

On the 28 June 1984 Jeanette (Jenny) Curtis and her six year old daughter Katryn were killed by a parcel bomb in Lumbango, Angola.

At 18, while still at school, she became politically active, campaigning against the Sabotage Act. As a university student she played an active role in the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), holding key positions in the organisation. In 1971, as NUSAS vice president, Curtis was instrumental in the establishment of the Wages Commissions on various campuses throughout the country. They aimed to provide labour related services and education for workers while mobilising for 'workers power'.⁵

The early 1970s saw a revival of the workers' movement in South Africa. The Wages Commissions joined forces with older ANC-SACTU activists in the building of workers' organisations. Curtis was key to a number of these developments. These initiatives led to the Western Province Workers Advice Bureau (WPWAB) launched on 5 March 1973 and the Industrial Aid Society (IAS) in Johannesburg.

Employed as an archivist at the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), while continuing her trade union activities, Curtis' passport was confiscated 1974. In 1975 she was detained for three months under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. In 1976, following the Soweto uprising, the Soweto Student Representative Council (SSRC) called the first national stayaways since 1961. In November 1976 Curtis

³ TRC Report Volume Two Chapter Three

⁴ Zubeida Jaffer on Ashley Kriel: taken from her memoir, *Our Generation*, chapter 7. Published by Kwela Books.

⁵ The Wages Commission, extract from 'Conservative Revolutionaries,' *Anti-Apartheid Activism at the University of Cape Town 1963-1973* by Erbmann published on South African History Online.

was banned, together with many trade unionists across the country.

In January 1977 Curtis enrolled for the Development Studies postgraduate course at Wits. In April that year she was charged with contravening her banning order. The hearing was postponed, but in June, Curtis married Marius Schoon, a recently released political prisoner. The following day they skipped the border, into exile in Botswana. Here, registered as refugees, they worked to build the ANC and SACTU. Both Schoon and Curtis taught at a secondary school in Botswana until July 1981 when they started working for a British organisation, International Voluntary Service, as field officers⁶.

Their daughter, Katryn, was born in 1978 and their son Fritz in 1981. Constantly under threat from the apartheid state, the ANC redeployed them to Lusaka, Zambia in July 1983. After three months they were sent to teach in Lubango, Angola. It was during the time that Schoon was reporting to the ANC in Lusaka that Curtis and their daughter were killed by a letter bomb. Their son Fritz witnessed the killing. Craig Williamson, a spy of the apartheid government who had infiltrated NUSAS, was responsible for Curtis' assassination. He applied for amnesty to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Schoon was engaged in a legal battle around Williamson amnesty prior to his death in 1999.

Curtis is reported to have said: "*All political activists, whether they are inside or outside South Africa have a real fear of assassination. Danger is nothing new. Wherever you are, you are in danger.*"⁷

ELIJAH NKWENKWE LOZA: 1918 – 1977

*"Elijah Loza was not powerful and rich. He did not have a string of degrees and he had not written articles for well-known publications. His strength and power lay in this commitment and willingness to struggle for others - for those who are ignored and unwanted, for those who face the daily brutal reality of apartheid."*⁸

Born in Langa, Cape Town, in 1918, by the early 1960s Elijah Loza was a militant activist, a South African Congress of Trade Union (SACTU) trade unionist, secretary of the African Commercial and Distributive Workers Union in the Western Cape, and member of the Regional Command of the African National Congress' (ANC) military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe.

In 1963 he was detained for three successive 90-day periods. He was then sentenced to six years on the notorious Robben Island for furthering the aims of the ANC. Although he was released on appeal after five months he was served a five-year banning order and was placed under house arrest. When he and other ANC-SACTU leaders were un-banned in 1972, many of their comrades had gone into exile for MK training. Despite the repression of the time Loza and his comrades renewed their political activity. It was decided that unions in the Western Cape should be revived but not under SACTU.

