

FOREWORD

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In October 2002 Mewa Ramgobin celebrated his 70th birthday. Guests asked him for a birthday present: his memoirs. The following day Mewa and I met, on his invitation, in his Parliamentary office. I was asked to assist in this memoir project. Ramgobin's collection of vignettes was published in 2009 as *Prisms of Light*. Much of my work concerned receiving, ordering and collating, and conducting research on what transpired to be a substantial collection of private and often highly personal political papers. This present volume, *Faith and Courage*, is an edited collection of material from these papers.

Projects such as this present a range of complex archival, ethical, legal and political challenges. The editorial task is thus consequently complicated and time consuming. My sincere acknowledgements are thus fulsome. Collegial thanks are due to Gail Gerhart; whose experience and expertise in these matters is unrivalled. The project has relied heavily on invaluable administrative, technical and translation expertise, with much gratitude to Lorraine Claasen, Sharleen Green and Terence Woodhead. The staffs at the National Library of South Africa, the South African Parliamentary Library, and the Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town in Cape Town, the South African National Archives and South African National Library in Pretoria, and the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg's Wartenweiler and William Cullen Libraries have always been exceptionally helpful.

Iain Edwards
2nd October 2013

ACRONYMS

AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement (Britain)
ACAG	Anti-Censorship Action Group
ANC	African National Congress
ANCWL	African National Congress Woman's League
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
ANC NEC	African National Congress National Executive Committee
ANC REC	African National Congress Regional Executive Committee
ANC RILC	African National Congress Regional Interim Leadership Committee
ARC	Anti-Republic Day Committee
ARM	African Resistance Movement
ASA	African Students Association
ASB	<i>Afrikaanse Studentebond</i>
ASC	Anti-Segregation Council
AZASO	Azanian Student Organization
AZAPO	African People's Organization
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BC	Black Consciousness
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BLA	Black Lawyers Association
BPC	Black People's Convention
BOSS	(South African Government) Bureau for State Security
BSS	Black Students Society
CAWU	Construction & Allied Workers Union
CC	Committee for Clemency
CCAWUSA	Commercial, Catering & Allied Workers Union of South Africa
CHAC	Chatsworth Housing Action Committee
CI	Christian Institute of South Africa
COC	Committee of Concern
COD	Congress of Democrats
Codesa	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COMPOL	Office of the Commissioner of Police
COPE	Congress of the People
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
COSAW	Congress of South African Writers
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPO	Coloured People's Organization
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
CRC	Coloured Representative Council
CSIR	Council for Scientific & Industrial Research
CWIU	Chemical Workers Industrial Union
DDA	Durban Democratic Association
DESCOM	Detainees Support Committee
DPSC	Detainees Parents Support Committee
DHAC	Durban Housing Action Committee
DP	Democratic Party
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
EPG	(Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) Eminent Persons Group
FAWU	Food & Allied Workers Union
FC	Freedom Charter
FCWU	Food & Canning Workers Union
FES	Frederick Ebhardt <i>Stiftung</i>
FF	Five Freedoms Forum
FOSA	Friends of the Sick Association
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
GCC	Gandhi Centenary Committee
GWU	General Workers Union
HoD	House of Delegates
HoR	House of Representatives
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IFP	<i>Inkatha</i> Freedom Party
JODAC	Joint Democratic Action Committee
JORAC	Joint Rent Action Committee
JWC	Joint Working Committee
LAC	(South African municipal) Local Advisory Committee/Commission
LRC	Legal Resources Centre
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement

MF	Minority Front
MK	<i>Umkhonto we Sizwe</i>
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MSC	Million Signature Campaign
MWT	Marxist Workers Tendency (of the African National Congress)
MWUSA	Media Workers Union of South Africa
NADEL	National Association of Democratic Lawyers
NAMDA	National Medical & Dental Association
NAPAC	Natal Arts Performing Council
NECC	National Education Crisis Committee
NEHAWU	National Education, Health & Allied Workers Union
NPA	Natal Provincial Administration
NRP	New Republic Party
NEUM	Non-European Unity Movement
NGK	<i>Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk</i>
NIA	Natal Indian Association
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NIC CSC	Natal Indian Congress Cultural Steering Committee
NIO	Natal Indian Organization
NNP	New National Party
NOW	Natal Organization of Women
NP	National Party
NRP	New Republic Party
NSC	(South African government) National Security Council
NSO	National Student's Organization
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
NUTW	National Union of Textile Workers
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OC	Organizing Committee
OB	<i>Ossewabrandwag</i>
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress Party of Azania
PACOFES	Performing Arts Council of the Orange Free State
PACT	Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal
PAWU	Paper & Allied Workers Union
PC	Presidents Council
PFP	Progressive Federal Party
PM	Prime Minister
POTWA	Post & Telecommunications Workers Association
PP	Progressive Party
PRC	Passive Resistance Council
PRP	Progressive Reform Party
PSC	Parent Support Committee
REC	Regional Executive Committee
RMC	Release Mandela Campaign/Committee
RSC	Regional Services Council(s)
SAAMWU	South African Amalgamated Municipal Workers Union
SAAWU	South African Allied Workers Union
SABA	South African Black Alliance
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACHED	South African Committee for Higher Education
SACPO	South African Coloured People's Organization
SACOS	South African Council on Sport
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADWU	South African Democratic Workers Union
SAIC	South African Indian Congress
SAIC	South African Indian Council
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SANCO	South African National Civic Organization
SAP	South African Police
SARHWU	South African Railways & Harbours Workers Union
SASM	South African Student's Movement
SASO	South African Student's Organization
Sats	South African Transport Services
SAYCO	South African Youth Congress
SB	(South African Police) Security Branch
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SRC	Student Representatives Council

SOYA	Sons of Young Africa
Sprocas	Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society
T&GWU	Transport & General Workers Union
TIC	Transvaal Indian Congress
TUCSA	Trades Union Council of South Africa
UCC	United Committee of Concern
UCM	University Christian Movement
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDF NEC	United Democratic Front National Executive Committee
UDF NGC	United Democratic Front National General Council
UD-W	University of Durban-Westville
UMMAWOSA	United Metal, Mining & Allied Workers of South Africa
UN	United Nations
UN	University of Natal
UND	University of Natal, Durban
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UP	United Party
UWUSA	United Workers Union of South Africa
WIP	Work in Progress
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
ZCC	Zion Christian Church

LEADING PERSONAE

Listed here are the names of people who figure so largely and importantly in Mewa Ramgobin's private papers. For ease of reference, the listings have been thematically grouped. Of course and crucially so circles intersect. Indeed this was a milieu in which so much depended upon such often discreet personal inter-relations. Within each group, alphabetic listings show family and given name(s); brief information on the person and, wherever possible, an electronically accessible biographical reference; and, if appropriate their sobriquet. Personal dynamics within families, close friendships, and wider but still close political circles all create sobriquets of affection, familiarity, and friendship. It is often so that within these circles only given names or a sobriquet is used when speaking and writing. When all of these personal, familial, friendly and wider social and political circles and networks exist in conditions of political oppression and surveillance and the needs for caution, discretion, and even secrecy, such sobriquets can become encoded. Where a name occurs in more than one list, this second naming is then given an (*) and the information is not repeated. Where two persons have the same sobriquet, the identity is made clear with an editorial insertion in the actual document.

