Lessons We Can Learn From 1932
by Dr. Mokubung Nkomo

FreeSA's Vice Chair is spending time in South Africa as a Fulbright Fellow in the Department of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. On August 14, 1992, the Weekly Mail in Johannesburg printed a piece from his writing which we have edited for our newsletter.

Scarcely a day passes without one's sensibilities being assaulted by media accounts of the destitution to which large segments of our population are subjected. Certain traffic intersections offer the spectacle of young black boys begging for coins from motorists. Some motorists avoid the spectacle by looking in the opposite direction or sternly gazing at the traffic light as if to beg for the quick merciful change to rescue them from the "nuisance".

At another time South Africa had a similar experience. In testimony given to the Transvaal Indigency Commission of 1906-08, it was noted that "Most of the poor... in South Africa are country men who have been forced off the land, and live in wretched shanties on the outskirts of towns." A Mrs. Faure of the Pretoria Benevolent Society said in her testimony to the commission "that this squatting on government town lands is on the increase and investigation discloses a terrible state of affairs. The people live in the most miserable condition and are sinking in the social scale."

The commissioner of police for the Witwatersrand testified to "a great deal of immorality and crime - illicit liquor dealing, etc. They fall quickly into crime. It is in consequence of the dreadful conditions under which they live. A large number of them are forced into criminal life." Although this dialogue is familiar, it describes white poverty at the turn of the century. This is what prompted the establishment of the Transvaal Indigency Commission. A much larger investigation, the Carnegie Commission

continued on page two

FREESA'S GRANTMAKING REACHES THE $1 MILLION MARK

Dear Friends:

As FreeSA enters its seventh year, it is gratifying to note that we have allocated more than $1 million in grants to South African projects seeking to establish a free and democratic society.

Reaching this goal seemed almost impossible when we first began in 1986. At that time, FreeSA was a one-staff person, one-room operation, distributing just eight thousand dollars in grants. FreeSA now has three full and one part-time staff members, a full-time consultant, and several very dedicated volunteers. Last year, FreeSA was able to distribute just over $272,000 in grants.

Immense effort and sacrifice has resulted in the abrogation of some of the repressive legislation and the unbanning of political organizations, allowing FreeSA the flexibility to operate within South Africa. Similarly,

continued on page five

The elimination of poverty is essential to the growth and prosperity of all South Africans.

AFRAPHOT, IMPACT VISUALS/GILL DE VLEEG

continued on page five
Grantmaking Reaches $1 Million
continued from page one

the repatriation of many exiles has meant that FreeSA no longer needs to fund in the Frontline States and all of our resources can be concentrated inside the country.

New Office
As a consequence, FreeSA was able to hire a field representative in September of last year. This fall, FreeSA has begun the process of establishing a full-scale office inside the country. This new infrastructure will allow FreeSA to conduct a needs assessment that will help determine future funding areas.

Looking back on our grants over the years, we are reminded of the many deserving projects we were able to support. From a township clinic that trained "barefoot doctors" who could minister to the injuries of demonstrators, to an organization that assisted communities forcibly removed from their land, FreeSA was a vital partner.

The future still poses many challenges for South Africa. The negotiations process moves in fits and starts. Even though much remains unsettled, including the fact that an interim government has not been established and the majority of South Africans still cannot vote, there is a recognition that the work of rebuilding must proceed. Consider unemployment levels around 50%, millions living in squatter camps, an utterly discredited educational system and a devastating drought that has struck all of Southern Africa.

South African NGOs have begun to identify and implement self-sustaining development strategies that address the terrible legacy of apartheid. They must still look to the international community for support during this transition phase and FreeSA is committed to providing whatever assistance we can.

Addressing the Violence
Most troubling is the violence that has reached intolerable proportions, leaving thousands dead, hundreds of thousands displaced and living in fear.

This past year, FreeSA was fortunate to be able to support the Project for the Study of Violence which has pioneered workshop models for young people as they struggle to find ways to cope with the violence that surrounds them. FreeSA was also able to provide funding for the Independent Board of Inquiry into Informal Repression (IBIIR) in Johannesburg. IBIIR monitors politically motivated violence throughout the country. It is critical that the political nature of these attacks be exposed if a halt to this madness is to be achieved.