By that time the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) students at the University of Cape Town had established a Wages Commission, with the intention of organizing workers. Jeanette Curtis, a student activist, introduced Loza to the Wages Commission. Together, the SACTU and student activists agreed that it would be strategic to establish an advice bureau rather than organize the workers into trade unions. Their objective was to establish works committees in factories - their longer-term objective was to establish a federations of these committees and ultimately, independent democratic trade unions.⁹ Thus the Western Province Workers Advice Bureau (WPWAB) was opened on 5 March 1973.

⁶ South African History Online

⁷ Sechaba No 4, August, 1984, www.disa.ukzn.ac.za

⁸ Elijah Loza lives on, Crisis News, September 1986, published by WPCC, Cowley House, p 8

⁹ TRC Report, Volume THREE Chapter FIVE, Regional Profile Western Cape 33 Interview with Zora Mehlomakulu conducted by Johann Maree, 29 October 1980 quoted in J. Maree, 'The General Workers Union, 1973-1986', in James, WG and Simons, M (eds), *The Angry Divide*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1989, p 129 - *The Road to Democracy*, Volume 2, Chapter 6, 1970-1980, SADET

The 1970s saw the revival of a militant, independent workers movement in South Africa. It paved the way for the mass struggles of the 1980s - with organized labour at its centre. Through his involvement in the WPWAB and as an organizer for the General Workers Union (WPGWU), Elijah Loza played an important role in this mobilization of the working class.

In the wake of the 1976 national stayaways, called by the Soweto Student Representative Council (SSRC) many trade unionists across the country were served with banning orders. Loza was served his third banning order.

On May 27, 1977 Elijah Loza was again detained under the 90-day legislation. Two weeks later he was found in a coma in his cell and was admitted into Tygerberg hospital with brain damage¹⁰. On 1 August 1977 he died, still detained, in hospital. Officials at the time stated that he had died of a stroke. Relatives insisted that he had been severely beaten during interrogation.

*" His death was officially found to be due to natural causes after a stroke. His family alleges he died as a result of torture. Numerous statements confirm that Mr. Loza was tortured during his 1963 detention. The Commission finds that he was again tortured during his 1977 detention and that this directly or indirectly led to his death."*¹¹

*"Five days after his death his name was included in a list of people restricted under the Internal Security Act. A clear measure of how much the government feared men like Elijah Loza who not only understood the workers struggle but also the students and young people of his day."*¹²

ABDULLAH HARON: 1924 - 1969*

Haron, a Muslim cleric and community leader, was born on February 8, 1923 in Newlands-Claremont, in the southern suburbs of Cape Town. He was very young when his mother died and was brought up by his aunt. During his high school years he spent two years of 'Islamic Studies' in Mecca. On his return to South Africa he continued his studies.

One of his teachers, in particular, would influence the course of his adult life - Shaykh Ismail Ganief nurtured his concern for the social welfare not only of his community but of the extended communities of Cape Town. These concerns guided his actions throughout his adult life.

His socio-political conscientisation was further advanced when he attended meetings of the Teacher's League of South Africa and the Non-European Unity Movement.

Haron worked first in his fathers shop and later at Wilson Rowntree, a British sweet company. His community work was conducted on a voluntary basis. In 1950 he married Galiema Sadan and in late 1955 was appointed Imam of the congregation at Al-Jamia Mosque in Claremont. This appointment, as Imam, provided Haron with an opportunity to implement his thinking on a range of issues:

*"During his 15 years as their Imam, Haron among other things established the Claremont Muslim Youth Association (1957-1964) and its mouthpiece the Islamic Mirror; conducted classes for adults and children; introduced Imam training sessions; encouraged the women to attend classes and to teach; created discussion forums where individuals of diverse backgrounds shared their thoughts; and helped the members of his community, both Muslim and non-Muslim, who needed financial and moral assistance."*¹³

He served his congregation with dedication and vigour until his death in 1969.