Ramgobin Family

Ramgobin, Mawalal	Mewa	www.sahistory.org.za/people/mewa-ramgobin
Ela Ramgobin <i>née</i> Gandhi		www.sahistory.org.za/people/ela-gandhi
Kidar Ramgobin, b. 5 th Feb. 1963		
Kush Ramgobin, b. 31 st Aug. 1964, d. 16 th December 1993		
Asha Ramgobin, b. 10 th June 1968		
Arti `Artiloo` Lata & Ashish `Sheesh` Lata Ramgobin, born 27 th July 1970		

Phoenix Settlement

Barker, Anthony & Maggie		Charles Johnson Memorial Hospital, Nqutu, Northern KwaZulu Natal; www.kznhealth.gov.za/cjmhospital.htm
Brink, André		http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/André Brink
Buthelezi, M.G.	Gatsha/GB	www.sahistory.org.za/people/mangosuthu-gatsha-buthelezi
Duphelia, Sita		www.sahistory.org.za/archive/sita-memoirs-sita-gandhi
Gandhi, Arun		arungandhi.org/
Gandhi, Sushila	Ben	www.sahistory.org.za/people/sushila-gandhi
Grice, Mary		Black Sash; http://www.givengain.com/cause/4146/about/
Hurley, Dennis		http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis Hurley (bishop)
Langa, Bheki		en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bheki Winston Joshua Langa
Lloyd, Anson		Hulletts Sugar & Chair, South African Sugar Association
Moerane, Manase		See Maimela, M.R., "Black Consciousness and White Liberals in South Africa", D.Lit., (UNISA, 1999)
Ngubane, Jordan. K.		http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/jordan-kush-ngubane
Oppenheimer, Harry Frederick		www.brenthurst.org.za/harryoppenheimer.cfm
Paton, Alan		www.sahistory.org.za/people/alan-stewart-paton
Turner, Richard	Rick	www.sahistory.org.za/people/richard-albert-turner
Turner, Foszia		www.sahistory.org.za/people/richard-albert-turner

NUSAS

Budlender, Geoffrey	Geoff	http://www.lrc.org.za/our-people
Cunningham, Jennifer	Jenny	www.wits.ac.za/alumni/news/features/14185/roadto76.html
Mansfield, Peter		http://za.linkedin.com/in/petermansfield1
Oosthuizen, Ann		http://www.honno.co.uk/php?func=poriawdur&awdur=AnnOosthuizen

South African Parliament

Suzman, Helen		http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/helen-suzman
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Lodson House, Grey Street

Arenstein, Rowley		www.sahistory.org.za/people/rowley-israel-arenstein
Babenia, Natvarlal	Natoo	www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/people/natoo_babenia
Biko, Stephen	Steve	www.sahistory.org.za/people/stephen-bantu-biko
Cooper, Sathasivan	Saths	www.sahistory.org.za/people/dr-sathasivan-saths-cooper
Docrat, A.K.	Doc	www.sahistory.org.za/people/abdul-khalek-mohamed-docrat
Mxenge, Griffiths		www.sahistory.org.za/people/griffiths-mlungisi-mxenge
Mxenge, Victoria		www.sahistory.org.za/people/victoria-nonyamezelo-mxenge
Nxasana, Bhekisisa Harold	Bheki	//www.sahistory.org.za/people/bhekisisa-harold-nxasana
Pityana, Barney		www.sahistory.org.za/people/professor-barney-nyameko-pityana
Skweyiya, Lewis		http://whoswho.co.za/thembile-skweyiya-434
Subromoney, Paul	Fuzzy	Mewa Ramgobin's business office manager

`Consulate Six`

David, Paul		www.saha.org.za/udf/repressing_the_leadership.htm
Gumede, Archibald	Archie	www.sahistory.org.za/people/archibald-gumede
Naidoo, Moaroograh J.	MJ	www.socialjustice.org.za/about-mj-naidoo
Nair, Billy	BN	www.sahistory.org.za/people/billy-nair
Ramgobin, Mewa*		
Sewpersadh, George	Sew	www.sahistory.org.za/people/george-sewipersadh

Pietermaritzburg Treason Trialists & their Lawyers+

Chikane, Frank	Frank/FC	www.sahistory.org.za/people/frank-chikane
David, Paul*		
Gering, Leonard+	Len	See Russel L. Weaver, "A Heroic Law Teacher; Dean Leonard Gering", <i>Journal of Legal Education</i> , vol 52, no 3 (September 2002) www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?ID=1103
Gqweta, Thozamile		
Gumede, Archibald*		
Jana, Priscilla+		Hayes, S., (ed), <i>Who's Who of Southern Africa 2000</i> , (Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 2001) www.sahistory.org.za/people/dr-essop-essak-jassat www.sahistory.org.za/people/sir-sydney-kentridge www.zoominfo.com/p/Sam-Kikine/1297484342
Jassat, Essop		
Kentridge, Sydney+		
Kikine, Sam		
Marcus, Gilbert+	GB	
Mohamed, Ismail	I	www.sahistory.org.za/people/ismail-jacob-mohamed www.sahistory.org.za/people/aubrey-mokoena
Mokoena, Aubrey		
Naidoo, Moaroograh J*		
Ngcobo, Isaac		www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/treason-trial-16-udf-members-resumes www.anc.org.za/caucus/ www.sahistory.org.za/people/curtis-nkondo
Njikelana, Sisa		
Nkondo, Curtis		
Ramgobin, Mewa*		
Saloojee, Cassim		
Saloojee, Ebrahim A.	Cass	http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/cassim-saloojee-0 www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/muslimportraits-goolamvahed
Sewpersadh, George*		
Singh, D.K.+	DK	
Sisulu, Albertina	AS	www.sahistory.org.za/people/albertina-nontsikelelo-sisulu www.sahistory.org.za/people/karel-tip
Tip, Karel+		

Other NIC, TIC, UDF, COSATU, ANC

Bhamjee, Yusuf		www.witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global
Boesak, Allan		www.sahistory.org.za/people/reverend-allan-aubrey-boesak
Carolus, Cheryl	CC	www.sahistory.org.za/people/cheryl-carolus
Coovadia, H.M.	Jerry	www.sahistory.org.za/people/professor-jerry-mahomed-coovadia
Dlamini, Chris	CD	www.sahistory.org.za/people/christopher-ndodebandla-dlamini
Ebrahim, Ebrahim	Ebe/Ebbie	www.sahistory.org.za/people/ebrahim-ismail-ebrahim
Gordhan, Pravin	PG	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pravin_Gordhan
Gordimer, Nadine		www.sahistory.org.za/people/nadine-gordimer
Gwala, Harry		www.sahistory.org.za/people/harry-mphephethwa-themba-gwala
Gwala, Pascal Mafika		www.sahistory.org.za/people/mafika-pascal-gwala
Jele, Josiah	JJ	www.sahistory.org.za/people/josiah-khiphusizi-jele
Jordan, Pally		www.sahistory.org.za/people/zweledinga-pallo-jordan
Kearney, Patrick	Paddy	www.satyagraha.org.za/current/index
Langa, Pius		www.constitutionalcourt.org.za/site/judges/justicepiuslanga/
Lekota, Mosiuoa	Terror	www.sahistory.org.za/people/mosiuoa-patrick-terror-lekota
Maharaj, Satyandranath R.	Mac	www.sahistory.org.za/people/satyandranath-mac-maharaj
Mahomed, Yunus	YM	www.sahistory.org.za/people/yunus-ismail-mahomed
Makana, Simon		www.info.gov.za/speeches/2004/04022313461001.htm
Mandela, Nelson	NM	www.nelsonmandela.org/ Life & Times of Nelson Mandela
Mandela, Nomzamo	Winnie	www.sahistory.org.za/archive/winnie-mandela
Meer, Farouk		scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/B/Ms/Meer_Family/MeerFaroukNICandUDF
Meer, Fatima		www.sahistory.org.za/people/professor-fatima-meer
Meer, Ismail		www.sahistory.org.za/people/ismail-chota-meer
Mji, Diliza		www.sahistory.org.za/people/diliza-mji
Mofolo, Titus		www.zoominfo.com/p/Titus-Mofolo/1229866701
Molefe, Popo	PM	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popo_Molefe
Moosa, M. Valli	VM	www.sahistory.org.za/people/mohammed-valli-moosa
Naidoo, M.D.	MD	www.nytimes.com/1995/06/12/obituaries/m-d-naidoo
Naidoo, Phyllis		www.sahistory.org.za/people/phyllis-naidoo
Nair, Elsie		http://subrygovender.blogspot.com/2011/02/elsie-nair.html
Naudé, Beyers	BN	www.sahistory.org.za/people/reverend-beyers-naude
Ndebele, Sibusiso	S'bu/SN	www.info.gov.za/gol/qcis_profile.jsp?id=1055
Ndlovu, Cleopas	CN	www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/ancunderground_mplan_rivonia

