

# Changing Men in Southern Africa



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CHAPTER 5

Masculinity and its Malcontents  
The Confrontation between  
'Struggle Masculinity' and 'Post-Struggle  
Masculinity' (1990–1997)

THOKOZANI XABA

I nearly did not recognise the tall young man who almost obsequiously greeted me in August 1993 in Kwamashu (near Durban in KwaZulu-Natal). I had last seen him ten years previously when he was only 11 years old. His father had been a friend whom I treated as an elder brother before his untimely death when this young man was too young to know him.

'Fernando!' I exclaimed.

'Uncle! You recognise me. I was afraid that you were not going to recognise me.'

'I was unsure at first, but then I could not miss the resemblance between you and your father.' I should not have said that. The mention of his father made Fernando react as though something had hit him in the middle of the chest.

'You should tell me about my old man sometime,' he said sadly.

When we parted, I could not help noticing the number of people who had stopped what they were doing and were unobtrusively looking our way. I was to discover later that Fernando was one of the 'exiles'.<sup>1</sup> I was to learn that the gunfire which rang out almost every night came from his place; he and the 'comrades'<sup>2</sup> tested their guns under the cover of the night. The reason people had been looking our way, was that I was the first 'non-guerrilla' and 'non-comrade' person with whom they had seen Fernando talking. Some told me later that they thought that he was holding me up.

In the following year, I met Fernando about ten times. During most of those times we only greeted each other and went our way. However, on one occasion I came across him walking to the store with three children. I was carrying a plastic bag containing fruit. As I was offering the fruit to the three children, he asked me to lend him R2,00. Since I did not have any money on me, I asked him to walk with me to the house to fetch it. On our way, I asked him if he had found employment. 'I can't, I do not have an ID,' he said, lowering his voice.

'Why don't you get one?', I enquired.

'I have tried – two times – and have not had any response.'

'Do you want me to help you try again?' I asked, opening the gate to our yard.

'No. The police are looking for me,' he said matter-of-factly. When we got to the house, I gave him R5,00 since I did not have a R2,00 coin.

'I shall repay you as soon as I can,' he promised.


'Don't worry about it,' I said.

I moved to another area and months went by. One day I visited Kwamashu and heard people singing 'freedom songs' which were periodically broken by the sound of a 'pump shotgun'. 'Fernando is dead,' said the man I was visiting. I enquired about the circumstances of Fernando's death but he did not have the details.

As the days went by, from talking to people here and there, the story which emerged was that Fernando was killed by the police who had been looking for him for some time. Reportedly, the police found Fernando with two or three friends in an outside building of what Fernando and his friends considered to be their 'safe house'. They told Fernando's friends 'Get up, you are arrested!' When Fernando also tried to get up, he was told not to bother himself. A gunshot rang out and a bullet went through his forehead and took the back of his head with it. Another went through his cheekbone and took out what remained of his brains after the first shot. Reportedly, seven bullets found their way into and through his body. Where Fernando and his friends had been hiding, the police found a cache of arms – some of which had belonged to members of the police who had been robbed and killed.

The story which came together was that Fernando (a former guerrilla) had returned to South Africa and found it difficult to get employment. At the time of his return, his contemporaries who were in 'people's courts' were contemplating their future since the

political leadership was distancing themselves from their practices and functions. While their functions were nullified, attacks against them by the police had not ceased. According to the youth, such attacks, indeed, seemed to be intensifying. Fernando's function then was to train these men to defend themselves. What seems to have been the proof of the success of such training was that in many shoot-outs against the police none of the men were either injured or arrested.

As time went on, some of the former 'comrades' who did not work, and could not get IDs and, therefore, could not find employment, found ways of using their guns to earn money. Some used their guns to rob banks and others used them in contract murders. They reportedly replenished their stock of arms by attacking police and taking their firearms. One thing they did not do was hold up their neighbours. In fact, they are reported to have 'cleaned the area' (that is, searched for and killed those who preyed on the 'community'). One man captured the feelings of many when he mourned Fernando's passing by saying, 'We have lost a hero . . .'.  