During the 1950s and 1960s permits were required for those deemed as 'non-Africans' to enter African townships.¹⁴

As a sales representative for Rowntree, the Imam's was able to obtain a permit and this mobility gave him

¹⁰ Elijah Loza lives on, Crisis News, September 1986, published by WPCC, Cowley House, p 8

¹¹ TRC Report, Volume THREE Chapter FIVE, Regional Profile Western Cape

¹² Elijah Loza lives on, Crisis News, September 1986, published by WPCC, Cowley House, p 8

¹³ www.islamonline.net

¹⁴ www.islamonline.net

the opportunity to enter communities and meet people whom, under the conditions of apartheid separate development in South Africa, he would generally have not. Consequently, he knew and was known by many people in the Cape Flats townships.

In 1960 when the recently launched Pan Africanist Congress of Azania [PAC] marched on Cape Town, the Imam, in his Friday sermon spoke of human brotherhood in Islam and the Muslims' role should play in supporting those who were worse off within the apartheid system.

In the early 1960s, slews of workers, in particular PAC activists, in these townships were detained and imprisoned for their political activities, leaving many families destitute. The Imam felt it his duty to assist these families in whatever way he could. The Imam developed strong ties with Barney Desai, a former member of the Coloured People's Congress, who had by then gone into exile and become a member of the PAC, and he supported the activities of the PAC.

In 1965 the Imam and his family were forced, under the Group Areas Act, to move from Claremont to Lansdowne. In 1968 he journeyed to Mecca, addressed a conference in Cairo and met with PAC members in exile there. He spent time with Desai in London. It was suggested that he consider exile as he was under security police surveillance.

On May 28 1969 Haron was detained under the 180-Day Terrorism Act. Throughout his detention Haron fasted as he had done every Monday and Thursday since his return from Mecca as a youth. On the evening of September 27, 1969, his wife was informed by the security police that he had fallen down a staircase in prison and died.

Despite evidence of prior multiple bruising, and that on 17 and 19 September, the Imam had been taken away from the police cells to an undisclosed place for interrogation, the inquest ruled that no-one was responsible for his death. The Haron family's legal representative argued that Imam Haron had been beaten in efforts to extract a statement from him, and that the trauma had resulted in his death.

As editor of the 'Muslim News' and as a religious leader, the Imam had a public platform from which he could articulate his thinking of the day. This he did with vigour:

*".. the Imam described the Group Areas Acts as "inhuman, barbaric and un-Islamic" and added that "these laws were a complete negation on the fundamental principles of Islam... (they are) designed to cripple us educationally, politically and economically... We cannot accept (this type of) enslavement." When the Sabotage Bill was tabled in parliament ... He stated that this Bill " ... seeks to close all loopholes in the Government's regimentation of the lives of the people. Our motherland has been a big prison house with just a few loopholes to breathe through. Now that it is cemented, a granite wall is to be built around our motherland to suffocate us, so that the world does not hear our cry. Our country is unique The monster of racialism is vicious. ..."*¹⁵

LUKE STOREY MAZWEMBE: 1944 TO 1976

Luke Mazwembe, known as Storey to his friends, was the first detainee to die in police detention in the 1970s. Originally from Engcobo in the Eastern Cape, on his death in detention in 1976 he was 33 years old. At the time he was an organizer for the Western Province Workers Advice Bureau (WPWAB).

The early 1970s saw a revival of the workers' movement in South Africa. In 1972 a number of ANC-SACTU leaders in Cape Town were un-banned. Mobilisation of workers was deemed critical. Given the repression of the time it was decided to join forces with student activists who, intent on mobilising a labour movement, had set up a Wages Commission at the University of Cape Town. Thus, through this collaboration, the Western Province Workers Advice Bureau (WPWAB) was established on 5 March

¹⁵ www.imamharon.com

1973.¹⁶ Their immediate objective was to establish, advise and train works committees.

In early 1975 workers at Lupini Brothers, a stonemasonry firm in the building industry, dissatisfied with their working conditions, established contact with the WPWAB. They decided to set up a works committee affiliated to the Workers Advice Bureau. Mazwembe, a contract worker, was key to this initiative. Chairperson of the works committee and an excellent organiser, he and his committee successfully challenged their management, who acceded to their demands, with the exception of their wage demand.