Ndlovu, Curnick	CN	www.sahistory.org.za/people/curnick-muzuvukile-ndlovu
Nzo, Alfred		www.sahistory.org.za/people/alfred-baphetuxolo-nzo
Omar, Dullah		www.sahistory.org.za/people/dullah-mohamed-omar
Padayachie, Roy		www.sahistory.org.za/people/roy-padayachie
Pillay, Thumba		www.zoominfo.com/p/Thumba-Pillay/1581729278
Poovalingam, P.	Pat	www.legalbrief.co.za/article.php?story=20090316083622453
Radebe, Jeffery T.	Jeff	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Radebe
Ramaphosa, Cyril	CR	www.sahistory.org.za/people/cyril-matamela-ramaphosa
Slovo, Joe	JS	www.sahistory.org.za/people/joe-slovo
Stuart, James (pseud.)		Herman Loots
Tambo, O.R.	OR	www.anc.org.za/list_by.php?by=Oliver%20Tambo
Xundu, Mcebisi		www.sahistory.org.za/people/reverend-mcebisi-osman-xundu
Yacoob, Z.M.	Zac/Zak	www.constitutionalcourt.org.za/site/judges/justicezakYacoob/

Operational Name

Vula Operation *Vulindlela* (*isiZulu* for `Open the Way`)
www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4168
www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/37a/043.html
www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv03445/04lv03996/05lv04012/06lv04014.htm; and
www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/members-anc-and-sacp-are-detained-due-operation-vula

“To Pastures Unknown, Hoping, Seeking”: Mewa Ramgobin’s private political papers in contemporary South African affairs”

Iain Edwards

“I move away
 from where I am
 To pastures unknown
 Hoping, Seeking for things
 That might be known
 Leaving the nomads
 Sorts of sophistication
 To rhythms strange in life
 Even to primordial landscapes
 Measured maybe by antiquity
 Of Gods, primeval
 And men’s mystic ritual
 Slowly
 Roused in consciousness
 Of ourselves
 An existence left behind
 Heightens its own uselessness
 Am I then
 Are we then denouncing
 Civilization
 Or are we asking
 Its celebration”

Mewa Ramgobin wrote this poem in September 1984 whilst in the British Consulate in Durban, where he and five fellow Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and United Democratic Front (UDF) leaders had sought public political refuge. From the highly stressful and slightly mad confines of their small Consulate room, and facing intense national and international political and media attention, this gently pensive poem is to his family. Now, here, this poem gives a wider public revealing insight into Ramgobin’s senses of his life’s pursuits, inherent perils, and great questions of interest and inspiration.

Within weeks of writing this poem Ramgobin was detained and imprisoned, then arrested along with fifteen others. They were charged with multiple counts of treason. Other accused included the liberation theologian Rev. Frank Chikane; Archie Gumede, a Natal president of the UDF; and Albertina Sisulu, a national UDF patron. All were denied bail. *The State versus Ramgobin & Others*, more popularly known as the ‘Pietermaritzburg Treason Trial’, was one of the last of the great treason trials which, from 1955 onwards, were so much a feature of the conflict between the South African state and its major political opponents. On the 9th December 1985 Natal Attorney General Mike Imber appeared in court, formally announcing the state’s dropping of all charges against all accused.¹ This was a decision of huge political importance. It was headline news throughout South Africa.²

Mewa Ramgobin’s primary and rightfully enduring legitimate public profile is that of a human rights and pro-democracy activist and campaigner, NIC and national UDF leader, African National Congress (ANC) politician and parliamentarian, and steadfastly devoted chairperson of the Phoenix Settlement Trust, the custodians of Gandhi’s Phoenix Settlement in Inanda. Within

¹ *The Natal Witness*, 10th December 1985.

² See as examples *Die Burger*, *Business Day*, *The Cape Times*, *The Natal Mercury*, and *The Star*, all of the 10th December 1985.

the wider pro-democracy, anti-Apartheid and national liberation struggles these were all activities of considerable significance.

In 1981 Ramgobin received his third order of banishment and house arrest. Highlighting this five year restriction order the *Rand Daily Mail* reminded readers that Ramgobin had already been banned for fifteen consecutive years, ten of which had been served under house arrest. The newspaper noted how the state had never charged Ramgobin with any offence and that “at least one hundred and thirty four other people shared Ramgobin’s fate”: clear evidence that the National Party was attempting to silence its critics. The newspaper reminded readers not to forget about the sacrifices and struggles of people like Ramgobin: he was “a victim of injustice on a truly awesome scale”, and observed that the name Ramgobin “may not be well known in broad public circles but deserves to be so ...”³

Ramgobin’s status in South Africa’s recent public life is now well recognised. Biographical summaries have appeared in numerous authoritative reference works and other such publications.⁴ Mewa Ramgobin retired from public life in 2010.

Mawalal Ramgobin was born in Inanda, just outside Durban, on the 10th November 1932.⁵ He is the second generation child of an indentured labourer, Sheochand, who arrived in the Colony of Natal in the 1880’s from the village of Banni, in Bihar. Through hard work and agricultural and entrepreneurial success Ramgobin’s father became wealthy, and a respected member of Durban’s then small Indian elite. Ramgobin was educated at Sastri College high school, in Durban, and then graduated from the University of Natal (UN) with a Bachelor of Arts, later also receiving a BA (Hons) from the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Ramgobin’s young adult interests and concerns came through the complex inter-relationships between various often seemingly contradictory dynamics. From youthful teenage observation and growing awareness came powerful senses of the pervasive paternalism and racism in white Anglophone-dominated segregated Natal. Ramgobin sensed the limitations and compromises within the Indian elite’s political stances. He first recognised privation; seeing first-hand real hardships of African migrant labourers employed by his father and other Indian sugar cane farmers. He then realised and later reflected on how these men, coming from Pondoland, endured their tough lives, with often considerable dignity. They, akin to millions across the world, were the cheap labour of imperial and colonial modernity. Indeed, Ramgobin’s publicly acclaimed novel *Waiting to Live* centres on the life of one such person, Elias Mzimande; his character taken from one of his father’s estate-hands.⁶ Within all of these energies were the tensions all too common between fathers and sons.⁷

Within these elite familial environments were other powerful dynamics. With his father part of the small Indian entrepreneurial and political elite, the young Ramgobin quickly acquired social confidence. Through such elite social networks the Ramgobin family drew closer to one of their near neighbours: Gandhi’s family and relatives living in or visiting Phoenix Settlement, then largely used as a family country estate. It was there that Ramgobin met Ela, one of Gandhi’s granddaughters. They were betrothed, marrying at the Kasturba Ashram, run by Ela’s aunt and named after Gandhi’s wife, in India in 1961. This familial and wider social environment also impressed the values of human improvement through education and its importance for the community’s future greater good. In these ways the obvious benefits of modernity on the

³ *Rand Daily Mail*, 5 November 1981.