FreeSA would not have reached the $1 million mark without the support of people like you. As our work continues to grow and find new directions based on the changing needs of South Africa, it is our hope that you will continue to support us in our endeavors.

Themba Vilakazi
Executive Director

SHARED INTEREST UPDATE

The Shared Interest project continues to move along, as FreeSA works to develop social investment vehicles that will enable U.S. investors to directly support grassroots South African economic development projects.

Since reported on in the last issue of MAMELANI, the Shared Interest Working Group has been working to understand the extent of investor interest in the kind of high impact South African social investment that FreeSA is proposing, and to design appropriate investment vehicles. Based on a market survey of about fifty individual and organizational investors, we found broad general interest in the concept of investing directly in South African development, with wide variance in investors interest in the type of South African development projects to be funded; the nature of their financial concerns; and the range of marketing strategies that will be necessary to attract a diverse investment pool.

FreeSA has also been talking at length with the South Shore Bank of Chicago, Vermont National Bank, and the Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society about working in partnership with them in the creation and marketing of various investment vehicles. Some of the possibilities include the creation of a loan guarantee fund, a direct lending option, or the original certificate of deposit program.

Grassroots agricultural development is critical to the future of communities in South Africa

ANC PHOTO DEPARTMENT

The question that requires the most work still is, perhaps, the most important: What will the Shared Interest funds be used for in South Africa? To answer that question, Themba Vilakazi, FreeSA's Executive Director; Beate

continued on back cover
Interview with Mmatshilo Motsei

Mmatshilo Motsei is one vibrant and assertive young woman who refuses to sit back and wait for others to deal with the issue of violence against women. As a result of her personal experiences of abuse and a study she conducted on violence against domestic workers, she is now working with the Alexandra Action Group on Violence Against Women, to make a positive difference to the lives of women who have been abused. In April, FreeSA helped the Alex group organize a workshop for women on counseling and dealing with abuse. Mmatshilo recently visited Boston and FreeSA staff member Letebele Masemola had the pleasure of interviewing her.

LM: I gather you are involved in a women's action group. What does it entail and how did you become involved?

MM: The idea of starting a women's action group against abuse arose out of a study that I did at Alexandra Clinic. I reviewed records of women who came to the clinic with injuries, to see how many of them had been identified by doctors and nurses as being assaulted by their boyfriends or husbands, and also to document the nature of the injuries and the kind of weapons used in the assaults. At Alex Clinic particularly and medical settings in general there is a very small proportion that is accurately identified as having been assaulted at home. In my study it's something like 10-15%. In most of the records they are reported as common assault and it is not said where the assault happened or who did it, so when a woman comes in, they don't even ask, "what happened to you?" They examine you, treat you and you are discharged. For the battered woman it means you are discharged back to your assailant—and this could mean even further beating for some women.

The injuries are horrible. They range from bruises to broken bones, pregnant women are kicked on the abdomen. What is very classic about the nature of the injuries is the high proportion of injuries to female reproductive and sexual organs. Some men use knives, axes, screwdrivers and hammers as weapons. But again, when a woman comes to the clinic or if she is referred to the hospital, it's just for medical intervention and nothing further.

Their maids. So for the black woman, you are assaulted in the home, assaulted in the street, assaulted at work, and the political violence affects you the same way it affects a man.

So we are aiming towards offering professional psychological counselling and outreach where we are going to have—if you want to call them 'lay' community counsellors, for example—women supporting other women. It will start at the clinic level first with the qualified nurse, and then a social worker. This very same person will go out and train women in basic counselling skills as a way of trying to make them share with others and speak out about the violence in their lives. Having 'lay' counsellors will bridge the gap between the professional and the lay person, many of whom feel a mistrust of professionals because they feel as if they are simply research subjects. I want to see women being empowered to do for themselves.

LM: Will men be included in the counselling initiatives?