Their success was evidenced in management's counter-offensive. In May 1975 Lupini Brothers management informed Storey Mazwembe and a fellow committee member that their labour contracts had expired and would not be renewed. This, despite the fact that their contracts had been renewed annually for more than 10 years. Their reinstatement never took place in spite of their fellow workers' demands. Lupini management was able to use this offensive to break the back of the works committee¹⁷.

Given his strong organisational skills, the WPWAB employed Mazwembe as an organiser. However the Department of Bantu Administration blocked his registration as an employee. *"While steps were being taken to try to legalise Storey's presence in the Western Cape his life was plucked away from him."*¹⁸

In 1976, following the Soweto youth uprising, the Soweto Student Representative Council (SSRC) called three successful consecutive political strikes - national stayaways. The WPWAB supported the strikes and they met on 1 September 1976 to discuss strategy. *"On occasion strong criticisms were voiced against the state, amongst others by Storey Mazwembe, one of the organisers. At 4.00a.m three organisers, including Mazwembe, and two office-bearers were detained."*

He was dead within a few hours of his arrest, allegedly found in a police cell, *"hanging from the ceiling by a noose made of strips of blanket tied together with pieces of twine. A razor blade had been used to cut the blanket into strips and to cut the twine. The police were unable to explain how the razor blade and twine had got into the cell"*¹⁹.

His death was officially described as 'suicide by hanging'. At the inquest the state pathologist stated that given Mazwembe's physical state he could not exclude the possibility that he had been killed and then hanged to fake a suicide.

Nevertheless the magistrate ruled that Mazwembe was neither tortured nor assaulted by the police. *"Storey will always be remembered by his friends and acquaintances as a person who died in the prime of his life while standing shoulder to shoulder with his fellow workers in the struggle."*²⁰

NEIL AGGETT: 1953 – 1982

Born in Kenya in 1953, Neil Aggett was the youngest son of a Kenyan farming family. At the age of ten the family left Kenya and settled in Cape Town, South Africa. The young Neil attended Kingswood College, a boarding school in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape. With an excellent academic record he went on to study medicine at the University of Cape Town.

It is during this period that Aggett became aware of the impact the apartheid system had on the health of those it oppressed. As editor of a medical student magazine he promoted the concept of community

¹⁶ 40 Interview with Zora Mehlomakulu conducted by Johann Maree, 29 October 1980 quoted in J. Maree, 'The General Workers Union, 1973-1986', in James, WG and Simons, M (eds), *The Angry Divide*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1989, p 129 -

¹⁷ Extract from Johann Maree's PhD thesis, pp.541-543. Full reference: Maree, J. 1986. *An Analysis of the Independent Trade Unions in South Africa in the 1970s*. PhD thesis, University of Cape Town.

¹⁸ Obituary: Luke (Storey) Mazwembe, Johann Maree, transcribed from *South African Outlook* 1975

¹⁹ TRC Report, Volume THREE Chapter FIVE, Regional Profile Western Cape

²⁰ Obituary: Luke (Storey) Mazwembe, Johann Maree, transcribed from *South African Outlook* 1975

health. Upon graduating in 1976 he spent the first six months of his internship at Umtata Hospital (then Transkei). The second period of his internship was spent at Thembisa Hospital in Johannesburg. These experiences confirmed his belief that social problems lay at the heart of his patients' health problems. *"Neil saw illness as a manifestation of people's living and working condition. He realized that to treat the affliction he had to change those conditions. The best way for him to play a part in achieving this change was to work as a trade unionist."*²¹

On completion of his internship in 1977 he worked at night at Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto as a Casualty Officer. During this time he also did part-time work for the Industrial Aid Society (IAS). The IAS had arisen out of an alliance between Wages Commission students at Wits University and SACTU members and aimed to provide workers education and legal assistance. Aggett dealt with health complaints and assisted workers with Workman's Compensation issues.

