

HIDDEN VOICES: THE PROMISE AND THE PITFALLS OF THE DURBAN MOMENT.

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An important debate took place between Sakhela Buhlungu and Johann Maree in the journal *Current Sociology* in 2006 on the role of white intellectuals in the post-1973 labour movement. This debate brought out the promise and the pitfalls of the Durban moment. I will argue that their debate neglected the crucial intellectual role played by black intellectuals in the labour movement during the Durban moment. I will introduce the paper through the now well established narrative of the creation of the Institute of Industrial Education (IIE) in 1973 and the *South African Labour Bulletin* in 1974. I will then focus on the IIE book on the 1973 Durban Strikes produced by Richard Turner and the survey research I did in 1974 and 1975 with Judson Kuzwayo on the social composition and attitudes of members of the post-1973 independent trade unions. While the key role of white intellectuals in these activities is well documented, the voices of black intellectuals such as Omar Badsha, Beksisa Nxasana, Judson Kuzwayo and Fozia Fisher have seldom been heard. Through a focus on the biographies, role and subsequent detention under the Terrorism Act of Beksisa Nxasana and Judson Kuzwayo, I want to problematize the promise and the pitfalls of the Durban moment. Their “hidden voices” raise complex, and still unresolved, questions on the relationship between class, race and the national question. The paper forms part of a project to recover the lineages of knowledge production from the 1950s to the 1980s, to bring to light unpublished theses, manuscripts, academic and scholarly texts, as well as personal diaries, oral archives and fieldnotes in the Humanities and Social Sciences, and to bring them into the academic mainstream.