## Introduction

This chapter is about the struggle heroes of yesteryear who have become the villains and felons of today. The African township youth, the 'young lions' or 'the footsoldiers of the revolution', have become marginalised and some have become full-time gangsters. The journey from fame to notoriety was associated with changes in the culturally projected ideals of masculinity and in the socio-political conditions of post-apartheid South Africa. The transformation of masculinity is shown by presenting what happened to young men trained in the use of military weapons who found themselves without any means to support themselves or to get the lavish consumer items they believed they deserved. The shift corresponded to the emergence of a new set of gender norms which supplanted many of the old 'struggle' norms. This chapter addresses the preoccupations of former 'exiles' and 'comrades' who were not assimilated into the official defence forces of the new South Africa, who cannot return to school, and who are perennially unemployed. They find themselves in a system which they consider to have rewarded those who did not 'put their bodies on the line'.

Fernando's<sup>3</sup> story is not unique: neither in the way he lived his young

life nor in the manner in which that life was prematurely and violently ended. His story represents a direct confrontation between 'struggle masculinity' and 'post-apartheid masculinity'. Like Fernando, numerous former 'exiles' arrived in the early 1990s with the hope of contributing to the development of the communities they were trained to defend. They were, however, rapidly drawn into the socio-economic struggles (such as rent and service boycotts, stayaways, etc.) in which 'comrades' and their communities were engaged. Many initially began by participating in 'defence committees' which protected communities from vigilantes and the state. But the nature of their battles against the state coupled with the methods they employed in fighting the state, progressively isolated them socially, economically and even politically. They began turning against the communities for whose defence they had been prepared to lose their lives barely five years earlier.

The concept of masculinity is often used in a manner that implies homogeneity among men. Connell (1995) corrects this by recognising a multiplicity of masculinities. In his typology of *hegemonic*, *subordinate*, *complicit* and *marginalised* masculinities, he describes the characteristics of each type – including their fluidity – while stressing the importance of investigating the relations between the different types. He maintains that hegemonic masculinity 'occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable' (77). However, when the given pattern of relations changes, 'the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded' (77).

Challenges and changes to hegemonic structures are often considered to originate from and to be affected by the *subaltern*. But the experiences of a few countries – Russia and South Africa, for example – have shown that such changes can also be effected from above (by the elite or the state). In these cases, the question is how those affected respond to such changes. If, as Cornwall and Lindisfarne emphasise, the control of one form of masculinity is 'never totally comprehensive' nor does it 'ever completely control subordinates' (1994: 5), how do subordinate masculinities respond to changes that occur when political and social power change hands and new gender prescriptions result? This chapter examines such a contest between 'struggle masculinity' and 'post-struggle masculinity' during South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy and beyond.

In this chapter, 'struggle masculinity' refers to the type of masculinity which became dominant among young, urban Africans during the days of the struggle against apartheid (in the 1980s). It is a socially constructed, collective gender identity. Its main characteristics were opposition to

the apartheid system (which included Bantu Education, exploitation of workers and communities, high rents and rates, and suppression of protest) and political militancy. Because many older African people (particularly men) were perceived to be complicit with apartheid, such opposition assumed a posture which was anti-authority. Since 'struggle masculinity' existed side-by-side with *street masculinity*<sup>4</sup> which was disparaging towards women, 'struggle masculinity' was tainted by some of the negative attitudes and behaviours towards women. 'Post-struggle masculinity' is the masculinity which seeks to supplant 'struggle masculinity' in post-apartheid South Africa. Its main characteristics are respect for 'law and order', the restoration of 'public order', the resumption of paying for services, respect for state institutions, co-operation with police, and fighting crime.

Before we discuss these two masculinities any further, we need to take a few steps back.

