

Memories of forced removals: Former residents of the Durban Municipal Magazine Barracks and the Group Areas Act

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Abstract

Two powerful phenomena around which people coalesce in the present, and which consequently give rise to notions of “community”, are recollections of historical suffering, and an affiliation to low income working class districts. Exploring both themes are particularly useful when looking at the experiences and the memories of the nearly three and a half million South Africans who were displaced from long standing settlements, beginning in the late 1950s as a consequence of the Group Areas Act. It has been argued that in response to being victims of land dispossession, many have created a counter narrative to the Apartheid justification of Group Areas. Over years this has led to the construction of romanticised memories of life before forced removals which has a profound influence on the way they see themselves today. While the motives and the broader political and economic impact of the Group Areas Act has been widely studied, it also crucial to look at these subjective experiences of ordinary South Africans and how they were both, impacted upon, and responded to forced removals in different ways. Historians trying to access this kind of information, not contained in official state records, are dependent on oral testimony and consequently human memory. Oral testimony does however present various methodological challenges. This paper is concerned with the subjectivities and fluidity of human memory, and focuses specifically on former residents of the Magazine Barracks, with their own unique experiences and interpretations of forced removals. Rather than seeing the fluidity of memory as only a limitation, looking at what former residents chose to speak about and what they chose to omit is also revealing about how they responded to the state laws imposed upon them. Built in 1880 to house Indian municipal employees of the Durban Corporation and their families, the severely overcrowded Magazine Barracks was home to over seven thousand people by the 1960s when it was evacuated and residents sent to Chatsworth. Despite poverty and very poor living conditions, former residents today speak nostalgically about the community that they had created and have very fond memories of growing up in the Magazine Barracks. They established numerous voluntary associations to promote cultural and welfare endeavours as well as many sporting bodies. Albeit the improved living conditions and

economic opportunities that former residents of the Magazine Barracks were able to take advantage of after moving to Chatsworth, today some of them argue that if it were possible they would prefer to go back to way that they lived in the barracks.

Keywords: Durban Indian municipal workers; Memory; Displacement; Forced removal; Community; Chatsworth; Magazine Barracks; Group Areas Act.

Introduction

Although the vast majority of indentured Indians brought to Natal from 1960 to 1911 worked on the plantations, a substantial number also found employment in the city, working for the Durban Corporation or on the Durban railways. By 1880, the Magazine Barracks were built just north of the Central Business District (CBD), to accommodate Indian municipal workers employed by the Durban Corporation, and their families. From its inception living conditions within this Barracks, considered unsatisfactory by various health officials, were nonetheless ignored by the authorities. In addition, Indian municipal workers in Durban made up the cheapest form of municipal labour in the country, and their grievances and financial difficulties in times of crisis, unlike their white counterparts, were also ignored by the Durban Corporation.¹ In response, residents of the Magazine Barracks created what they describe today as a rich closely knit community where they worked collectively to deal with their daily challenges. From 1960 to 1965 however, all residents were removed from the Magazine Barracks, due to the implementation of the Group Areas Act, passed in 1950. The Group Areas Act enabled local and central state departments to demarcate exclusive areas for each racial group, and to then remove people from existing settlements to make this possible. It resulted in residents of the Magazine Barracks being split up, with most resettled into different areas within the low cost housing scheme of Chatsworth. Located 20 kilometres south west of Durban, Chatsworth was built from 1958 to 1975 to house Indians who were being removed from in and around the city during the implementation of the Group Areas Act. By 1965, the Magazine Barracks which had been home to Indian Municipal workers for eighty years was demolished, and replaced with a police headquarters and the magistrate's court.

1 G Vahed, "Race or class? Community and conflict amongst Indian municipal employees in Durban, 1914-1949", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27, March 2001, p. 112.

Forced removals during this period have affected millions of South Africans, but it must be emphasised that it had different implications for different settlements. Consequently, residents of the Magazine Barracks have their own unique experiences and memories of the Group Areas Act. In addition, even people within this “community” have contrasting ways of remembering the impact of their removal as there were generational, gender, and class differences within. This needs to be taken into consideration when trying to understand the impact of forced removals. Field and Swanson explain that focusing on the diverse memories of individuals, and how they “remember, forget and silence the past(s)”, is not simply a “‘view from below’, in the outdated popular history sense. Rather they represent a kaleidoscope of imaginings and remembering, constructed from different vantage points in time and space”.² Taking this into consideration, this paper based on qualitative oral interviews aims to analyse the memories and experiences of former residents of the Magazine Barracks, and to tell the story of forced removals through their subjective perspectives. Oral history is crucial to writing this kind of history and provides a rich alternative to supplement existing written sources and enhance our understanding. However, it also generates various challenges, since individuals have contrasting and conflicting ways of remembering the past. Additionally human memory is fluid and impacted upon by changing social and political factors in the present. Before looking at the stories of former residents of the Magazine Barracks, it is necessary to look at oral history as a methodology for examining the impact of forced removals in South Africa.

Oral History and memory

As already mentioned, oral history, crucial when trying to understand the impact that forced removals have had on ordinary South Africans, is also fraught with various difficulties and challenges. These challenges are well documented. Creswell and Ollerenshaw explain that narrative research comprising of qualitative interviews involves the researcher retelling the participant’s story by organising the raw data into themes that emerge from the story. In effect, the researcher becomes an active participant in the inquiry and brings her or his own perspectives, resulting in a gap between the narrative

² S Field & F Swanson, “Introduction”, S Field, R Meyer & F Swanson, *Imagining the city: Memories and cultures in Cape Town* (Cape Town, Human Sciences Research Council, 2007) p. 8.

told and the narrative reported.³ However, those who embrace oral history recognise that it is a subjective methodology and acknowledge that “memory stories are contingent and often fluid” but believe that this “in no way detracts from their veracity and utility. In the process, oral historians have become both intuitive and imaginative interpreters of their materials”.⁴

At the heart of oral history is memory since people are being asked about how they felt about something that happened and how they recalled it. There is a vast body of work by psychologists, sociologists, cultural anthropologists, and others on memory. Memory is affected by ageing, trauma, nostalgia, and other factors. The task of researchers is to facilitate respondents’ remembering events as best as they can and, as Abrams points out, “in our analysis, consider the various influences that shaped their recall. The important point here is that memory is not just a source; it is a narrator’s interpretation of their experience and as such it is complex, creative, and fluid”.⁵ With regard to South Africans affected by forced removals, memory is influenced by a variety of factors and what they choose to remember and to forget illustrates how they responded to laws imposed on them.