Through the IAS he deepened his relationship with workers' organisations. The experience spurred his belief that change in South Africa was dependent on the building of a strong workers' movement. He became involved in the African Food and Canning Workers Union (AFCW) and was later asked to assist in an official capacity. In 1979 he was secretary of the Transvaal branch of AFCWU.

At this time the Fattis and Monis strike was underway. Aggett's commitment assisted in the building of AFCWU branches in, what was then, the Transvaal. According to the union he also played a leading role building solidarity and comradeship between the various unions in the region.²² In 1981 he was tasked with organising a campaign with workers in Langa, Cape Town. His work to establish a strong, democratic and united trade union movement made him a target of harassment by the security police.

According to those that knew him Aggett was a shy person, modest and unassuming, leading by example *"He commanded respect, by the example he set of quiet hard work and by the respect he himself showed to others."*²³

He was detained on the morning of the 26th of November 1981 under Section 22 of the General Laws Amendment Act and re-detained 14 days later under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. His partner Liz Floyd with whom he had worked in the IAS was detained on the same day and released five months later. Aggett was taken to Pretoria Central Prison and later transferred to John Vorster Square in Johannesburg. He was held in solitary confinement.

He died in detention on 5 February 1982, allegedly by hanging himself by with a scarf, although the inquest revealed his death was as a result of police torture.

WILFRED RHODES: 1936 -2002

*"The first words that come to my mind are principled and total commitment He was a very humble man, a factory worker who lost his job because of the struggle He lived his whole life in service of the community. As chairperson of CAHAC he had always put the lives of others before his own. I will always remember him as a dedicated comrade, very reliable and dependable."*²⁴

Unlike others commemorated at Community House, Wilfred Rhodes was not killed by the apartheid regime, nor did he die prior to South Africa's liberation. However, at the time of his death Wilfred Rhodes was the manager of the Community House in Salt River. It was considered appropriate to commemorate

²¹ Editorial, Critical Health Journal, Number 7, NUSAS, April 1982, page 2, www.disa.ukzn.ac.za

²² Neil Aggett Funeral Programme 13.2.1982, Tribute AFCW, A1888/I1.1-I2.3, Pogrund: Bannings and Detentions 1965-1983(WITS Historical papers)

²³ Neil Aggett Funeral Programme 13.2.1982, Tribute AFCW, A1888/I1.1-I2.3, Pogrund: Bannings and Detentions 1965-1983(WITS Historical papers)

²⁴ www.anc.org.za, CAPE UDF STRUGGLE LEGEND PASSES AWAY, 15 August 2002

this stalwart of the liberation struggle, a committed activist within the civic movements of the Western Cape.

As noted in the ANC's media release after his death,²⁵ Rhodes was legend on the Cape Flats, renowned for his involvement in civic struggles. Throughout his life Rhodes demonstrated a commitment to community. He was a founder chairperson of the Cape Housing Action Committee (CAHAC), an umbrella body for civic structure across the Cape Flats, established in 1980. Sports development was also Rhodes' passion. At the time of his death he was involved in a badminton development programme on the Cape Flats. He was also a lay preacher in the United Congregation Church.

Rhodes, married to Magdalene, had two daughters. He worked at a textile factory for about 28 years before he was retrenched for his political activities. In 1986 Rhodes was detained for a long period. On his release, he indicated that, because of his desire to work with community members, he preferred to work as an organiser. In the early 1980s, *"the focal personality of the social movements in Cape Town had been largely redefined as the organizer; a person who identifies commonly held grievances and facilitates a group's collective action. The role of the organizer had been defining a common platform in local communities and at local work places for a diverse cross-section of radicals who only began to split into their different camps once organization had reached a certain level The UDF would never have emerged without a core of radical organizers driving the process through their deep commitment to practical recruitment."*²⁶