#### 'Liberation now, education later'

Like Fernando, the youth who became 'comrades' or 'skipped the country' for military training were responding to a call to overthrow apartheid domination. They were recruited into political organisations in the 1970s and 80s during the intensification of the resistance campaigns spearheaded by the internal anti-apartheid organisation, the United Democratic Front (UDF) (founded in 1983) and the exiled African National Congress (ANC). Understanding the price of activism and seeing the costs borne by friends, relatives and associates, the youth nonetheless joined in numbers and remained members of both legal and underground organisations. For many, this meant that their education was interrupted as slogans such as 'liberation now, education later' resonated with their feelings. For the most part, theirs was an existence of daily confrontation with the police, the army and vigilantes. The objectives of 'the struggle' as well as songs such as '*Qiniselani nina maqhawe*' ('Hold on you heroes'), '*Siyaya ePitoli*' ('We are going to Pretoria'), and '*Singamasotsha kaTambo*' ('We are Tambo's soldiers'), together with slogans such as '*Niyabesaba yini na?*' ('Are you afraid of them?')<sup>5</sup> and '*Dlala AK-47*' ('Play AK-47'),<sup>6</sup> spurred them on.

In townships, 'comrades' took it upon themselves to organise 'defence committees' whose responsibilities included protecting communities from the state and the 'third force' (clandestine forces either armed and controlled by the state or operating with its tacit consent), as well as 'weeding out' state informants. Some townships were effectively 'freed' from direct state repression through such measures as chasing state officials away and replacing them with popular institutions such as 'people's courts', as well

as barricading the entrances and exits to the townships with burning tyres so that the police and army had difficulty in moving around.

Numerous factors conspired to produce 'struggle masculinity'. The upbringing of youth in poor households of impoverished and poorly serviced townships, coupled with the relations they had with state institutions, engendered opposition to the state. The apparently symbiotic relationship between capitalism and apartheid produced antipathy to capitalism. 'Comrades' were impatient with the elders who either seemed to be tolerating or accommodating of apartheid and this created tensions between the young and the old.<sup>7</sup> The demands to intensify the struggle by boycotting white shops and staying away from work exacerbated conflict as elders went to war against the youth whom they saw as preventing them from earning a living which would enable them to support their families. The young men were seen as the 'warriors' of their areas who stood with the community while the older men were seen as 'vigilantes' who served the interests of the state. All parties to the conflict were able to retrieve images from the past which suited and supported their position in the conflict.<sup>8</sup>

During those days, being a 'comrade' endowed a young man with social respect and status within his community. Being referred to as a 'young lion' and a 'liberator' was an intoxicating and psychologically satiating accolade. This was especially so to young men who were members of a group with low social status and who came from families where accolades of any kind were hard to come by. The accolades would have given any young man an idea of himself which was disproportionate to reality. Such accolades also came along with the kind of power and respect which attracted women to men. As such, 'young lions', especially those who were in leadership positions, were coveted by women. In fact, some tended to have access to more than one woman at a time, either as girlfriends or sleeping partners. Indeed, the more status a man had, the more women there were to whom he had access.

For some 'comrades', the daily hide-and-seek with vigilantes and police as well as reliance on home-made weaponry quickly became insufficient responses against a force bent on repression. Formal military training was the next logical step to take. Between the mid-1970s and the late 1980s, large numbers of 'comrades' opted to join the liberation forces in exile.

#### **Masculinity and a new gender order: transforming masculinity**

What seems to have contributed greatly to the ostracisation of 'comrades' and 'exiles' was the series of events which unfolded immediately after the 1990 unbanning of political parties and the freeing and return of their



*Toy soldier: A younger young lion at the launch of the ANC's Youth League*

leadership. The UDF was absorbed into the ANC and many of its hundreds of affiliates were disbanded or just faded away. For the 'comrades', former members of these organisations, their dissolution left them without a political parent. Initially this did not create difficulties since they considered the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) as their primary political homes.

