

FAMILY LIFE, POVERTY AND CRIME IN THE BLACK URBAN TOWNSHIPS

MEMORANDUM FOR URBAN FOUNDATION

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INTRODUCTION:

Very little published research material is available on this section. The following observations and facts are based on consultation with Africans themselves and the experience of persons closely involved with Africans for a number of years, amply backed up by unresearched case records.

1. FAMILY LIFE:

a) In Cape Town the only families who are housed, or put on the waiting list for a house, and allowed to lodge until one is available are those of men born in Cape Town, married to women who qualify under section 10(1)(a) or (b) of the Urban Areas Act for permanent residence.

Men born in Cape Town are not allowed to introduce legal wives who qualify in other proclaimed areas or from a "Homeland" to join them permanently. They receive visiting permits for a maximum of 3 months, have to lodge return tickets to their place of origin on arrival and are given a permit to lodge at an address different to that of their husband.

Thus the majority of men living in Cape Town Townships are living in bachelor quarters although a high percentage of them are married.

The overall housing and accommodation picture in December 1974 was as follows:

	Langa		Guguletu		Nyanga		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Married Quarters							
Persons over 16	1 647	2 244	10756	12706	2381	3053	32787
Persons under 16	1 578	1 660	12027	12521	2065	2234	32076
Lodgers over 16	82	134	572	1032	23	65	1908
Lodgers under 16	71	77	625	774	17	35	1599
TOTAL	3 378	4 115	23980	27024	4486	5387	68370
Single Quarters	23 622		4691		8019		36332
Total in 3 townships	27 000	4 115	28671	27024	12505	5387	104702
Compounds (docks and Langa)							4798
Licensed on premises							7682
Property owners							27
Domestic - private							5560
TOTAL 31.12.1974							122769

(Home? M. Nash
p. 55)

- b) Men who are denied permission for wives to join them form local attachments and start a second family. They are then supporting themselves and two dependent families.
- c) Overcrowding of married quarters - often each room contains a whole family and teenage children have to share rooms if not beds with their parents. There is no privacy for newly married couples who are forced to find lodgings in already overcrowded houses. Children are often forced to go back to school in the evenings in order to have a place to study in reasonable quiet conditions. It may not be realised that houses in Langa, Guguletu and Nyanga are not supplied with electricity unless this is put in at the tenant's expense.
- d) Conditions of single quarters are squalid, overcrowded and stark - many of them unfit for human habitation, and many men pay rent but sleep elsewhere, often in squatters' camps. For instance, in Crossroads, a high proportion of the men are legally in the area, many of them qualified under Section 10(1)(a) or (b) of the Urban Areas Act.
- e) The high proportion of men living in single quarters in Langa compared with those living under family conditions leads to rape, seduction and a high proportion of illegitimate children.
- f) Many families consider township life so dangerous for their teenage children that they make an enormous financial sacrifice to send them to boarding school in the "Homelands" - there is a real danger that teenage girls will become pregnant by migrant labourers. In order to protect their residential rights these children have to come home at least once a year for holidays - an added financial burden. Failure to do this leads to children being refused permission to rejoin their families upon leaving school. Many families are arbitrarily broken up in this way.
- g) There is a high proportion of female headed families in the townships, and a large number of unmarried mothers supporting families. As there is no security of tenure for women in these townships, they are often evicted and have great difficulty in keeping their family together. Widows, unless they qualify in their own rights, are in a similar position of insecurity which threatens the foundation of family life.
- h) The overcrowding of the married quarters is exacerbated by the total lack of entertainment. There are no cinemas, theatres, or restaurants, hotel or boarding houses, in the townships and such inadequate transport facilities that there is little incentive to find these in other areas. Sports facilities are totally inadequate for the size of population which they serve.

2. CRIME

- a) The lack of recreational facilities and present high unemployment leads to:
- i) excessive drinking
 - ii) vagrancy
 - iii) hooliganism
 - iv) rape

b) The inability of educated youngsters to obtain work suitable to their qualifications leads to unemployment, frustration, and idleness, very often ending in their committing one or other of the above crimes.

c) The prosecution and conviction under the "Pass Laws" leads to a lack of respect for the law and the police - going to jail is no longer a social disgrace. The following figures have been taken from Hansard 10, 31st March 1976, 711 and Hansard 11, Column 812, 9th April 1976:

Cape Peninsula: Men and women arrested for offences relating to identity documents and influx control:

1975 - total number of arrests: Men 20,830 and Women: 13,665.

Langa: 23,597 were convicted of offences relating to influx control. Average daily cases heard 105.

d) Unemployment, drunkenness and general frustration have led to increased number of cases of violence - stabbing, shooting and burning.

e) Darkness in the townships at night due to poor street lighting and few houses with electricity aggravates the situation.

3. POVERTY

a) The Household Subsistence level for Africans in Cape, October 1976 was R136.46 per month.

In the manufacturing industry, 1975, Africans averaged R106 per month. In the construction trade 1975, Africans averaged R104 per month and in the Retail Trade R71.00 per month. These figures are taken from the Monthly Statistical and Marketing Digest, Vol. 12 No. 6. Further statistics on Page 13 (SALDRU Working Paper No. 12) : These figures speak for themselves but the added burden of two households, in an urban area and the other in the "Homeland", still further aggravates the situation.

b) With their level of earning African men can no longer afford to pay lobola for their wives and marriage is becoming an impossible luxury. (The price of cattle is now so high that the normal lobola of 10 head of cattle costs R2,000.) The recent tendency to pay lobola in cash instead of cattle removes the security on which the custom is based. Hence the lack of respect for marriage and a disregard for legal unions. Africans still consider marriage, even a Christian or Civil Rites marriage incomplete without the security of lobola.

c) Prices of essential foods in the townships are far higher than in supermarkets in white areas so Africans either have to pay the higher prices or the added cost of transport.

d) Blind, Old Age Pensions and Disability Grants are unrealistically low for Africans:

	Whites	Coloured & Asian	African
Maximum Pension	R72.00	R38.50	R18.50
Free income allowed	R42.00	R21.00	R 6.66

The African pensions are paid out every two months and seldom last more than 1 month leading to great poverty and hardship among the elderly and disabled.

CONCLUSION:

As less than half the urban blacks in Cape Town live under family conditions it is obvious that the quality of life falls far far short of the standards expected of Christian Western Civilization to which this country subscribes.