Trotter has focused on how coloured identity in the Eastern Cape, has been influenced by trauma of forced removals and at how coloureds construct a counter narrative in opposition to the “official transcript” that was used by Apartheid architects. Whereas the bill to introduce the Group Areas Act was justified on grounds of reducing interracial conflict and improving overcrowding, respondents remember their neighbourhoods as being places of “interracial harmony” and what the National Party called overcrowding is seen by former residents as “closeness”. This he refers to as a “counter memory”.⁶ As will be shown in this paper, this form of memory can also be observed in the narratives of many former residents of the Magazine Barracks. When residents were informed that they would have to leave the Magazine Barracks, municipal authorities promised better housing, running water and electricity, and a solution to the overcrowding that existed in the Magazine Barracks. However when residents reminisce in the present about the past and about life in the Magazine Barracks, most focus on the positives such as

3 JW Creswell & J Ollerenshaw, “Narrative research: A comparison of two restorying data analysis approaches”, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, January 2002, p. 332.

4 L Abrams, *Oral History theory* (London, Routledge, 2010), p. 6.

5 L Abrams, *Oral History theory...*, p. 105.

6 H Trotter, “Trauma and memory: The impact of Apartheid-era forced removals on Coloured identity in Cape Town”, M Adhikari, *Burdened by race: Coloured identities in Southern Africa* (Cape Town, UCT Press, 2009), pp. 49-78.

the close relations with neighbours, and the close proximity to the beach and CBD. The Group Areas Act and their powerlessness to prevent it, is seen by some as something that has destroyed this way of life. Many even say that in the Magazine Barracks, they lived in comfort.

Former residents of the Magazine Barracks also exhibit what Trotter refers to as “comparative memory”, where his respondents compared life before forced removals to life after forced removals. In this instance they ignored or downplayed all the disadvantages to their settlements before forced removals, which they then contrasted with their settlements after forced removals. When asked about poverty or violence in the Magazine Barracks, former residents explained that although it existed, it was under control unlike what happened in Chatsworth. However, the views of residents are also varied and in many instances contrast with each other. Whereas some see the Group Areas Act as a force that destroyed a rich and loving community, others see it as a force that brought up the material progress and provided a solution to overcrowding.

Bohlin has observed the conflicting memories of residents from the fishing community of Kalk Bay in the Eastern Cape. In Kalk Bay those who were forced to leave and those who remained, remember the area before the Group Areas Act very differently. Space and the uses of it was a powerful factor in shaping how different groups of people remember the impact of the Group Areas Act.⁷ In making sense of the disparate views and meanings that place has on people in the present, Bohlin follows the call made by Minkley and Rassool, that we should not essentialise the past through dichotomies of before and after forced removals. Rather we should seek to understand the way in which the past is negotiated with the present “through memory, tradition and history”.⁸ Being a closely confined space which housed only Indians and only families of municipal employees, the Magazine Barracks presents a unique example to explore forced removals. Unlike the larger mixed race settlements such as Sophiatown, District Six or Cato Manor, as well as many smaller settlements such as Kalk Bay, the Magazine Barracks housed only one racial group with residents being similar in terms of class.

7 A Bohlin, “Places of longing and belonging: Memories of the Group Area proclamation of a South African fishing village”, B Bender & M Winer, *Contested landscapes: Movement exile and place* (London, Berg, 2001).

8 G Minkley & C Rassool, “Orality, memory, and social history in South Africa”, S Nuttall and C Coetzee, *Negotiating the past: Making of memory in South Africa* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 94.

Today, many former residents of the Magazine Barracks see themselves as unique when compared to other people in Chatsworth, who came from other places; because they feel that a sense of a Magazine Barracks community still exists today whereas other residents of Chatsworth have lost theirs. Residents in the Magazine Barracks lived in a closely bounded place which they describe as one large family. Working class areas are usually associated with “community”. Alleyne suggests that this may be because of the association with pre-modern times and dense networks of collective social relations based around religion and kinship.⁹

Indian municipal labour and the Magazine Barracks

In order to assess the impact of forced removals and to provide a context from which to view the memories of former residents, it is important to understand the Magazine Barracks and living conditions within. Plans to build the barracks on a site on Somtseu Road, just north of the CBD began in 1867. By 1884 the Magazine Barracks, named after a nearby military complex storing magazine powder, was completed. It originally comprised of 93 houses with 26 allocated to married men and 67 for single men.¹⁰ Each house was merely a single room roughly five metres by five metres and acted as a kitchen, dining room, lounge and bedroom. The houses were cramped closely together and surrounded by a fence, with two gates that were locked each night. Two single men or one family were allocated to one room, regardless of the number of children in the family.¹¹ Danny Pillay, who was born in the Magazine Barracks in 1941, explained that some families increased with up to fifteen children and due to a lack of space some children would have to sleep cramped up on the kitchen floor.¹² As the number of residents increased, married couples were forced to share rooms and they would erect curtains across for privacy.¹³ These early wood and iron structures lacked electricity and water and residents relied on communal taps and toilets. Writing in a book about barracks in Durban, former resident of the Magazine Barracks,

9 B Alleyne, “An idea of community and its discontents”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 25(94), September 2002, p. 610.

10 R Home, “Barracks and hostels: A heritage conservation case for worker housing in Natal”, *Natalia*, 28, December 1998, p. 48.

11 P Murugan, *The Lotus blooms on an Eastern Vlei* (Chennai, Parkar Computers, 1998), p. 14.

12 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, D Pillay (Pensioner), 28 November 2012.

13 S Gounden, untitled section, G Pillay, *Come to the point: A History of the Indian community and some well-known personalities* (Durban, Point Indian Remembrance Committee, 2002) p. 13.

Gounden recalls that as many as “twelve people could be using these toilets in full view of one another”.¹⁴ In later years brick buildings with electricity and running water were added for graded employees.