In 1994, the main liberation organisations (the ANC, SACP and the Congress of South African Trade Unions) became part of a Government of National Unity having gained a majority of votes in the first democratic election in South Africa. The task of building a new society began in earnest. As the government, the former liberation organisations assumed the responsibility for maintaining 'law and order' as well as protecting property and lives. As such, they had to instil a new culture of paying for services and respect for state institutions.

The political transition that brought the ANC into government was accompanied by changes in the gender order. ANC leaders were compelled by their office to create new norms of gender behaviour. This process fed into the construction of human rights discourse but it was also skewed by the gender politics of the ANC which stressed gender equality and women's rights. These values are a world away from struggle masculinity. As the content of the gender order changed, the comrades were forced to make choices. Some 'comrades' and 'exiles' joined the national armed and police forces where their skills were put to use. But others, like Yasmina,<sup>9</sup> for one reason or another, either did not qualify or were 'demobilised'. These 'comrades' and 'exiles' who had been recruited and trained to undermine and fight state institutions and personnel now found themselves on the other side of the social, economic and political fence. Without much formal education, they could not find reasonably remunerative employment. Without employment, they could not legitimately get money to buy what they considered to be 'the best things in life' – expensive cars, clothes and jewellery (for their girlfriends).

### Masculinities of survival

Former 'liberation soldiers' sought but did not find confirmation of their masculinity from the new society where a new hegemonic form of masculinity had been installed. The masculine characteristics they possessed were inappropriate for the new South Africa. They resorted to finding affirmation and confirmation from each other and no longer looked to the liberation movement for endorsement or approval. The type of masculinity they recognised was a masculinity born out of the harsh environment in which they live. In that environment, they learned to rely

on one another both for support and for company. They depended on one another for shelter, food, and protection. In this regard, the former comrades essentially operated like a close-knit and supportive family.

The comfort provided by such a 'family' came with obligations. The primary obligation was to do for other members of the 'family' as was done for you. Since survival depended on the survival of the 'family', a person was obliged to 'stand by' the 'family' whatever the consequences. The mark of 'a real man', in the eyes of the 'family', was the extent to which a man 'stood by' the 'family' and its members.<sup>10</sup> In an environment where he was a social, economic and political outsider, such a stand was taken in the context of defiance against authority and its organisations. Defiance against authority manifested itself both in a disregard for authority and in open confrontation with it and its institutions. Often, confrontation with authority involved violence. The survivors of such encounters received accolades from their friends for being 'mamba',<sup>11</sup> and 'bhoza',<sup>12</sup> that is, 'real men'. Quite often, the successes of 'comrades' and 'exiles' in such confrontations made young acolytes aspiring to be 'real men' emulate them.

The 'families' laid down codes which were not written down anywhere but were understood by all.<sup>13</sup> Among these codes was the demand and maintenance of a person's respect and honour. As economic, political and social outsiders, former 'comrades' and 'exiles' did not have access to the trappings of general respect and honour. Respect and honour among them rested on their ability to dictate terms and procedures within the areas they considered to be their domains. Those who violated such terms and procedures were often violently reprimanded. The vigorous and virulent enforcement of the group's codes contributed to the notoriety of some 'comrades' and 'exiles' for their hair-trigger irritability and the 'unnecessary' violence in their communities.

### Displaced masculinity

Former 'comrades' and 'exiles' formed survivalist groups<sup>14</sup> during the days of confrontation with the police and these exist to the present day. In the current conjuncture these groups, in David Hemson's words, face 'marginalisation, dispossession, and powerlessness' (1997). Among these groups, in the new era, are different gradations of criminality. Some are composed only of former 'exiles' and 'comrades', others incorporate members of purely criminal gangs, and still others are completely criminal gangs. Some of the groups have various women who are associated with them as either girlfriends or as people called upon to assist in petty crimes. The crimes are designed for accumulation – robbery and car hijackings are

therefore common. The levels of violence that accompany these crimes range from assault to rape and murder. These activities were sometimes condoned in a previous era and context, but the new era rejects both their motivations and activities.