⁴ See for examples Shelia Gastrow, *Who’s Who in South African Politics*, vols 1 & 2, (Ravan, Johannesburg, 1985 & 1987), www.sahistory.org.za/people/mewa-ramgobin, www.literarytourism.co.za/index:mewa-ramgobin and whoswho.co.za/mewa-ramgobin.

⁵ Within Ramgobin’s private papers are three handwritten biographical outlines, each of differing length and biographic detail, and a typed *Curriculum Vitae*. *Ramgobin Papers*, File: CV & Biographies.

⁶ Mewa Ramgobin, *Waiting to Live*, (Random House, New York, 1986), and see “Kampaan – the Kid from Pondoland” in Mewa Ramgobin & Iain Edwards, *Prisms of Light. Within My Memory*, (Iqula Publishing, East London, 2009), and *The Star*, 11th November 1986.

⁷ Interview with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, 22nd January 2003.

margins would be harnessed. Within this milieu the youthful Ramgobin developed his reflective and pensive interests in spirituality and its relationships to wider morality and public affairs.

On leaving school, Ramgobin worked as a counter-hand in various family-owned businesses in Inanda, and as a salesman at a motor vehicle tyre retail business in Durban. He became ever more deeply involved in new youthful initiatives in Inanda's largely staidly adult-dominated and established communities. In 1956 he helped to establish the multi-racial Inanda Cultural Group. In this reading and discussion group, men from the area; including Manase Moerane and Jordan Ngubane, came together debating pressing current issues. Discussion covered the Cold War and decolonisation, the Moral Rearmament Movement, spirituality and religion, the `isms` of the times, and of course race, multi-racialism and non-racialism.⁸ In 1957 Ramgobin published a review in *Opinion*.⁹ Significantly, it concerned Vinoba Bhave and the *Bhoodan Yagan* movement.¹⁰ Bhave (1895-1982) was the spiritual successor to Gandhi, also known as the `National Teacher of India`. Bhave's Bhoodan Movement was a voluntary association, seeking to develop Gandhi and Bhave's spiritual views, particularly *Sarvodaya*, into developmental policies and programmes. Prominent during the 1950's, the Bhoodan Movement encouraged wealthy landowners to give a portion of their land to landless lower castes. That same year Ramgobin was also instrumental in founding the Inanda branch of the Ramakrishna Centre. Ramgobin helped arrange and attended interdenominational prayers there on Sundays.¹¹

With these influential and extensive familial circles and through the young Ramgobin's own social encounters in Inanda and wider Durban, Ramgobin developed an almost self-defining humane characteristic. Mewa Ramgobin has a confident, well-mannered and gregarious personality. Many would later be the time when socially graceful flair, and savvy, proved a fine counterpoint to political shrewdness and cocky, disputatious and mentally acute outspokenness. This was often so in Ramgobin's relationship with Alan Paton.¹² There were, of course, times when such adroitness failed him.

Ramgobin was the organiser and secretary of the Campaign for Clemency. This was the first national campaign calling for the release of South African political prisoners, on spiritually grounded principles of compassion. This was a difficult, important, and brave campaign. In the late 1960's and early 1970's much of South African elite public political life remained cowed in the face of state intimidation. Many leading religious figures and self-professed political `liberals` in South Africa had deep-seated animus towards liberation movements, and armed struggles in particular. Further, in so far as the South African government was concerned there were no `political prisoners` in its jails. So, the campaign faced uphill battles.

Conducted during the early 1970's and deeply rooted in the rising force of ecumenicalism then sweeping the world, and most particularly the Third World, the Campaign for Clemency became the multi-faith predecessor to the later politically-based national and international Free Mandela Campaign. Appropriately, Ramgobin sought the support of Archbishop Robert Selby Taylor, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town. The two met at Bishopscourt; the official residence of the Archbishop of Cape Town - the primate of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. Ramgobin ambushed Selby Taylor, getting him to sign attesting to a text of Ramgobin's making, handwritten on notepaper embossed with the logo *Mainstay Cane Spirit*.¹³ Ramgobin quickly acknowledged the inappropriateness of his behaviour.

Registering as a part-time student majoring in politics at the then spatially segregated University of Natal, the twenty seven year old Ramgobin was quickly politically active. In 1962 he was

⁸ See "Home Boys`, Buddies & Comrades", *Prisms*, pp.12 - 15.

⁹ Through the efforts of Jordan Ngubane and others *Indian Opinion* had by now changed its name to *Opinion*.

¹⁰ In this Collection; Part 3, Section 4, Document 1. All further references to material in this collection will just give Part, Section and Document numbers. For an electronic copy of the published article see www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/index.

¹¹ See "Swami Nischalananda", *Prisms*, pp. 7-8 and Interview with Mewa Ramgobin, 23rd January 2003.

¹² Part 2, Section 1, Documents 46, 47, 48 & 50.

¹³ See "Archbishop Robert Selby Taylor", *Prisms*, pp. 65-66.

elected to head the non-European section of the Student Representative Council (SRC). The following year he was elected to the National Executive of the National Union of Students (NUSAS), holding the portfolio of Director of Studies.¹⁴ Ramgobin was an active participant in key NUSAS public debates. His main interests lay in stressing the importance of academic freedom, and the historical and future significance of decolonisation, the Third World and the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). At these debates he met, associated with, and grew to feel at ease in the company of leading figures in South Africa's largely white English-speaking liberal and radical intellectual and political circles. Part of a group of students, white and black, lobbying for NUSAS to become part of the liberation struggle Ramgobin was a key participant at NUSAS meetings at Hiddingh Hall, University of Cape Town (UCT), and at the pivotal NUSAS meeting at Botha's Hill, in Natal.¹⁵ University was a crucial experience, coming at a particularly important time.

From the March 1960 proclamation of the State of Emergency, the Apartheid state set about crushing its political opponents. People and organisations were outlawed, and organisational coherence and capacities dismantled. Leaders, members and supporters were jailed, often serving lengthy and always harsh but also bravely endured sentences. Ramgobin became an active participant in a loosely formed 'committee' co-ordinating Congress movement support structures in Natal. As such he assisted in organising a mass protest in the Durban area against the Emergency regulations. Part of the protest involved a fast led by Gandhi's daughter Sushila at Phoenix Settlement.¹⁶ From 1964 onwards he was also couriering wanted activists, some then personally unknown to him, across the South African border into soon to become independent Botswana and what would prove to be long and difficult exiles.¹⁷ It was only after 1990 that Ramgobin was to include mention of these activities within his public profile.