Since the inception of the Magazine Barracks, the overcrowded conditions were condemned by various officials. For example, as early as 1884 the Protector of Indian Immigrants concluded that the Magazine Barracks were “unfit for humanity to live in”. The following year in 1885, the Major’s Minute found that it was necessary to build a new barracks. In 1923 the Chief Sanitary Inspector wrote to the Town Clerk complaining that the barracks were “badly arranged” with poor ventilation and in addition, had been left to deteriorate beyond repair and would consequently require reconstruction.¹⁵ Nothing however was ever done to improve or replace the existing structures and the same buildings which were disapproved of in the 1880s, continued to house municipal workers up until the 1960s. Although, as the number of municipal employees increased some additional rooms were added to the barracks to accommodate more families. By 1933, there were 5 000 people living in the Magazine Barracks, which by this stage consisted of wood and iron as well as double storey brick buildings with a total of 1 251 rooms.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the overcrowded conditions persisted. In 1943, Dr Gunn, the Medical Officer of Health investigated the Magazine Barracks and found that 40% of deaths resulted from dysentery, diarrhoea and enteritis which he attributed to fly plagues, overcrowding and communal latrines. The lack of facilities meant that many residents used the kitchen for bathing, washing clothes and cooking. In 1950 a Commission of Enquiry concluded that “these conditions constitute a grave risk and should not have been allowed to develop to the stage they have now reached”.¹⁷

In addition to the neglected living conditions, Indian municipal employees were amongst the lowest paid workers in Durban. A comparison made in 1924 showed that Indian labour was cheaper than African labour with the average cost of labour per annum, including wages, housing and food rations, being £39 for Indians and £46 for Africans.¹⁸ Although residents

14 S Gounden, Untitled section, p. 13.

15 RH Omar, “The relationship between the Durban Corporation and the Magazine Barracks” (B.A. Hon, UDW, 1989), pp. 8 -9.

16 In 1922, double story brick buildings contained 528 rooms, hollow concrete block buildings contained 156 rooms and the original wood and iron buildings contained 567 rooms. RH Omar, “The relationship between the Durban Corporation and the Magazine Barracks” (B.A. Hon, UDW, 1989), p. 17.

17 G Vahed, “Race or class?..”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27, March 2001, p. 107.

18 G Vahed, “Race or class?..”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27, March 2001, p. 116.

were provided with monthly food rations, these were of a poor quality and insufficient for a balanced diet. A survey conducted in 1946 found that residents spent an average of 62.3% of their income to supplement their food rations.¹⁹ At the same time that these pleas from Medical Officers of Health and community bodies to improve living conditions went unanswered, the Durban Corporation was particularly rigid with maintaining discipline at all times. There were stringent rules and regulations. During the 1930s, they tried to limit residents to “sober, clean and well behaved” employees of the Durban Corporation with no more than two children but this was impossible to implement.²⁰ To enforce law and order, some residents were employed as Sirdars. Sirdars were armed with batons and cuffs and given the status of “special constables”. To limit absenteeism at work, those reporting sick needed to be certified “unfit” by the state hospital. This was a timely procedure where the sick workers had to walk distances of up to 15 miles to get the necessary documentation.²¹ In addition sick workers not reporting to work were denied their share of food rations for each day that they were absent.²²

When looking at these conditions in the Magazine Barracks, it does become apparent that there were advantages to Group Areas Act for former residents. Chatsworth, where the bulk of residents from the Magazine Barracks settled, meant larger houses and increased services, such as electricity and water. However for the former residents there were also many advantages to living in the Magazine Barracks. It had been their home from which they were forced to leave without choice, and this has an important impact on the way in which they see forced removals. While documentary records, whether archival or newspaper articles, portray a harsh view of living conditions in the Magazine Barracks, oral testimonies of former residents reveal a different perspective. Every former resident that were interviewed by the author, claim that they were “very happy” when living in the Magazine Barracks. They highlight notions of sharing, family, and closeness. Siva Kugesan for example, stated that everyone knew and treated one another as “one large family” and that there was a strong culture of sharing and neighbours would often eat together or exchanges curries.²³ John Kisten who lived at the Barracks for over thirty

19 VS Naidoo, “Survey of income and expenditure of Indian employees of the Durban Corporation, living at the Magazine Barracks, Durban”, *The South African Journal of Economics*, 14(1), March 1946, p. 45.

20 B Freund, *Insiders and outsiders: The Indian working class of Durban 1910-1990* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1995), p. 74.

21 G Vahed, “Race or class?...”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27, March 2001, p. 116.

22 RH Omar, “The relationship between the Durban Corporation and the Magazine Barracks” (B.A. Hon, UDW, 1989), p. 30

23 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, S Kugesan (Pensioner), 31 January 2013.

years said that “we lived as one big loving community. There was so much of love, understanding and respect, we respected our elders. It was very, very nice”.²⁴ Vassie Muthen acknowledged that, although there was violence and gangs in the Magazine Barracks, the Barracks had “a little of everything” and that it was under control. During interviews, notions of poverty or violence were often legitimised. Residents explain that while earnings were low, so were living expenses and although there was violence it was under control.

Another theme that emerges from the interviews, but one that former residents argued was carried over to Chatsworth is the idea that living in the Magazine Barracks led to residents becoming very progressive. Naddie Perumal stated that when living in the Barracks people always found ways to improve their predicament, and that by their nature they were very “progressive people”.²⁵ To deal with challenges, residents established numerous voluntary community bodies, which included a care community for the Friends of the Sick Association (FOSA), a Child Welfare Committee, St John Ambulance and the Red Cross First Aid, amongst others. The Durban Indian Municipal Employees Society (DIMES) established by Indian employees of the Durban Corporation, relentlessly took up worker grievances, such as inadequate wages, establishment of a pension scheme and the provision of essential facilities.²⁶ One advantage of living in the Barracks that former residents emphasised was that everything that they needed was within walking distance. Shopping centres, the Durban Market, cinemas and the beach were all close by. Inside the barracks, residents had established their own clinic, library and the Drama Hall, which was the main meeting point and where vernacular and dance classes amongst other things took place. There was also a rich sporting life and each district within the barracks had their own football teams which partook in spirited matches.²⁷ It is these aspects that former residents chose to focus on when looking back at their time in the Magazine Barracks. Moving to Chatsworth however brought far reaching consequences.