When the gender norms of a society change, boys who modelled themselves in terms of an earlier, 'struggle' version of masculinity may grow up to become unhappy men. Those who cannot change together with the society or who do not possess the skills to make it in the new social environment find themselves strangers in their own country. If the new values are totally opposed to the former expressions of masculinity and manliness, boys find themselves, later in life, ostracised and, sometimes, outside the law. What was normal and acceptable behaviour suddenly becomes inappropriate and, often, criminal. What made some people heroes within their communities in the old order, may be the exact reason for their ostracism and punishment in the new order. Transitional societies tend to make the heroes of the past the villains of the present.

Fernando's case and the cases that follow are a few examples of how the old forms of masculinity have been expressed in the new order. They reveal the types of activities in which the former 'comrades' have engaged in in order to acquire what they could not get by other means. The violent form of such actions is not accidental but derives from the socialisation (in families, schools and the violent 1980s) to which former 'comrades' and 'exiles' were exposed. The cases also reveal what happens to those who express their masculinity in ways which are neither supported by the state nor by communities. Once the expression of such masculinity has ceased to be legitimate, 'comrades' and 'exiles' become 'fair game'.

The five cases which follow were part of a larger study of informal forms of justice conducted in African urban areas around Durban. The people interviewed for the study of informal forms of justice were residents of six townships around Durban, namely, Chesterville, Clermont, Kwamashu, Lamontville, Ntuzuma and Umlazi. The rest of the evidence is drawn from interaction and interviews with members of youth groups, former 'comrades' and former 'exiles'. Except for those incidents that also appeared in newspapers, fictitious names are given to former 'comrades' and 'exiles'.

#### *Confiscating property at gunpoint*

Kwamashu, C- and D-Sections (August 1993)

On Saturday 28th August 1993, three 'exiles' were killed at D-Section while trying to rob a shack-store owner. They – together with some of their friends who escaped – were notorious for prey-

ing on their neighbours. They were reported to have held-up residents and then taken TVs, VCRs and the like. In some cases, they raped old and young women and even children.

On Monday 30th August 1993, two more 'exiles' who, reportedly, had been among those who escaped on Saturday, were killed near the Kwamashu train station. They were reported to have been killed by being tied to a minibus and then dragged along at high speeds. For more impact, the minibus would make abrupt stops and starts as well as sharp swerves to the left and right. Before very long, the minibus returned dragging their bruised lifeless bodies drenched in muddied blood.

On Thursday 2nd September 1993, three more 'exiles' from the original group were shot dead with high calibre bullets at point-blank range while still inside a minibus taxi. (*Ilanga*, 6–8 September 1993)

'Comrades' and 'exiles' who did not have legitimate means to procure the 'good things' in life used their guns to frighten and to overcome those who attempted to prevent them from obtaining such 'good things'. They thus turned their weapons against the people they had been trained to protect. They used guns to have their way with those people's property, as well as their wives, mothers, sisters and daughters.

#### *The gang-rape and murder of a local woman*

Chesterville (December 1994)

Early in January 1995, a group of young men were stoned to death – in full view of the public – because they, reportedly, had raped and killed a young local woman.

The story which came together was that Nomusa, who was a Christian and 'a good person', was coming from church when a gang of about six boys, notorious for disporting themselves by raping women, approached her. She may have first thought of running away but the fact that she recognised some of them may have influenced her fatal decision not to flee.

After forcibly bringing her to the ground, the boys raped her in turns and, when they were finished, began assaulting her. It is during this time that high-pitched screams – of the names of the boys that she recognised – were heard. People who were still out then heard the names of people Nomusa shouted but did not venture to assist her, fearing for their own lives.

It was only when the sun came out the following morning that



the residents of Chesterville could find out what had happened to Nomusa. She was found raped, stabbed and stoned to death, and the Bible she had been carrying had been placed on her chest. The residents who gathered around her body – most of whom were women – were incensed. They wanted to lay their hands on the people who had committed such a crime.