Thus, with the formation of the UDF in 1984, Rhodes campaigned tirelessly to achieve a non-racial, democratic South Africa. At the annual meeting of CAHAC in 1984, Rhodes opened his address with this statement: *"We have reached another milestone in the life of CAHAC. The PC [Presidential Council Proposals], the Tricameral Parliament and the formation of the UDF forced us to see our struggle in a far broader context than the struggle for decent houses."*

With the unbanning of the ANC in 1990 he was nominated branch chairperson in Kensington. In the early 1990s he took on the task of managing Community House, where he lived and work until his death in 2002. Ebrahim Rasool recalls:

*"He was a legend on the Cape Flats, he was the man who pioneered organising in Coloured communities through his work in CAHAC, by campaigning for washing lines, for water and electricity and basic services in communities across the Cape Flats."*²⁷

²⁵ www.anc.org.za, CAPE UDF STRUGGLE LEGEND PASSES AWAY, 15 August 2002

²⁶ The Tricameral Boycott of 1980, Gorm Gunnarsen

²⁷ www.anc.org.za, CAPE UDF STRUGGLE LEGEND PASSES AWAY, 15 August 2002

COMMUNITY HOUSE HERITAGE VALUES AND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

as drafted in the Community House Conservation Management Plan of 2009.

“ In nominating Community House as a heritage site the following is taken into account:

- The intangible 'fabric' of the site, the memories, associations, values and meanings it holds for people and its past and present use.
- The tangible fabric of the site; its built environment and associated objects (artifacts) and physical records related to the site.

The heritage values of the site were identified as follows:

1. Historical value: Historically the site is associated with community service and activism. While its use as an institution for young white workers in the first half of the twentieth century speaks to the social constructs of our apartheid past and of changes in settlement patterns due to the growth of industrialization in the Western Cape. Its key historic value lies in its use as a centre of militant spirit and action in the 1980s in the Western Cape. The site, known since 1987 as 'Community House', played a critical role in a defining period in South Africa's history. As a site and springboard for mass struggles, it bore witness to the unifying role of labour in the struggle for liberation. It is associated with the planning and implementation of key campaigns and events. Workers, activists and leaders have passed through its gates. In sum, the history of Community House and the people commemorated here, illustrate the significant contribution of a dynamic cross-spectrum of labour and community organisations that collaborated and contributed, then and now, towards shaping South African democracy. Twenty-one years later, Community House still accommodates organisations and unions engaged in social justice issues.

2. Educational/scientific value: The memories and records related to the site are important to our understanding of the past. Critically, since its inception, the emphasis on creating a space for alternate, transformative knowledge has been key to the culture and practices of Community House. It housed and still houses organisations that have supported the growth, education and mobilization of the labour movement. Amongst these are the Trade Union Library, now the largest library of its kind in the country, the Labour Research Services whose slogan "*Knowledge is too important to be left in the hands of the bosses*" succinctly encapsulates its mission and the International Labour Research and Information Group [ILRIG] who continue to play a role in educating workers. Transformative education is a key value and one that the project hopes to extend through the proposed site museum.

3. Social value: In the 1980s, for many throughout the country, Community House symbolized organized opposition to inequality, discrimination and oppression. Today, as home to activists engaged in broader struggles for social transformation, Community House retains this symbolism. For many it represents a resilient, militant, fighting spirit. Slain labour and community activists are commemorated in its halls and foyers. Its symbolism is embedded in its cultural environment - the memories and associations it holds for people, its practices and ethos, both past and present. As such it retains its signification - of hope for the future.

2.3.2 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

It is noted that significance holds the potential to change over time - as new information arises and perspectives and interpretations change.

Community House is a unique, historic site of living heritage located in Salt River, Cape Town. A site of activism, it shaped and continues to shape the socio-political landscape of its extended communities and our country. In its twenty-one years of existence, Community Houses remains what its founders envisioned it to be, a vibrant centre for social change and community action.