²⁴ K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, J Kisten (Priest), 12 December 2012.

²⁵ K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, N Perumal (Pensioner), 5 February 2013.

²⁶ Gandhi-Luthuli Documentation Centre (DC), University of KwaZulu Natal, Westville Campus DIMES Annual Report and Audited Balance Sheet for 12 Months ended June 1964, 30th Annual General Meeting Wednesday, 12 August 1964.

²⁷ P Murugan, *The Lotus blooms...*, pp. 24-69.

Resettlement to Chatsworth

The resettlement of residents from the Magazine Barracks to Chatsworth began in 1961. The graded staff were allocated slightly better houses in Unit 2 (Bayview), whilst ungraded staff would later be put in Unit 3 A and B (Westcliff) and Unit 5 A and B (Croftdene). Muthen, who was one of the younger members of DIMES at the time, explained that the first residents to move to Chatsworth were a slightly wealthier section of residents of the Magazine Barracks. During mass meetings, they told the others not to move, during which time they had already made applications for houses in Unit 1 (Havinside) and Bayview. In the meanwhile, DIMES vehemently opposed the decision to destroy the barracks and resettle its residents to Chatsworth. Muthen explained, “we weren’t happy, we were fighting tooth and nail, we went to court, we went to Maritzburg and all that” until it became clear that there was no alternative.²⁸ On 12 March 1964, DIMES organised a special general meeting where members passed a resolution urging the Town Clerk to reconsider removing the 6000 residents occupying the barracks and resettling them to Chatsworth. DIMES representatives argued that municipal workers provided an essential service in and around Durban and being moved miles away from their place of work would result in unnecessary travel expenses.²⁹ This however was to no avail and once it was made clear that the barracks would inevitably be vacated, DIMES made suggestions to relocate workers to nearer residences such as Springfield Flats. But this too was rejected.³⁰

Muthen highlighted the role played by George Singh, a lawyer who was well known amongst Indians in Durban for his role as a community leader and political activist. Referred to affectionately by residents of the Magazine Barracks as the “Godfather”, he played a central role in representing their case to the authorities. According to Muthen, once all attempts to keep the Magazine Barracks failed, it was Singh who organised a meeting to inform residents. He brought photographs of the houses being built in Chatsworth and told those in attendance that they should visit Chatsworth and see the new houses. Muthen explained that residents then saw that the standard of living in Chatsworth would be higher, as they were moving from a one roomed house in the Barracks, to two and three roomed houses. Nonetheless,

28 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, V Muthen (Pensioner), 12 December 2012.

29 See Gandhi-Luthuli Documentation Centre (DC), University of KwaZulu Natal, Westville Campus, Durban Indian Municipal Employees Society (DIMES) collection, 1935-1990.

30 DC, UKZN, DIMES Annual Report and Audited Balance Sheet for 12 Months ended June 1964, 31st Annual General Meeting Wednesday, 12 August 1965.

he added, “when we first moved out of Magazine Barracks, we were all very disappointed and disheartened. We weren’t very happy, nobody was very happy to be removed from their birthplace”. Singh ensured that residents wouldn’t have to pay for the transport costs associated with moving and liaised with the municipality to provide trucks to transport their furniture. Residents were given an option of three or four houses in Chatsworth from which to choose. When they were ready to move, they contacted the caretaker in the Magazine Barracks who drew up a schedule and found a suitable day so that between three to four families could be transported at a time.³¹ While the majority of residents were able to choose their house in Chatsworth and plan their move, a few residents (about six families) refused to leave until the end and were forcibly removed and sent to any available house in Croftdene.³² According to Pillay “towards the end were, some very poor families, were reluctant to make the move into a very strange destiny” and “the municipal officials virtually dragged them onto municipal trucks, vehicles and whatever belongings that they could transfer were just thrown into the vehicle and they were physically pushed into the vehicle”.³³

Pillay is the president of the Magazine Barracks Remembrance Association, which was established in the 1990s to get monetary compensation for each family that was displaced from the Magazine Barracks. Through his voluntary work in the association, he had been in contact with most former residents and has much experience dealing with individual cases. Referring to residents of the barracks who settled in Chatsworth, Pillay explained that “they started with very little opportunities of choice, they were just placed into households”. In contrast to the Magazine Barracks where everything was available to residents, Chatsworth during the early years, when displaced Indians began settling there was a just bare housing scheme with no public amenities. There was no infrastructure, no schools, no shops and no community centres. Pillay added that “initially these relocated occupants, felt destitute because they didn’t know who to turn to because their master had just evicted them from their former residence, into this strange place and they were not prepared for it”. He did acknowledge that in the long term, these families particularly the younger generation improved financially after settling in Chatsworth, but highlighted the initial challenges.

31 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, V Muthen, 12 December 2012.

32 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, D Pillay, 28 November 2012 and K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, V Muthen, 12 December 2012.

33 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, D Pillay, 28 November 2012.

Attitudes about moving to Chatsworth and the immediate impact

The Magazine Barracks had been home to Indian Municipal Employees for eight decades, and virtually overnight residents found themselves in new unfamiliar surroundings. As already mentioned, Chatsworth was established as a low cost housing scheme constructed at a rapid rate to accommodate Indians from various parts of Durban. Plans to build the township only began in 1958, yet by 1975 when it was completed an estimated 120 000 people were relocated there. From 1963 when displaced Indians began settling there until it was completed, there was a constant backlog of displaced people waiting for housing. This housing scheme was actually built on rural land connecting townships Kharwastan, Silverglen and Umhlantuzana, and was originally occupied by famers, predominately by banana cultivators.³⁴ Converting this into a mass housing scheme in the shortest possible time created several challenges for its new residents.