As those journeys drew to an end, Ramgobin was part of a small but growing set of interlinking circles of people within the country.¹⁸ White and black; including students, trade unionists, young aspirant professionals, academics, lawyers, priests and others. They had very diverse political outlooks. Only some supported a Congress tradition. A few were within the rising European neo-Marxist fold. Many embraced Africanist visions. Others searched for spiritual or political ways out of Cold War dichotomies. Some were Communists, of either Chinese or Soviet persuasions. But, they had three commonalities. They were widely read men with international perspectives. They found deep affinities. They sought ways in which to understand how to live in an Apartheid-dominated society, and to challenge its fundamentals at the very same time. They were, to greater or lesser degrees, dissatisfied with the prevailing dissenting political narratives on modernity and historical oppression and exploitation. They needed more. They posed and addressed a new question: how to turn the essential elements of their oppression into the very strengths of their liberation. Here they found diverse but often complimentary inspiration: from Marx, to Fanon, Nkrumah, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and to Martin Luther King jnr. and Gandhi. It is this very question that defines the huge historical significance of these people. From this came the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society (Sprocas), and South African liberation theology.

For many of these seekers and doers Phoenix Settlement became a "lighthouse", as did the Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre, on the semi-rural western outskirts of Johannesburg.¹⁹ It was within this milieu that the idea came of holding Gandhi Work Camps at Phoenix Settlement.²⁰ It was also from within these circles that formative new public political challenges to the Apartheid state came. First to come were public protests against country-wide celebrations marking the 10th anniversary of the formation of the Republic of South Africa on the 31st May 1961. From

¹⁴ For archival material see *NUSAS Papers*, M 4: University of Natal Non-European Section, Jagger Library, University of Cape Town.

¹⁵ See "The Botha's Hill Encounter", *Prisms*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁶ See "Sushila Gandhi" *ibid*, 9-11

¹⁷ See "Dr S.A.G.M. Randeree" & "M.P. Naicker & George Poonen", *ibid*, pp. 39-40 & 42.

¹⁸ See Interview with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, Session 18, 5th March 2003.

¹⁹ Personal communication with Ronnie Govender, 28th January 2003.

²⁰ Part 2, Section 1, Document 15, and Part 3, Section 1, Document 2.

this, in Durban, came the momentum to re-launch the NIC, later that same year. Never outlawed, and a signatory to the Freedom Charter, the re-launch of the NIC was meant to appeal to Gandhi's legacy, but with the congress now drawing a wider non-racial membership and support, with the Freedom Charter still embracing its wider aspirations.²¹

By then Ramgobin, Ela and their young families' home was at Phoenix Settlement. He had already proven his interest in developing Phoenix Settlement, then a slightly dilapidated sprawling and overgrown country estate. He had been involved in establishing a Clinic at the Settlement, in 1961. And, most importantly, in 1964, the trustees of the Phoenix Settlement Trust; which now included figures such as Alan Paton and Albert Luthuli, rather than an Indian-only board²², appointed him as the Organising Secretary of the Trust's Mahatma Gandhi Centenary Committee. He was tasked with planning the October 1969 centenary commemorations of Gandhi's birth.

In November 1965, just as his University of Natal undergraduate years drew to a close, the Apartheid state served Ramgobin with his first banning order; for five years. This banning order, served on him by two Security Policemen whilst he was in Rowley Arenstein's Durban office, is the first listed and second earliest dated document in this entire collection.²³

This published collection from Ramgobin's private political papers is properly and firmly located within a key field of political knowledge. Internationally this is a hugely respected field long valued for its richness and public importance. At its centre is the public political figure. The purpose of the field is to enhance public discourse and debate on political and more widely civic affairs. It is by definition a publicly accessible field, with four associated genres.

The first genre is certainly the most well-known and popular. Here are political autobiography and memoir. Internationally, autobiographies and memoirs by political leaders are now well established as a burgeoning publishing genre. Many world leaders secure lucrative contracts, their autobiographies eagerly awaited, and launched amidst much media interest. Ex-political prisoners have long favoured memoirs as a preferred form of writing: *inter alia* Brendan Behan, Lena Constante, Václav Havel, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Jacobo Timmerman, Leon Trotsky, and Loung Ung.

There is much scholarly and wider informed critique of the quality, and indeed the very honesty of intent and content of many of these works. Some autobiographies or memoirs are obviously calculated exculpatory works or driven by future-looking ambition. Content often fails to live up to pre-publication media hype. Debates on the nature and veracity of memory continue.²⁴ Yet, these issues notwithstanding, within the genre are very many works well recognised as vital contributions to our understanding of public life and human experience.

Although not given similar publicity, much of the field's implicit dynamic comes from its second genre. Here is hitherto unseen public and private primary material being placed in the public domain. The value of such archival releases has long been recognised as a vital aspect in participatory democracy. New document releases by national archives attract considerable attention. Many governments have amended their closed periods; with the British National Archives changing from a thirty to a twenty year closed period. Published volumes of private political papers are core works within this genre. Editions of private diaries of political life²⁵, secret diaries²⁶, collected writings and speeches²⁷, and confidential off-the-record interviews²⁸

²¹ See "Nadine Gordimer", *Prisms*, and Interviews with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, 5th March and 6th February 2003.

²² Interview with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, 23rd January 2003.

²³ For further details of this event, see Interview with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, 23rd January 2003.

²⁴ See William Zissner (ed), *Inventing the Truth. The Art and Craft of Memoir*, (Mariner Books, New York, 1998); John Lancaster, "Not My Fault", *London Review of Books*, vol 30, no 14, 17th July 2008; Dominic Sandbrook, "Why are political memoirs so disappointing?", *The Telegraph*, 20th May 2010, Daniel Mendelsohn, "But Enough About Me. What does the popularity of memoirs tell us about ourselves?", *The New Yorker*, 25th January 2010.

²⁵ The deservedly best modern examples is Alan Clark's *Diaries*, (Weidenfield & Nicholson, London, 1993).

²⁶ For example Albert Speer, *Spandau. The Secret Diaries*, (translated by Richard and Clara Winston), (MacMillan

are similarly vital parts of this primary source genre. Archivists note a growing interest amongst the public to preserve private or family records and artefacts. The internet and digital technology has allowed for often voluminous collections of such public and private material to be widely accessible. More recently, as in the *WikiLeaks* controversy, other disclosures of state material has been indiscriminate, random and lacking any ethical or methodological rigour and responsibility.²⁹

It is widely acknowledged that autobiographies, memoirs and the publication of primary material, both public and private, are essential elements in on-going struggles against authoritarian regimes and abuses and misuses of power in democratic societies. Regarding memoir, the best and most egregious recent example must surely be the Valerie Plame Wilson case.³⁰ In so far as primary sources are concerned, the most famous modern example must be concerning President Nixon, Watergate and the White House tapes.³¹ Since the end of the Cold War and the emergence of new democratising states critically important collections of previously secret archives of overthrown authoritarian regimes are being used for scholarly research.³² In this way such publication becomes vital not only for their content. The very act of publication and making publicly accessible becomes a vindication of struggles against such abuses, and allows for wider public discourses on the matter.³³ Public access and publication is public interest.

The third and the last of these interlinked genres are both not primary sources. They are contemporary political biography, and elite oral interviews. As with political autobiographies and memoirs, a wider reading public has long been fascinated by political biographies, particularly contemporary political biography.³⁴ There is public debate, and a deeper scholarly interest - and concern - over the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary political biography.³⁵ The final genre consists of elite oral interviews with leading political figures and their decision-making associates. These are formal tape recorded, and now often filmed, interviews; transcribed and archived, undertaken after sometimes long political and public lives have concluded. These interviews may be either life history interviews, or more incident-based or thematic in scope.³⁶ With distinct strengths and weaknesses such interviews have become an ever more important, accepted, and respected aspect in this wider field.³⁷

These are the wider international informed public and scholarly contexts in which an edited collection from Mewa Ramgobin's private political papers is now published. Whilst this collection contains only primary source material, there are very many inter linkages between this material

Publishing Company, London, 1976).