The boys whose names Nomusa had shouted were found first. They were taken to a field where they were asked about the incident. They confessed to having raped and killed the woman, giving, as an extenuating circumstance, the fact that they had been taking mandrax. They named their accomplices and were then sentenced to 'suffer as she had suffered'. They were stoned to death in broad daylight – by mostly women and children. The same fate befell the other boys except for one who was later shot in the back of the head at point-blank range.

Community disgust towards the boys was such that hardly anyone other than the members of their families attended their wakes (an event normally attended by most people who had been familiar with the deceased and his or her relatives). Over and above this, initially, their parents and relatives were told not to bury them in the community cemetery. One woman is reported to have said emphatically – to which others assented – 'Those dogs should not be buried here!' However, after some entreaties from other concerned people who pointed out that the decision to prohibit the burials was affecting innocent people, that is, parents and relatives, the parents and relatives were allowed to bury the boys in the community cemetery. But they could only do so if they were to be earlier than usual, that is, so that they would leave the cemetery before the arrival of Nomusa's funeral procession. (*Ilanga*, 8 December 1994)

'Struggle masculinity' considered women to be fair game. The current high incidence of women who are kidnapped and kept for days while being raped repeatedly by any number of the members of a group underscores the prevailing attitude towards women.<sup>15</sup> Killing the victim in these cases is a way of ensuring that there are no witnesses to the crime.

#### *Killing the killers*

The former 'comrades' often demarcate the areas under their control (Glaser 1998). Within such areas their word is law. Failure to heed their commands and demands is heavily punished. Since their unofficial power

is not overwhelming, former 'comrades' and exiles' almost always eventually lose the territorial battles to the numerically superior residents of the area. The following case shows how this competition resulted in the death of a policeman and the death of several former 'comrades'.

Ntuzuma (June 1995)

A group of teenage boys who had been terrifying the Ntuzuma community for more than a year had their days numbered when they raised the stakes of crossing their path. First, they banned police from their area. Within days of that decision, they captured a policeman – who lived in the area – while he was waiting for public transport, killed him and took away his service weapon. A few days thereafter, two of the boys disappeared and were later found dead with bullet wounds. While no one could claim to have seen or heard anything, it was openly discussed that they had been killed by the police in revenge for the policeman who had been killed by the same boys. This was further affirmed by the fact that the mother of one of the boys threatened to take legal steps against the police, for the death of her son.

Later that month, the surviving members of the gang – who were resorting to extorting money from taxi drivers – were abducted by 'unknown men' and were later found shot dead in one of the community sports fields. Again, while no one claimed to have seen or heard anything, the story which went around was so clear that either the people telling the story had first-hand knowledge of events or the person who told it initially had an extremely vivid recollection of the unfolding of events that day. The story was that taxi drivers abducted the boys from their homes, bundled them into two minibuses and drove them to the sportsfield where they were summarily shot dead as they were pleading for their lives.

It was unclear who notified the police of the incident and the bodies since few people – among those who would discuss the event – did so without displaying a sense of relief at the death of the young men. (*Ilanga*, 29 June to 1 July 1995)

#### *Protecting the community from its former protectors*

Kwamashu, L-Section (July 1995)

In Kwamashu's L-Section, 'the cleaners', a group of 'comrades' who were fed-up with 'the dirties', a group of 'exiles' who had been terrorising the area, resolved to end the problem once and for all. Daily, they set about looking for 'the dirties', where they were

known to live and where they were known to 'hang out'. Whenever a member of 'the dirties' was found, summary justice of 'a hole in the head' was administered.

Sensing their impending demise, 'the dirties' chose to go down fighting. They embarked on counter-attacks on 'the cleaners' and their neighbours. From there, the violence degenerated into conflict between the two L-Section communities. On some occasions, the neighbours of 'the dirties' were also attacked since, it was claimed, they provided 'cover' for 'the dirties'. In the ensuing battle of mutual decimation, the argument that the neighbours of 'the dirties' had no choice but to do as 'the dirties' said or else, could not receive much favour. The violence became a 'war' between people who lived in two different parts of L-Section.<sup>16</sup> At least one person was hospitalized or buried every week between the end of June 1995 and February 1996.