For residents of the Magazine Barracks it meant that their living expenses became more than four times higher and they were faced with the additional expense of travelling to work by bus or train. In 1966, DIMES carried out its investigation to work out living expenses in Chatsworth and found that the average family of six spent R49 each month as a result of rent (R7.35), light (R3.17), transport (R7.20), groceries (R18.20), vegetables (R8.28) and bread and butter (R4.80). At this stage ungraded municipal Indian employees earned between R36.60 and R41.00 per month.³⁵ These figures do not account for meat, clothes or additional furniture that was needed in Chatsworth.³⁶ These figures can be contrasted to the Magazine Barracks where rent cost 87 cents, paraffin and wood rations were provided and they lived within walking distance from their place of employment. Former residents also explained that in the Magazine Barracks, sharing resources with neighbours reduced living expenses but in Chatsworth, many were unfamiliar with their new neighbours. In spite of the increased rent that residents in Chatsworth paid, houses were flimsily built and vulnerable to flooding caused by poor town planning.³⁷ There were no facilities, such as community centres or even shopping centres to buy groceries, and to do this meant the further expense of travelling to

34 See PP Devan, et al, *Glimpses of rural Chatsworth: The life and times of a people of the soil* (Durban, Palani Publications, 2012).

35 DC, UKZN, DIMES Annual Report and Audited Balance Sheet for 12 Months ended June 1966, 33rd Annual General Meeting Wednesday, 12 August 1966.

36 For example, houses in Chatsworth were not equipped for coal stoves so residents had to buy electric stoves

37 See A Desai & G Vahed (eds), *Chatsworth: The making of a South African township* (Scottsville, University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2013).

town by bus or train.

Displaced Indians who were allocated housing in Chatsworth, differed in their attitudes. Some house owners in places such as Cato Manor and Riverside were strongly opposed to being resettled into the mass housing scheme, while those who came from shack settlements in and around Durban were happy to move into larger houses with electricity and running water.³⁸ Former residents of the Magazine Barracks also had mixed reactions about their resettlement to Chatsworth. Kiru Naidoo, who was born in Chatsworth after his family were removed from the barracks, explained that while the majority of people would have preferred to have remained at the Magazine Barracks, his father was somewhat of a minority in that he felt and said that his family was blessed to move into Chatsworth. Chatsworth to his father meant that their family would have their own house and garden as well as better opportunities for the children, in contrast to the severely overcrowded conditions of the Magazine Barracks where “we lived on top of each other”.³⁹

Deena Muthen, brother of V Muthen who was previously mentioned, explained that if he had to choose today, he would prefer to return to the Magazine Barracks. His reasons, he argued, were that while Chatsworth brought about the improvements in the way of the “modern lifestyle”, it had also led to cultural degeneration. He added that in the Magazine Barracks there was a strong sense of family and community and that this had been lost with the move to Chatsworth. When residents were informed of the decision to move, he explained “they were not happy about it whatsoever, they were angry, they did not want to move. Because look, we lived there for a long, long time, all the children grew up there”. Echoing the sentiments of his brother, he added that in 1964 many residents visited Bayview and found that the houses were big and “they took on to the idea of moving”. Most of the residents of the Magazine Barracks lived in wood and iron structures with no electricity or running water and depended on paraffin and communal taps. The houses in Chatsworth however, as D Muthen explained with electricity and hot water appealed to many, especially those from the poorest section of Magazine Barracks who lived in the tin shanties.⁴⁰

38 K Subramony, “A history of Chatsworth: Impact of the Group Areas Act on the Indian community of Durban, 1958-1975” (MA, UNISA, 1993), p. 78.

39 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, K Naidoo, 26 November 2012.

40 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, D Muthen (Priest), 1 December 2012.

The experiences of the Muthen family also highlight a significant theme that emerged from the interviews, about how the older generation of Magazine Barracks were unable to adjust to Chatsworth. When living in the Magazine Barracks, Muthusamy Muthen, father of V Muthen and D Muthen, was a Sirdar for the Durban Market and important community leader known as “Headmaster” for his role as principal of the central vernacular school, which operated from the Drama Hall and was run by volunteers. One year after settling in Chatsworth however, Muthusamy had a stroke and had to retire from the municipality. After arriving in Chatsworth he would leave home at four o’clock each morning to walk to the Westcliff bus stop where he would board a bus to town. D Muthen explained that “the stress built up in him, as a result, he had a stroke”. At the time, V Muthen was also employed by the municipality and the family were given two houses in Chatsworth both next to each other, one for M Muthen and one for V Muthen. After M Muthen’s stroke, V Muthen became the sole breadwinner of the family which comprised of eight and he also supported his four foster brothers.

Adding to the same point, Perumal explained that a lot of the older residents were unable to cope and passed away shortly after arriving in Chatsworth. According to Perumal they just could not make it because in the Magazine Barracks they lived a “rosy life” and “everything was comfortable” but in Chatsworth they just could not adjust. “Everything you know was good life, everything was nice for us but when apartheid, when they took us and you can say they dumped us here, the moment when we came here, things were getting very tough”. Perumal’s father originally worked in the Storm Waters Department during which time the family lived in a section of the barracks with no electricity, and they received wood and paraffin rations from the Durban Corporation. During this time his father managed to work his way up and was promoted and given a job at the Municipal Swimming pool, the Rachel Finlayson Baths which was the largest in Durban. The promotion meant that the family were given a brick house in J1 block with electricity and running water. However, after moving to Chatsworth his father worked for a few years and then unable to cope took early retirement.

Perumal claimed that his mother too, was unable to work much after settling in Chatsworth. In the Magazine Barracks, she lived in close proximity to people who would employ her as a domestic worker and could walk to Beatrice Street, Grey Street and First Avenue. She worked as a domestic worker for many years until one employer who was the owner of a clothing factory

called Avalon Clothing, hired her to work at his factory in Grey Street. She then worked her way up, and according to Perumal became one of the top machinists and earned a decent salary. However moving to Chatsworth and relying on the buses to get to work, he said, was too much for her and she too retired soon thereafter. When Perumal arrived in Chatsworth he completed his standard eight (grade ten), and then left school to find a job. His older brother's salary and father's pension combined were not enough to deal with increased expenses in Chatsworth, and so when he found employment in the Municipality, he worked both day and night shifts. Perumal stressed a number of times during the interview that things became "very hard" during the initial years of settling in Chatsworth. When reflecting on his time at the Barracks he said "we were living in luxury there".⁴¹