²⁷ See for example James M. Washington (ed), Martin Luther King Jr, *A Testament of Hope. The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr*, (HarperOne, reprint, New York, 2003).

²⁸ For example W.P. Crozier's *Off the Record. Political Interviews, 1933-1943*, (Hutchinson & Co, London, 1973).

²⁹ See Benedetta Brevini, et al, (eds), *Beyond WikiLeaks. Implications for the Future of Communications, Journalism and Society*, (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2013).

³⁰ See Valerie Plame Wilson, *Fair Game. My life as a spy, my betrayal by the White House*, (Simon & Schuster, New York, 2007) and Joseph Wilson, *The Politics of Truth. Inside the lies that led to war and betrayed my wife's CIA identity. A Diplomat's memoir*, (Carroll & Graf, New York, 2004).

³¹ See *The White House Transcripts. Submission of Recorded Presidential Conversations to the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives by President Richard Nixon*, (Bantam Book, New York, 1974)

³² For examples Anthony Glee, *The Stasi Files. East Germany's Secret Operations Against Britain*, (Free Press, London, 2003), <http://news.yale.edu/2011/11/30/yale-university-press-launches-stalin-digital-archive>; and www.casavaria.com/cafesentido/2009/05/14/2719/a-tragedy-to-shock-the-world-secret-zhao-memoirs-acknowledge-tiananmen-massacre/.

³³ John Weiner, *Gimme Some Truth. John Lennon's FBI Files*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2000).

³⁴ See Nigel Hamilton, *Biography. A Brief History*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2010).

³⁵ Ben Pimlott, "Is Contemporary Biography History?" *The Political Quarterly*, vol 7, no 1 (January 1999); Mark Bostridge (ed), *Lives for Sale. Biographer's Tales*, (Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2004); Barbara Caine, *Biography and History*, (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2010); and Patrick O'Brien, "Is Political Biography a Good Thing", *Contemporary British History*, vol 10, no 4 (1996)

³⁶ See Robert L. Peabody et al, "Interviewing Political Elites", *Political Science and Politics*, vol 23, no 3, (September 1990); Jeffrey Berry, "Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing", *ibid*, vol 35, no 4, (December 2002); and Darren Lilliker, "Interviewing the Political Elite. Navigating a potential Minefield", *Politics*, vol 23, no 3 (September 2003).

³⁷ See for example the extent of the oral interview collections in the J.F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. See <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Search-Our-Collections.aspx>

and a wider set of information now publically available on modern South African history, and in particular the anti-Apartheid struggles.

Internationally, there is no clear understanding of the meaning of a personal collection of private papers. There is also no scholarly consensus on approaches to collation and presentation. Editorial decisions are very much dependent upon the nature of the material. There are no sets of international standards. For this collection wide comparative international examples provide context, influence and inspiration. The chosen format is rooted in ethical, scholarly and editorial principles.³⁸

The editor of such a collection has responsibility for a variety of tasks. The skills of the archivist, contemporary historian and political analyst are required. There are six main responsibilities. First, the authenticity and provenance of the original material collections must be verified. Second, the chosen material must be both representative of the collection and historically important. Third, this material must be ordered in an appropriate fashion. Fourth, the material must be placed in relevant historical contexts. Fifth, there are ethical issues inherent in publishing previously private and publicly unseen, often secret, contemporary material. Finally and ultimately, the collection must be presented and arranged in a manner which facilitates readability, understanding and stimulated interest.

Mewa Ramgobin's private political papers were gathered from a range of places over a number of years. This is not a collection that has been created, collated and systematically stored together over time in one place. Material arrived in a variety of packaging: files, envelopes, boxes and packets. Some material had been carefully preserved; others hadn't. Papers were sometimes filed neatly. Many other components were unruly assemblages. As the collection grew it became starkly evident that files and material were of very different historic status.

A large file containing all Ramgobin's and his lawyers and other's correspondence with the Minister of Justice in regard to his banning and house arrest orders and circumstances was in scrupulous chronological order. How could this be otherwise? After all it was these original documents which, grotesquely, empowered the state and its officials to control, monitor and sanction Ramgobin's day to day life plans and his legal rights. Considering its import, this file was sacrosanct; an untouchable reference file.

Some cherished files had clearly been created and kept by Ramgobin's family. Here were letters from Mewa to Ela and their children written by Mewa from the British Consulate in Durban, and the Pietermaritzburg New Prison and Durban Central Prison. Files containing Ramgobin's poetry were clearly kept by both himself and at least one other member of the family. Some, if not all, of this material has clearly survived by being assembled and stored discreetly, if not also secretly.

There are many working files. Here are files sequences made without any nod to future coherence let alone public posterity and accessibility. Here are the documentary markings of oppositional groupings neither enjoying nor, self-evidently from their very nature, expecting any legal protection. There are few indications of administrative support. There are obvious and apparent gaps. There are few agendas and minutes. There are no files dealing with organisational finances. Within these files many original documents had been photocopied, often many times over, and appear in numerous files. Some file covers had been re-named, sometimes often. These were clearly campaign operational files; mainly from the NIC and UDF periods.

Significantly, there are very many files devoted to newspaper clippings and photocopied clippings; mainly from the 1980's. Ramgobin was the Public Relations and Press Officer for the NIC and UDF in Natal. Clearly some person or persons were tasked with conducting a thorough

³⁸ Richard J. Cox & David A. Wallace, *Archives and the Public Good. Accountability and Records in Modern Society*, (Praeger, New York, 2002).

search and retrieval from the South African and, often, international press coverage on South Africa during the 1980's.³⁹ It appears evident that this material was viewed as highly strategic in two important senses. First, as research information: for keeping 'abreast of the times'. But there was a clearly more important issue. These were files created for political activists who were media savvy. These were after all the same people who got politically loyal professional media and advertising experts to conceive of the UDF's emblematic slogan: 'UDF Unites, Apartheid Divides'.⁴⁰ The strategic brilliance of this slogan cannot be underestimated. These were people who understood how vital it was to keep up a public profile. It is quite apparent that by the 1980s NIC and most particularly UDF media statements were carefully and tactically prepared after assessments of national and foreign media trends. As the anti-Apartheid struggles in general were the world's first truly global political campaign, so the UDF's campaigns in the 1980's became the first example of the strategic use of mass media in South Africa liberation politics.

Mewa Ramgobin's private political papers, as now assembled, is a substantial collection. Three points required clarification. First, as a general point, private political papers do have gaps. In politics information is not always communicated in writing; indeed quite the opposite. Further, material does get misplaced, accidentally, or otherwise disposed of. Second, the milieu in which Ramgobin and his associates conducted their politics was hardly a 'normal' one. In his own letters Ramgobin reveals his awareness of the state's postal and telephonic surveillance. The anti-Apartheid struggle was often a clandestine world; of secrecy and surveillance, where forms of communication, oral or written word, had particular strengths and weaknesses. Again these features are all too apparent in much of the material presented in this volume. Finally, the state frequently conducted raids, where material was confiscated. This happened just after Ramgobin was served with his first banning order and similar confiscations occurred over the years.⁴¹

As documentary examples in this collection show in their grotesque frequency people like Ramgobin's daily personal, professional and financial lives were continuously overshadowed by their restrictive orders and concomitant bureaucratic procedures.⁴² As fathers and mothers, Mewa and Ela had to ask permission to attend events marking their children's rites of passage.⁴³ Ramgobin was denied permission to attend funerals of his friends and political associates, including Rick Turner - himself assassinated by South African police agents.⁴⁴ Ramgobin was the target of South Africa's first parcel-bomb attack. Ramgobin's family was drawn, innocently, into webs of deceit.⁴⁵ There were cat-and-mouse games.⁴⁶ There were informers and agents.⁴⁷

It is no accident that the first chronologically dated document in Ramgobin's correspondence is his first banning order. Sadly none of this confiscated material has ever been traced, let alone returned to Ramgobin. Together Ramgobin and I have made concerted efforts to trace this personal and family material. It is a matter of considerable regret that neither parliamentary, nor party political or state instances have seen such genuine desires as a principled priority of restorative justice.