The violence spread outward from L-Section and affected life in other parts of Kwamashu. One such example was the murder of a teacher in one of the schools in Kwamashu, which resulted in teachers downing chalk and the disruption of education (*Ilanga*, 28–30 March 1996). Conditions got so bad that a group of women from L-Section marched to the ANC offices in Durban to seek the intervention of the ANC (*The Natal Mercury*, 29 January 1996).

This case is one example of how the old and new masculinities are shaping up in the new era. Those who have been left behind socially, politically and economically create spheres within which their word is law. They confiscate property at will and rape young and old women as they please. Those who are part of the new dispensation take it upon themselves to 'protect the community' from those who terrorise them. The clash of these two masculinities results in violence, as was the case in Kwamashu's L-Section between 1995 and 1996. The conflict in L-Section continued well into 1997.

#### *Stoning the former liberators*

At a community meeting to address incidents of rape and house-breaking in Madiba Valley (Marianhill), two young men, Sibusiso Shabalala (22) and Mzi Sibisi (23) were stoned by members of the Marianhill community. Sibusiso died during the attack and Mzi, a former MK commander, managed to escape with his life. The two men were accused by a group of women of causing 'trouble' in the area. (*The Natal Mercury*, 24 March 1997)

Township struggles were not fought by men alone. In this case, the participation of women in violence is evident. Little research has been conducted on violent femininities in South Africa, although Clive Glaser (1992) has revealed the existence of ruthless female gang leaders on the Witwatersrand in the 1950s. This case likewise alerts us to the error of assuming that femininity is synonymous with passivity and nurturing. Struggle masculinities will only be fully understood when we know more about struggle femininities.

#### **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that particular configurations of masculinity forged in one historical moment can become obsolete and dangerous in another. This is particularly true in transitional societies. The young African males who became 'exiles' and 'comrades' in the 1980s sacrificed their formal education in the process. Furthermore, in training to become soldiers, they failed to acquire skills marketable in the workplace. Their situation became desperate in the 1990s when they failed to obtain the documents needed for seeking employment. This led them to lives of crime. It has been further argued that the particular socialisation of former 'comrades' coupled with their social circumstances led them to violent crime. Their situation in the 1990s made it possible for former 'exiles' and 'comrades' to commit violent crimes, as well as display a dangerous and deadly bravado, for which they were notorious. The daring escapades in which they engaged were those which resonated with their own conceptions of masculinity.

For the few 'exiles' and 'comrades' living lives of crime, it is no secret that the knife-edge life of violent crime is eminently more remunerative than the palliatives offered by the Adult Basic Education and Life Skills Programmes in which former 'comrades' and 'exiles' are expected to enrol. It is almost impossible to encourage anyone to exchange a life, however dangerous it may be, in which there is a possibility of driving a C220 Mercedes Benz for a life in which he will be a carpenter, electrician or painter or, more likely, unemployed. To attain such luxuries a person has to be more daring and brutal and, consequently, is also more likely to be killed. For many, however, such risks seem worth taking and seem eminently better than any benefits promised by any of the 'programmes' offered to them.

The risks that 'comrades' and 'exiles' take have led to the confrontation between them and the post-apartheid state. Such confrontation has led not only to an excoriation of former 'comrades' and 'exiles' but also to a celebration of pictures of the lifeless bodies of alleged 'hijackers' or 'rob-

bers' which are periodically presented in the media. While such pictures satiate the hunger for revenge, they declare emphatically to the repudiated young men that it is 'open season' on them. 'Struggle masculinity' may, in time, disappear as the numbers of former comrades decline and the social and economic landscape changes. But the likelihood exists that African township youth who continue to have limited opportunity for upward social mobility will develop oppositional forms of masculinity. These forms are likely to contain violent elements drawn from the repertoire developed and utilised by the comrades and their apartheid state opponents. And so long as these young African men are also the recipients of violence (by members of the police and community), they will have great difficulty developing more peaceful, non-violent masculinities.