Perumal's views of the Magazine Barracks being comfortable are particularly interesting when compared to most accounts of the Barracks from visitors. Aroo Naicker also supports this idea of a familiarity of space within the Magazine Barracks and the difficulty of adjusting to Chatsworth. He recalled that "we were not happy when we were moved out". In the Magazine Barracks, he explained, everything was central and available to residents, within walking distance. Life in the barracks was "comfortable" whereas moving into Chatsworth was "another experience". "Come out here, I mean look, to begin with we didn't have anything like grassy areas in the Magazine Barracks. Coming out here and living in the bush was some kind of an experience". "In the Barracks we had good buildings, we had good roads, we had good sanitation, good toilets. The people that we lived with were like family". He added that "everything was comfortable" and people were friendly and knew one another but in Chatsworth "things changed". Suddenly "we were living in isolation" and people "were not as friendly as when living in the Barracks". One of the key ways in which the move to Chatsworth affected former residents of the Magazine Barracks, was that it destroyed existing social networks. While residents of the Magazine Barracks were allocated housing in certain parts of Chatsworth, and alongside other residents from the Magazine Barracks, it did split up established networks between neighbours. The Magazine Barracks was divided into several districts and neighbours were very close. However residents from within districts were given houses in different parts of Chatsworth. Naicker was given a house in Croftdene whereas most of his neighbours and friends from the Barracks went to Westcliff.

⁴¹ K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, N Perumal, 5 February 2013.

Whereas some individuals struggled to make the adjustment from the close-knit community of the Magazine Barracks, to a more isolated environment in Chatsworth, others found it easier. Mrs Pillay recalled that although she was separated from her friends, most of who went to Westcliff while she went to Croftdene, she didn't have a difficult time adjusting. She was still able to meet up with old friends and she made friends with her new neighbours. There was also a committee for former pupils from St Mira bai, the school that she attended when living in the Barracks. Pillay began working in a clothing factory in 1964, two years before moving to Chatsworth. Despite the fact that her father retired two years after settling in Chatsworth, she and some of her siblings were employed by this stage. When her family settled in Chatsworth in February 1966, she could not recall any instances of her parents expressing anger. She explained that being young at the time she never thought much about anger over the fact that they were being removed from their home. She was excited to move into the larger house as in the Magazine Barracks she belonged to a large family living in a small area. Although she added living conditions were better in Chatsworth, "there was much more talent in the Magazine Barracks". There were Tamil schools, dancing, singing, sports and joyous celebrations, she said. She described life in the Magazine Barracks as being "very wonderful" because of the "culture" but was nonetheless happy that she was moved to Chatsworth.⁴² Her memories of adjustment from the Magazine Barracks to Chatsworth, are in stark contrast to those of Naicker and Perumal, however the cultural aspects of Magazine Barracks is something that she remembers with nostalgia.

In 1965 when Kisten arrived in Chatsworth he was 32 years and worked for a private company in town. At this stage, he took care of his two children and his wife's five siblings. When informed that he would have to leave the Barracks, Kisten claimed that he was not angry but decided he had no choice but to make the best of the situation. "Instead of sitting here, and moaning and groaning we made the best of it" he explained. Nonetheless he acknowledged that he was disappointed about leaving the Barracks and what disappointed him the most was that residents of the Barracks would not settle in the same place, but would be split up in Chatsworth. However, Kisten said that he recognised the benefits of leaving the barracks, in particular the fact that if they remained in the barracks, overcrowding would have worsened. Families were extending and there was no additional space within the Barracks and this

⁴² K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, Pillay, 15 April 2013.

would have aggravated the already severe overcrowded conditions, he said. One problem however during these early years was that all the income was spent and they did not have any extra money.⁴³

When other residents were being resettled from the Magazine Barracks to Chatsworth in 1964, Jay Pillay was doing his standard six (grade eight). He had a younger brother who would also soon enter high school. Since his parents could not afford to send two children to high school, when Pillay finished his standard six, he had to leave school and look for work. Due to his young age, employers were originally reluctant to hire him. However when one of his friends from the Magazine Barracks left his job at Addington Hospital, Pillay applied for the position and was hired. This was in 1965, the same year that Pillay's family moved to Chatsworth. When reminiscing, Pillay could not recall his parents being angry. Rather they saw the move as inevitable and decided to make the best of the situation. "I think maybe they took their anger out in the meetings" he said, referring to the meetings where the DCC informed residents that they would have to leave the Barracks. Although he was young, Pillay did attend some of these meetings and remembers other residents putting up a fight. Members of the Durban Corporation tried to appease the audience by explaining that they were giving them better houses and that they would no longer have to live in tin shanties houses with no toilets. Pillay explained that residents especially the older ones did not want to leave. They told the DCC that life was simple for them in the Barracks as everything was within walking distance and they had temples, churches and sports grounds.⁴⁴

Pillay's own parents decided to make the best of it. When his father first saw the house in which they were going to settle, he was very happy. When the family arrived, they were also excited about moving into a new house. The move did however take its toll, due to the increased distances to travel to work and back. While Pillay did not feel it much because Addington Hospital provided a bus with no charge for its employees, his father was affected and like many others retired from the municipality shortly thereafter. He was however able to find a job at the Westcliff Market nearer to the house. Unlike many other families who struggled financially during the initial years of settling in Chatsworth, Pillay's family were able meet the increased living expenses, since he and a few of his siblings were employed at that stage. However, two

43 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, J Kisten, 12 December 2012.

44 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, J Pillay (Pensioner), 9 April 2013.

months after settling in Chatsworth, his grandmother passed away and his mother, who became sick whilst still living in the Magazine Barracks, was unable to work in Chatsworth. She eventually passed away in 1971. Jay worked at Addington until 1970, when he worked as waiter for one year and was thereafter employed by the municipality to work in the Montford Library, the first library in Chatsworth. During this time he did night studies and wrote exams in M.L. Sultan Technical College. In 1974 when he got a position in the Durban Police Force, with a raise in earnings, he decided not to continue with his studies.⁴⁵

Education

The importance of education was described during most interviews as a huge component of life in the Magazine Barracks. Respondents explained that their parents placed a major emphasis on education, and that this was important to the financial progress of many families in Chatsworth, especially for subsequent generations. There were two main schools that children from the Magazine Barracks attended, namely the Depot Road School for boys and the Temple Girls School (later called St. Mira bai) for girls. Most people have very pleasant memories of their schooling and especially of their teachers and principals. Kugesan and Mrs Pillay described the important role played by their teachers. Kugesan stated that they appreciated the strict nature of their teachers.⁴⁶ Runga Munien chose to spend most of his interview talking entirely about the respect he has for his former teachers and the principal of Depot Road School.⁴⁷ Like most residents he spoke nostalgically about his schooling years and valued the emphasis that was placed on both discipline and sport. Naicker concurred claiming that “we had beautiful teachers”.⁴⁸ V Muthen and Kisten amongst others pointed out that the two people that were most respected by children were teachers and policemen. V Muthen said that in Depot Road and Greyville, schools were like a family, and since the teachers felt that children from the Barracks were deprived, they played an important part, in the children’s upbringing.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, V Muthen, 12 December 2012.