This collection draws from three components of Ramgobin's private political papers. First and most centrally, are Ramgobin's correspondence, speeches and articles and private reflective writings. Second, there is material from anti-Apartheid organisations and movements, most notably the NIC and the UDF, and long held by Ramgobin as his private possessions. Third, the

³⁹ It is clear from Ramgobin's Directorate of Security Legislation files that the state was doing precisely the same. See for example Part 6, Section 1, Documents 8, 13 & 14.

⁴⁰ Interview with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, 25th February 2003.

⁴¹ For Ramgobin's sense of how to remember the Security Police raids and other intrusions see "Imitations of Light, Darkness and Fury", *Prisms*, pp. 146-149.

⁴² Part 2, Section 1, Documents 38, 44 & 76.

⁴³ Part 2, Section 1, Document 115.

⁴⁴ Part 6, Section 1, Documents 107 and 108.

⁴⁵ Part 7, Section 1, Document 12.

⁴⁶ Interview with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, 10th March 2003.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, Document 7.

South African National Archives has provided Ramgobin with a full copy of his personal file from the records of the Apartheid South African state's Directorate of Security Legislation.

The Directorate of Security Legislation's key task was to gather and analyse information gained from the state's security services and to advise the Minister over the issuing of banning or other restriction notices. Having antecedents, the Directorate itself was established in 1982 and disbanded in 1991. It is now accepted that the operational archives of other state security and intelligence agencies were destroyed. Further, after 1994 the integrity of the Directorate's own records maintenance was investigated by the National Archives, with concern over unauthorised destruction of records.

Each of these three components to Ramgobin's private papers has a distinct provenance. Yet they are related, albeit discordantly. One is rooted in the private; another in the public; the other in the secret. One is personal; one located within public political organisation; and the third within the state. All three components reflect a desire to influence public actions, debate and policy. All are concerned with knowledge and power.

Fittingly so, and in line with international trends, there is also a fourth component part to Ramgobin's private political papers. Soon after Ramgobin and my initial discussions as to my roles of researching, collating, preparing and editing, it was evident that a fifth role was critically necessary. As part of the overall memoir project, from 2002 through to 2006 Ramgobin and I conducted numerous interviews. There were four broad themes. First chronologically structured life history interviews. Second, interviews dealing with specific issues, events or personalities. Third, interviews dealing with particular questions: leadership, political philosophies and so forth. Finally, interviews also dealt with the history of his political papers. Many interviews were confidential and unrecorded. Over sixty hours of interviews were recorded, all of which is now fully transcribed. This record now forms a fourth component to Ramgobin's private political collection. Hopefully soon, this entire collection of material will soon find a permanent publically accessible archival home.

Over time Ramgobin and I have separately and together chosen material for publication.⁴⁸ Discussion, gradual aggregation and assemblage, and then heavy excision created a final selection within six themes. First, individuals must be understood as nuanced social characters of humane complexity. Second, we must see the making and development of Mewa Ramgobin as a political person and leader. The third theme concerns the relationships between the individual and institutional political structures, characteristics and dynamics; including both their public presentation and internal workings. Fourth, we see the relationships between the state, citizens and subjects. The final two themes are those posing far wider moral, ethical and political questions. The fifth theme concerns the relationships between personal understandings and interpretations of the past as history, and human agency and political action. Finally, we seek to ask of human emancipation and freedom. How do individuals strive to define and make their freedom? What are the spiritual and moral dimensions to such emancipatory politics? What are the consequences of deeply held beliefs? What of moral courage, and the forge of leadership? These six chosen themes criss-cross the entire collection.

The contest between the Apartheid state and its foes was conflict-ridden and violent. Humanity was tested. Historical legitimacy was contested. The Apartheid state presided over a system which legitimated certain political and historical sources whilst vigorously suppressing others. For over a decade and a half Ramgobin was unable to legally speak or write for a South African public audience. Much political action was conducted secretly, covertly and clandestinely.

Post-Apartheid society calls for greater historical and political awareness and openness. This very process is essential to deepening democracy. Yet this imperative must be respected without causing unwarranted or unnecessary personal public exposure. Ethical, historical,

⁴⁸ This collection does not contain material from the archives of the Phoenix Settlement Trust. It is for the Trustees to decide when, where and how these records shall be made publicly accessible.

moral and political issues are complexly interwoven. Realms historical, political, private and public are dynamic; their inter-relationships continually changing. Interpretations of these inter-relationships differ. These differences are essential parts of political discourse. Published genres on political knowledge lie within and reflect fundamental aspects of this complexity.

Private and state papers can and do have confidences and secrets. Publication is public disclosure. Societies have a legitimate need to gain deeper understanding through evaluating new sources. But people, beliefs and associations can be unnecessarily harmed by historical revelation and public disclosure. Historical imagination is acutely sensitive. Ethically, morally and politically it is impossible to pretend otherwise. These are issues of political and historical research ethics of wider international import. Yet these very issues are most pressingly felt in transitional societies emerging from long periods of oppressive government. This is being shown to be the case in new post-Cold War states across Africa, Asia, and Central Europe. Indeed these ethical dilemmas are one of the many very sharp legacies bestowed on youthful democracies by their pasts. These very conditions place acute responsibilities on the archivist, the editor and the contemporary historian in these societies.

Significantly, few politicians or parliamentarians active in the period between 1948 and 1990 have published autobiographies or memoirs. The four notable exceptions are F.W. de Klerk, Tony Leon, Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, and Helen Suzman. Three of these parliamentarians were leading political opponents of Apartheid. Suzman's political papers are now publically accessible.⁴⁹ F.W. de Klerk was the last leader of the National Party, whose February 2nd 1990 speech at the Opening of Parliament began the process of formal political negotiations which led to South Africa's first one-person one-vote elections in March 1994. Few National Party politicians or parliamentarians have left significant collections of private political papers in the public domain. A set of primary documents curated by F.W. de Klerk concerning the February 2nd speech and related matters is also publicly accessible.⁵⁰

In publishing this work, we pay express tribute to the founding, pivotal and continuing scholarly benchmark of the genre in South Africa: the *From Protest to Challenge* archival project and its publication series. Initiated by American academics Tom Karis and Gwendolen Carter the project focuses on collecting, archiving and publishing critical primary documents relating to the struggles for freedom in South Africa. Through their close association with the defence legal team during the epic Treason Trial from 1956 to 1964, Karis and Carter were provided with one complete set of the trial records of this mammoth and epoch defining trial. What was originally envisaged as a single edited documentary collection soon stretched into a much more ambitious and influential project. The series continues, under the leadership of Gail Gerhart, with volume 6, which covers the period from 1980 to 1990, recently having been published.⁵¹ Many years ago Ramgobin was interviewed by Gwendolen Carter. Gerhart has copied some of the documents which appear in this volume for incorporation within the *From Protest to Challenge* archive.