MM: In, we are planning to involve men. I've been running workshops for men and women and I think it's very important. I do not see an end to this problem if we do not involve men.

LM: Have men been receptive to this idea?

MM: I've had a meeting with the ministers of religion in Alexandra, they were very supportive, they would like to invite me to come and run my workshops in their churches and there are individuals in community organizations who are also supportive. At the Alexandra Crime Convention I was asked to come and present a paper on violence against women as a crime because the convention was aimed at looking at all forms of crimes that are happening in Alex. People were talking about what they can do about the situation and when I started talking, people were listening but a few of the men left as I started getting into the nitty-gritty of what is violence against women.

LM: In terms of women being abused and those treating the abused, is there a great response or are they passive about the issue?

MM: There is a great response as long as you do not get too personal. The women are willing to come together at a workshop continued on page four
Mmatshilo Motsei Interview
continued from page three

and talk about violence against women in general, but when we get personal, when we get to a stage where we say, let's talk about violence in our own personal lives, in a sense sharing, all of us sharing about our experiences, they are still not at that stage. But the fact that they can come to some workshops and are willing to participate, it's a very positive thing indeed and I think it's going to be a process leading up to a point where they speak about violence in their personal lives. Concerning the helpers, they still victimize the victims further when women come to them for help. They feel that they may have provoked their abusers, they blame them for the violence, they think they deserve it, all these kinds of things. It's not much help and that's why I'm thinking of working at two levels - 1) empowering the women and 2) empowering the helpers and trying to change the helpers attitudes so that they should be effective.

LM: How receptive are the political organizations to the issues of women and the abuse of women being an issue?

MM: They pay lip service to it because they want to be seen as being progressive. In reality they don't do anything about it. But it's our responsibility; we just need to push it and we just have to find a way to put it on the table, on the political agenda. Fortunately a few women who are involved with the issue in the country are very effective at mobilizing around this kind of violence and it has come up as matter to be addressed in the unions and I know that the ANC health department has identified it as one area needing an instant campaign.

LM: What are your needs as far as funding is concerned?

MM: Funding is one area in which we are struggling quite a lot. So far we have not been successful in getting money for the organization itself except for a limited fund that we got early this year to run a workshop for women on counselling and dealing with abuse in our daily lives. At this point, what is crucial is funding to employ full time people for the provision of counselling services.

I would welcome support in terms of money, resources, materials like books, video tapes, slides etc., because we literally have nothing. When we run workshops we depend on scanty information that we have to share among ourselves. I am a member of a network of organizations that are dealing with violence against women in the Johannesburg area. Early this year, FreeSA helped us bring Renae Scott to South Africa to facilitate a workshop and she brought with her quite a lot of information that was very helpful. It was like an instant library and source of reference.

LM: What is the network?

MM: It does not have a name, but consists of several women's organizations: People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), run by white women in Johannesburg. There is Eldorado Park Violence Prevention Project which is in a predominantly Indian area: There is Lungelo in Soweto and GLOW, Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand. We all participated in the workshops and out of that workshop we decided to form a network.

LM: What are some of the policies regarding women, that you would like to see adopted and implemented by the powers that be?

MM: One of the things I would like to see being implemented is the protection of women from all forms of discrimination, like when you call someone a 'Kaffir' (nigger) now, you could actually be seen as doing wrong. There are all the sexist names and labels that are used for women - people need to start thinking about them in the same way they think about the word 'Kaffir'. To me they have the same effect as being called Kaffir or whatever racist label, so I want women protected from such harassment. It verbal or sexual or physical.

Furthermore, even if we have an act like Physical Abuse Protection Act, we must realize that an act in itself does not do much, what is important is people's change of attitudes. The act could be there and the police may not enforce it and the women may not even go to the police station to report because they feel, as women, that they have to withstand beatings. I think quite a lot of efforts should go into campaigning to try and change people's attitudes.