⁴⁶ K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, Pillay, 9 April 2013 and K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, S Kugesan, 31 January 2013.

⁴⁷ K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, R Munien, 7 February 2013.

⁴⁸ K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, A Naicker, 7 February 2013.

⁴⁹ K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, V Muthen, 12 December 2012.

During the initial years when residents arrived in Chatsworth, there were no schools in Westcliff or Croftedene and many parents unable to pay for bus fare to send their children to town, had to withdraw them from school altogether. When D Muthen arrived in Chatsworth at the age of 16, he was attending the Greyville High School. Given the absence of an inter-unit bus service, he walked to Higginson's Highway to board the municipal bus which workers took, at six o'clock in the morning and would wait outside the school grounds for the clerk to open up. At four o'clock in the afternoon, he and the other pupils would make their way to the bus station in town and join one of two long queues. He explained that "we had to wait there for three, four buses to go past and then the fifth one you will take. That was the delay and that leaves us little time to do our homework for the next day".⁵⁰ Perumal who also took the municipal bus to go to school explained that sometimes they would pocket the money that their parents gave them to take the connecting bus from Warwick Avenue to Somsteu Road and walk the distance in a group.⁵¹ However due to difficult circumstances, Perumal chose to finish school early to find work.

Schooling for many former residents after their relocation to Chatsworth may have been a challenge, especially given the difficult financial circumstances. However most were able to ensure that their children completed their schooling. According to V Muthen, while it was rare in the Magazine Barracks for children to receive a higher education, in Chatsworth "people have learnt to move ahead". The children and grandchildren of former residents he said "are either doctors, enough doctors, enough lawyers, like my family and all we got three doctors and two lawyers, because the children learnt and they mastered themselves".⁵² While neither of his parents progressed further than standard seven, Naidoo acknowledged the huge emphasis that his parents put on formal education was a massive advantage for him. He added that many friends he grew up with in Chatsworth, with the same opportunities, still live in difficult circumstances but because of his parents he had a huge edge. One of his great joys was his mothers' reaction when he won a scholarship to do his Master's degree in Cambridge. His education was vital to his mother who came from a family that was unique, he said, in that the same emphasis was put on educating girls as was on educating boys. The value that both his

50 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, D Muthen, 1 December 2012.

51 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, N Perumal, 5 February 2013.

52 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, V Muthen, 12 December 2012.

parents put on education was his “silver lining”.⁵³

Cultural impact of moving to Chatsworth

In the Magazine Barracks, most residents belonged to either one or a few of various self-help voluntary associations that were established.⁵⁴ Community work in such bodies was an integral part of their daily activities. Kugesan for example, explained that after school, she and her classmates would attend meetings of FOSA. Apart from the Drama Hall, the homes of many residents also acted as Tamil schools, for both adults and children after they finished their secular schooling. These classes were operated by volunteers after work. Moving to Chatsworth however split residents up, and combined with increased travelling time to get to work, some discontinued their voluntary work. V Muthen initially found a job as a teacher after he finished his schooling. However, to qualify for a house in the Magazine Barracks he needed to work for the Durban Corporation and so he left teaching and joined the City Health Department, where he was employed as an office cleaner. In the Barracks, he belonged to a number of different voluntary bodies, including the Durban Child Welfare Society whose work was not confined solely to residents of the Magazine Barracks, but extended outside as well. He served on the Red Cross First Aid, which did weekly duties in a Sport’s Club that existed in the Barracks, and ran a first aid clinic called the Side Room where they attended to children who were sick or picked up minor injuries whilst playing sport. V Muthen was also a member of FOSA, ran a football club and played an important role in the Magazine Barracks Temple. However after moving to Chatsworth the task of providing for the family, with the increased living expenses meant that he had to take on multiple shifts in his work. As a result he was unable to continue with much of the community work he did earlier. During the early years of settling in Chatsworth, he was only able to continue with his religious and sporting work.⁵⁵ Others however were able to extend their community work in Chatsworth. Kisten for example continued to play an integral role in FOSA amongst other bodies. In fact Mrs Pillay, who was not active in the body when living in the Magazine Barracks, joined FOSA after settling in Chatsworth. She stated that after moving to

53 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, K Naidoo, 26 November 2012.

54 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, N Perumal, 5 February 2013.

55 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, V Muthen, 12 December 2012.

Chatsworth, TB was on the rise and in Croftdene they needed volunteers.⁵⁶

Residents differ in their opinions over the impact that Chatsworth had on their way of life. As previously mentioned, since people who were originally from the same neighbourhood districts were split up in Chatsworth, some found it difficult to adapt. However, others argued that even though their new neighbours were from different districts, what mattered most was that they were still from the Magazine Barracks. Sintha Munien for example, said that she got along with new neighbours like a “house on fire” because they all came from the Magazine Barracks.⁵⁷ Some people, who settled in Chatsworth from other places, had varying degrees of hostility for those who came from either the Magazine Barracks or any other of the labour barracks, especially during the early years. Residents of Barracks were seen as being “thugs”. Most respondents say however that the stigmatisation meant nothing to them because outsiders “did not know us”. A few like Perumal, said stigmatisation led to many fights during the early years.⁵⁸ Perumal lived in Westcliff nearer to residents from other places, but some who lived in Croftdene were surrounded by houses of former Magazine Barracks residents.