## NOTES

1. 'Exiles' is a term reserved for those who left South Africa and joined the liberation forces in exile. These former guerrillas returned to South Africa from various military bases in the early 1990s.
2. 'Comrades' refers to the youth who fought against apartheid within South Africa and did not leave the country for military training.
3. Not his real name. In fact, except where the names originate from another source, I use fictitious names to protect the identity of participants in this study.
4. This refers to the masculinity represented by the 'tsotsis' or youth gangs. For an example, see Clive Glaser (1997).
5. To which the crowd responds, 'No we are not afraid, we want them!'
6. This slogan was accompanied by verbal imitation of an AK-47 sound.
7. In order to curb incidents of crime prevalent in urban areas, older men established disciplinary systems that echoed those of rural areas. According to older men, such systems sought to maintain order that seemed to be dissipating in urban areas. Because such structures performed the function of the police, because some people within them were either policemen or police reservists, and because they often used excessive violence, they were slowly seen as instruments of state oppression. Young men who opposed them were seen as serving the interests of the people.
8. Inkatha, in particular, was able to use Zulu mythology to mobilise its supporters (see Waetjen and Maré in this volume).

9. Yasmina is an unemployed former Umkonto we Sizwe (MK) guerrilla who discovered that, despite repeated attempts to register as a former guerrilla, her name was not in the Central Personnel Register which was used by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to recruit former guerrillas (*Weekly Mail and Guardian*, 9 February 1996).
10. Protecting one another from physical harm, economic hardship, social ostracism, and helping maintain one another's psychological stability was a mark of most close-knit communities forced to respond to external pressures. Sitas, discussing similar circumstances for hostel dwellers in the East Rand, refers to that complex of relations as 'defensive combinations' (1996: 237).
11. The mamba is considered to be one of the most fearless and fearsome snakes.
12. Bhoza is a derivative from 'boss'. But the sense given to it in this regard is that of having power and ability to do what you want.
13. Among the codes they use is that a 'real man' survives any confrontation. Such confrontations include confrontation that the former comrade himself may initiate. In many such instances, winning sometimes means killing the opponent. Another code is that a person has to prohibit others from making him feel less than a man. This compels former 'comrades' to respond violently to those who 'insult' or 'disrespect' them. Insults include remarks made against a member of the group, stepping on someone's shoes, moving into their area (especially if a person engages in activities which compete with those the group engages in), and flirting with their girlfriends as well as refusing to do as he is told.
14. This study refers only to groups of former 'exiles' and 'comrades' and not to the numerous, amorphous criminal gangs. While, for the most part, there were less than ten groups operating at one time in each of the townships around Durban, it was difficult to estimate the numbers of people involved, at each point in time, in each group. For most groups, there was a core of about ten people who converged around a distinct leader. Closely associated with the core were other more numerous younger people who moved in and out of the group. Some of these younger people were later incorporated into the group and others moved on to other engagements. While the groups were relatively small, their actions made people in their neighbourhoods feel besieged. The frequency and brutality of some of their actions and the seeming inability of the police to either curb them or to effectively deal with them fuelled the perception that there were more groups

- than the number that existed, and that they had boundless capabilities.
15. Three schoolboys who had raped two girls were seen pointing and laughing at the girls they had raped. The schoolmates of the raped girls declared war on the rapists and their school because 'It was time for us to exercise our manhood and attack first.' From the ensuing knife and panga battles, at least one boy was stabbed in the back and many others were seriously injured (*Sunday Times City Metro*, 28 February 1999).
  16. When one of the prominent members of one group was arrested, the 'community' is reported to have raised funds to bail him out since, they claimed, they felt unsafe without him.

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## PART TWO