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Lessons We Can Learn
continued from page one

on the Poor Whites, that ended in 1932, discovered very much the same situation. What is very striking is that white poverty then is very similar to black poverty today. The difference being one of scale. As a result of these two commissions, vast resources were mobilized and systematic plans put in place by successive administrations in order to eliminate white poverty. As a result, white poverty today is negligible. The Second Carnegie report investigated contemporary black poverty in South Africa and unveiled disquietingly widespread debilities. Nothing of notable consequence has been done to eliminate poverty on the scale of previous government programs. Now the World Bank is initiating its own study. Will its findings be any different? Is anyone going to pay heed? It appears that there is no serious intention, let alone commitment, on the part of those who govern to implement effective schemes that will eliminate black poverty as was done with white poverty.

Many of the whites who live comfortable affluent lives today are the offspring of indigents at the turn of the century. Pretence and self-righteousness are not only inappropriate responses to the current crisis but destructive. It is the case of those who, upon reaching the top of the social ladder, not only deny that they ever were at the bottom but proceed to dismantle it or deny that there was ever a ladder.

That won't work. The future of this country is intrinsically bound to the achievement of the welfare of all. Indifference and ad hoc solutions will not work either. The debilitating effects both physically and mentally, of poverty of any section of the population of these dimensions is like a boulder tied to the ankles of one who wants to soar to great heights. Eliminating poverty is the equivalent of unshackling the boulder.

State intervention through the deployment of resources and carefully co-ordinated plans as in the earlier period is the only solution. For example, as a consequence of the findings of earlier commissions, a variety of schemes were employed both in the public and the private sectors. Compulsory primary education and industrial training were effectuated through legislation such as the Job Reservation Act (affirmative action a la South Africa) and a Department of Social Welfare was established.

In the current period, at the very least, these laws and schemes should be extended to blacks (not the Job Reservation Act of course). The following are essential considerations: a re-constituted Department of Social Welfare with the power and resources to address poverty related problems; and a Department of Human Resources Development which, in collaboration with labor and employers, could develop public works programs and apprenticeships to provide jobs to the millions of unemployed especially to develop the physical and social infrastructures in urban black and rural areas.

The proposed National Economic Forum could be the venue to begin deliberations on appropriate strategies to eliminate poverty. A vital corollary is the consolidation of the various education departments with unconditional compulsory education extended to all with the proper provisions and a serious effort undertaken to turn black schools in particular into healthy learning environments.

Needless to say there is a role for non-governmental agencies to play in such a reconstructive endeavor. For such an undertaking to be successful, it is crucial that a genuine and inclusive democracy that can restore the lost legitimacy be established.

Wastage of human resources of the magnitude experienced today is suicidal. Worse, it makes security, peace and prosperity impossible to achieve. Sustainable development is as strong as the weakest block in the social edifice. Two annual surveys compiled by the International Management Institute and the World Economic Forum suggest that South Africa's major weakness is its inattention to the development of the "human factor." Without commitment to the development of the human factor, becoming the "Japan of Africa" can only be a cruel dream.
Klein Becker, FreeSA Treasurer and Shared Interest Project Director; and Robert Zevin, Senior Vice President of U.S. Trust Company and a FreeSA Advisory Board member are now travelling in South Africa to meet with development policymakers, community organizers, and development project sponsors.

Just a few of the organizations that they will be meeting are the Women’s Development Bank that lends to women’s borrowing circles; Soweto and Alexandra Civic Associations that work on housing development and community organizing in the townships; and the National Land Committee that deals with land claims and farmworkers rights. They will also be meeting with the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Council of Churches, both of which have sponsored economic development projects.

Assuming that the Shared Interest team is successful in identifying viable projects with a need for external financing, upon their return, FreeSA will finalize the actual investment vehicles and be ready to seek investments in Shared Interest by the beginning of 1993.

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SARAFINA!

On September 22,1992, FreeSA hosted a screening of the recently released film ‘Sarafina!’ More than two hundred Boston supporters and donors were able to attend. The film opened at the time negotiations in South Africa were to resume after months of deadlock. With calls for the lifting of sanctions and the rewarding of the National Party government, the release of ‘Sarafina!’ is a timely reminder to the world of the horrors of apartheid. Although some apartheid laws have been repealed, the laws on Bantu Education remain painfully in place.