All respondents said that the notion of a “Magazine Barracks identity” was and still is important to them after settling in Chatsworth. For Kisten, it was crucial in overcoming the many obstacles in the new township. Circumstances may have been difficult, but former residents in the Barracks “worked as a team, as of now even if I hear someone has a problem, I run [to assist]”.⁵⁹ V Muthen explained that due to his work in the MBRA and his religious work, he had visited most families at some stage, and that “ninety percent of them have progressed so far”. Although it was difficult in the beginning, they overcame, and not just on their own but as a community”, he added. According to V Muthen, one way in which the “community” functioned in Chatsworth was through the advice of seniors. In the Magazine Barracks the advice of seniors was important, and after settling in Chatsworth their authority amongst younger former residents of the Magazine Barracks was maintained. V Muthen added that even though his father was a well-respected senior of the Magazine Barracks, who many came to for advice, sometimes when making certain decisions in Chatsworth, he would consult someone even more senior to his father. Up until today, V Muthen added, the bond

56 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, Pillay, 15 April 2013.

57 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, S Munien, 14 February 2012.

58 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, N Perumal, 5 February 2013.

59 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, J Kisten, 12 December 2012.

between former residents of the Barracks was never really broken and when he meets a former resident or one of their children at a shopping centre, for example, they will always stop what they are doing to greet him. Muthen also exhibited an imagined exceptionalism when he claimed that many people from other areas “don’t have this type respect”. While the younger generation live a very different lifestyle and “do not follow their culture as seriously” as their parents did, he said there is still a “type of bond that binds us together”. “If you speak to them [children and grandchildren of former residents] badly about the barracks they flare up because that blood is still there”.⁶⁰

V Muthen’s views are in stark contrast to those of his brother. D Muthen argued that much was lost with the move to Chatsworth. He greatly missed the enthusiasm and the passion that he remembered during celebrations in the Magazine Barracks. Referring to Chatsworth he said “you just won’t find that here, that fellowship was broken”. When we came to Chatsworth we lost it. When we came to this place our culture deteriorated”. In the Magazine Barracks he said, many people sent their children to be educated in vernacular but in Chatsworth there were no facilities and it “was so sad”. Today, D Muthen runs Tamil, drama and dancing schools at no charge and open to all residents of Chatsworth. He also has a free medical clinic and feeding scheme. He stated that his intentions are to preserve the culture. His desire to do this he claimed was due to the upbringing in the Magazine Barracks, especially from his father, who taught them to serve others. Like most of the other respondents, D Muthen pointed out that in the Magazine Barracks: they lived as a family irrespective of “whether you were a Christian, or a Muslim, or a Hindu or a Hindi”. Unlike others however, this was lost in Chatsworth, he added. According to D Muthen when he heard that they would be moved out from the Magazine Barracks, he was afraid that they “would lose that contact, which is exactly what happened in Chatsworth”.⁶¹

Like the Muthen brothers, the testimonies of the other respondents also vary over the extent to which they saw the move to Chatsworth as destroying the “culture” of the Magazine Barracks. But respondents mentioned that they were proud of where they came from and several have stated that whenever people from the barracks meet, they always say “you can’t beat Magazine Barracks”. In fact this notion of a commemorative memory, they explained emerges whenever former residents gather together. For Kisten, “you can go

60 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, V Muthen, 12 December 2012.

61 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, D Muthen, 1 December 2012.

throughout the world you will never find a community like this".⁶² To preserve the heritage they named the Shri Vishnu Magazine Barracks Shri Vishnu Temple in Westcliff after the temple that they attended and the Depot Road Memorial School in Bayview after the original school which was on Depot Road in town. Immediately after coming to Chatsworth, football players from the Magazine Barracks established their teams in Chatsworth, named after the original districts in the Barracks. In 1968, every tournament final in the Chatsworth league, was contested by two teams from the Magazine Barracks, with Young Clydes winning them all.⁶³ Today former residents of the Magazine Barracks also have clubs and associations where they meet regularly to keep the fellowship alive.

Conclusion

The Group Areas Act has affected thousands of South Africans throughout the country, with devastating financial, economic and social consequences. Oral history however, allows us to transcend broad generalisations, and to look at the specific experiences of ordinary individuals and how they were impacted upon by the broader events in South African history. Focusing on specific groups, in this case former residents of the Magazine Barracks, allows us to see how the forced removals and resettlements have impacted upon specific communities and different individuals within those communities. The Magazine Barracks was a closely demarcated space, which was home to nearly seven thousand people. Residents shared many similarities, they were Indian, predominantly Hindus and at least one member per household was employed by the Durban Corporation. Communal living and sharing characterised the way of life in the Magazine Barracks. The homes of many residents acted as vernacular and cultural schools, most belonged to voluntary community bodies and there was a rich sporting and cultural life. During the implementation of the Group Areas Act, residents were removed from this closely confined space and dispersed into areas in the much larger Chatsworth housing scheme. In Chatsworth they faced a new set of challenges including increased expenses, longer distances to travel to work and a lack of public amenities. During the initial years of settling in Chatsworth, circumstances were very difficult as earnings remained the same as expenses increased

62 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, J Kisten, 12 December 2012.

63 K Gopalan (Personal Collection), interview, J Pillay, 9 April 2003.

dramatically.

The lifestyle to which residents were accustomed in the Magazine Barracks underwent dramatic adjustments. While some respondents stated that it was abandoned completely, others argue that many essential features were maintained. Finances for most residents improved and they were able to send their children to good schools. Children, who took advantage of their schooling, were able to pursue a variety of jobs and were not limited to working for the Durban Corporation. Houses in Chatsworth were able to accommodate families that were extending. While many houses were limited in size, residents were able to do extensions and construct outbuildings in the backyard. In the Magazine Barracks, the space problem which was already severe would have been further aggravated. Today every former resident interviewed put great emphasis on how “wonderful” life was in the Magazine Barracks because of the strong friendships between residents. While some say that in the long term they are happy to have been moved to Chatsworth, others say that if they had the choice they would want to return. Some residents see the Group Areas Act as something that destroyed a way of life while others see it as bringing opportunities. Some residents also look at the lifestyle in the Magazine Barracks with nostalgia and feel that it was the upbringing there that enabled them to adjust to circumstances in Chatsworth. Interestingly the notion of a “Magazine Barracks identity” is still important to all former residents that were interviewed by the author, nearly five decades after it was demolished.