In the mid-1980s, apartheid South Africa saw heightened repression, the revival of the workers' movement and an intense struggle for liberation. As a centre of militant spirit and action, Community House played an important role in a defining period in South Africa's history. As a site and springboard for mass struggles, it bore witness to the unifying role of labour in the struggle for liberation. During this time, for many throughout the country, Community House

symbolized organized opposition to inequality, discrimination and oppression. Today, as home to a community of activists engaged in broader struggles for social transformation, Community House retains this symbolism. It stands thus as an authentic symbol of resilience, of fighting spirit and of hope for the future.

Organisations that formed the backbone of the anti-apartheid and labour movement were housed at Community House. From this site some of the largest strikes and anti-apartheid campaigns were organized. The organizations, meetings and events that took place here during the late 1980s and 1990s mark its historic significance.

It is the only site in South Africa that provided and continues to provide a collective home for those involved in the broader labour movement. And since its inception, the Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU), its union affiliates and organisations servicing and supporting workers, have been the backbone of Community House.

The suppression of black worker rights in South Africa is embedded in its history of apartheid and capitalism. The emerging independent trade unions of the 1970s and 1980s thus regarded worker rights as indistinguishable from broader human rights for all. Within South Africa, in the 1980s, the labour movement embraced its role as a unifying force in the struggle for liberation. Thousands of workers and local communities were mobilized in the fight for justice and equality for all South Africans.

Regarded as a safe haven for the activities of the liberation movement, workers would converge on Community House. They not only fought for better wages and working conditions but for equality for all, and against all repressive laws. By 1988, every major mass-based organisation faced bannings and restrictions. In July 1989, the Mass Democratic Movement — declared a countrywide defiance campaign against these bans and restrictions. In September, Community House witnessed the planning and preparation for the historic "purple rain" march and the march of 100 000 people through the streets of Cape Town. The defiance campaign proved a turning point and by February 1990 political organisations were unbanned. Post 1994, the labour movement's role has been to actively voice and redress the racial, social and economic inequities facing South Africans. Community House has been the site of dissonant voices that have steered the course of the new democracy.

The meeting halls, in particular, are a vast repository of memory. Over time, they have witnessed the activities of thousands of workers, on strike, in meetings and launching campaigns. Here the campaign for a non-racial Labour Relations Act was launched; the strategies of striking workers from the Vineyard Hotel were developed, as well as those of the bus drivers, railway workers, hospital workers and teachers on strike in 1990's.

The halls have witness the release of political prisoners from Robben Island; they were the nerve centre of first election campaign of the ANC in 1994, they have hosted cultural workers and gumbas, training workshops and meetings and the painting of innumerable banners. These halls have hosted countless community activities; weddings, funeral wakes, 21st birthday parties and karate classes.

Whilst the labour movement has played a critical role in shaping South African history, within the terrain of national heritage, these rich and dense narratives continue to remain largely untold. However, in the 1980s, a number of labour and community activists were commemorated in the halls and foyers within Community House. Those commemorated demonstrated selfless dedication to the struggle for the liberation of the South African people. Some played a critical role in the revival of the trade union movement especially in the Western Cape. Others left the country for military training or were forced into exile. All were detained by apartheid's security police. All with the exception of one, were murdered by the apartheid state. Community House remembers Elijah Loza, Storey Luke Mazwembe, Jeanette Curtis, Ashley Kriel, Neil Aggett, Imam Haron and Wilfred Rhodes. (See appendix biographies). Their histories of struggle and sacrifice represent the histories of thousands of others who were detained, tortured and killed by the apartheid regime.

Thus, Community House commemorates and memorializes not only their role but also the role labour, social justice and community organisations played and continue to play in the forging of a just and equitable society. As such the symbolism of Community House speaks to the struggles and aspirations of workers and working class communities, not just in South Africa but also throughout the world.

The site itself has history of service and support. Its use as an institution for young white women workers in the first half of the twentieth century has the potential to yield complex interpretations of the history of the workers movement and the socio-economic constructions of apartheid in Salt River and provincially and nationally.

That Community House continues to function as a site of activism, reinforcing its legacy, is in itself an act of remembering - promoting ideas that sustained the struggles of the past and reinforcing the memories of those who sacrificed their lives for liberation.”