The Apartheid state restricted key microfilmed archival and published components of this collection. Personal possession of one volume: *Challenge and Violence, 1953 – 1964*, was deemed illegal. Only authorized libraries could hold the voluminous microfilmed material which lay behind the selected published material. Reading was deliberately restricted, authorised by written ministerial permission only. The law prohibited reproduction. Through legal, surreptitious and clandestine access, facilitation and circulation, the series became invaluable. In the South African political world the *From Protest to Challenge* series was not only a scholarly archive but also an indispensable political resource and stimulus. Indeed, within this collection Ramgobin gives direct documentary testimony to this. When Ramgobin and his colleagues planned the revival of the NIC they sought out a true copy of the Freedom Charter. None of them possessed a copy. At the formal re-launch of the NIC, held at Phoenix Settlement, the Security

⁴⁹ Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

⁵⁰ F.W. de Klerk Foundation.

⁵¹ Gail Gerhart and Clive Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge*, (volume 6), *Challenge and Victory, 1980-1990*, (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2010 & Jacana, Johannesburg, 2013)

Police attempted to distribute bogus copies.⁵² Later, in the months before the launch of the UDF, Fatima Meer came to their assistance, referring them to a book written by Gwendolen Carter containing a lengthy extract from the Freedom Charter.⁵³

Modern South African history and politics, and particularly the liberation and anti-Apartheid struggles, are themes that have attracted much popular interest, not only in South Africa, but internationally too. So, since the late 1980's and early 1990's autobiographies, memoirs and biographies of South Africa's post-Apartheid leadership has quickly become a rich, developing and dominant genre. So too, since 1990, and particularly since 1994, tremendous amounts of new information and analysis on these issues have come into the public domain. Throughout South Africa and internationally there are archives holding relevant collections; documentary, oral and visual.⁵⁴ There are seminal edited collections of primary source material and important printed and electronic sources providing both primary information and analysis.⁵⁵ Many new primary documentary sources; both from within the South African National Archives and a far wider set of sources, has become publicly accessible. However, many of the publicly released collections; so-called 'liberation archives', appear stripped of important material. Very many sound efforts have and continue to be made to collect oral histories of liberation histories. However the advent of freedom and democracy came when all too many critically important figures were aged and soon died, often before providing recorded and archived oral testimony. Some notable 'Struggle' personalities have made substantial private political papers publicly accessible. This edited collection from Mewa Ramgobin's private political papers is very much a part of these national and international traditions.

The period covered by Ramgobin's collection is well covered in a rich corpus of published reference and general secondary works. There are bibliographies and dictionaries of biography.⁵⁶ There are reference works on South African political organizations⁵⁷ and lexicons on key South African historical and political terms and linguistic usage.⁵⁸ There are many excellent general histories.

Gandhi's life has been much studied. This is particularly so within the fields of biography; imperial and colonial history and politics; South African history, local history, and heritage and myth; Indian history, and twentieth century philosophy and religion.⁵⁹ Anti-Apartheid and black political challenges to the Apartheid state during the 1980's have been well studied.⁶⁰ There are

⁵² Interview with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, 6th February 2003.

⁵³ Part 2, Section 1, Document 129.

⁵⁴ See for example the British Anti-Apartheid Movement archive, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Rhodes House, University of Oxford (www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk).

⁵⁵ See for examples the Nelson Mandela Centre for Memory collections (www.nelsonmandela.org/), and in particular the Pdraig O' Malley archives (www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv01508.htm) and South African History On-Line (www.sahistory.org.za/).

⁵⁶ Shelia Gastrow, *Who's Who in South African Politics*, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg 1985,1987,1990,1992 & 1995).

⁵⁷ See Robert Davies and Dan O' Meara, *The Struggle for South Africa: A Reference Guide to Movements, Organisations and Institutions*, 2 vols, (Zed, London, revised edition 1988) and H.J. Kotzé & Anneke Greyling, *Political Organizations in South Africa, A-Z*, and (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1991).

⁵⁸ Dene Smuts, Shauna Westcott, Margaret Nash, *The Purple Shall Govern*, (Oxford University Press, Centre for Intergroup Studies, 1991) and Barbara Ludman & Paul Stober, *A-Z of South African Politics*, (Jacana, Johannesburg, 2004).

⁵⁹ See for examples Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1991); Guy de Mallac, *Gandhi's Seven Steps to Global Change*, (Ocean Tree Books, Santa Fe 1990); Ela Gandhi, *Mohandas Gandhi, the South Africa Years*, (Maskew Miller, Cape Town, 1994); David Hardiman, *Gandhi in his time and ours; the global legacy of his ideas*, (Columbia University Press, 2004); Eric Itzin, *Gandhi's Johannesburg, birthplace of Satyagraha*, (Wits University Press & Museum Africa, Johannesburg, 2000); Joseph Lelyveld, *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle with India*, (Vintage, New York, 2012); Jay Naidoo, *Tracking Down Historical Myths. Either South African Examples*, (Ad. Donker, Johannesburg, 1989); B. R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography*, (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996); Shanti Sadiq Ali (ed), *Gandhi and South Africa*, (Hind Pocket Books, Delhi, 1994); Manfred Steger, *Gandhi's Dilemma: Nonviolent Principles and Nationalist Power*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); and Maureen Swan, *Gandhi, the South African Experience*, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1985).

⁶⁰ For examples see Gregory Houston, *The National Liberation Struggle in South Africa: A Case Study of the United Democratic Front, 1983-1987*, (Ashgate Publishing, London, 1999); Tom Lodge and Bill Nasson, *All, Here and Now. Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980's*, (Ford Foundation, New York, 1991); SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, volume 3 (1980-1990), (UNISA Press, Pretoria, 2010), Jeremy Seekings, *The UDF. A History Of United*

general scholarly survey analyses of the NIC and UDF.⁶¹ A study focuses on political dynamics within liberation politics.⁶² There is an analysis of black student politics in the post-1960 period.⁶³ There is no organisational history of NUSAS. There are important studies on the role of churches and faith communities in the anti-Apartheid struggles.⁶⁴ Since 1994 a study into aspects of the Apartheid state's security apparatus complements earlier work on the subject.⁶⁵ Some scholarly works are concerned with political trials.⁶⁶ There are a number of studies in contemporary history and politics offering insights into the period from February 1990 to 1994.⁶⁷ Scholarly works focus on the ways in which these pasts are remembered in post-Apartheid South Africa.⁶⁸

Yet there are very few autobiographies, memoirs or biographies of anti-apartheid activism inside South Africa.⁶⁹ The leading exception must be the biography of Trevor Manuel; himself a leading figure in the Western Cape UDF.⁷⁰ Aside from Ramgobin, none of the other `Consulate Six` have left records, or written or have been interviewed about that pivotal moment in their lives.⁷¹ Of the Pietermaritzburg Treason Trialists, only Frank Chikane has written an autobiography.⁷² This is revealing. The only such work to touch on matters closely related to Ramgobin's is Ismail Meer's memoirs.⁷³ Considering how closely they worked together, at one stage meeting almost daily, it is remarkable how little mention Meer writes of Ramgobin.⁷⁴ Other works provide insights into Gandhi's lineage, in particular Nana Sita and Manilal Gandhi, and his legacy in South Africa.⁷⁵ Fatima Meer has edited a collection of accounts of the 1985 *State versus Ramgobin and Others* Pietermaritzburg Treason Trial.⁷⁶ In 1992 and at the request of the government of India an Indian academic came to South Africa to investigate the state of `people of Indian origin` in South Africa. His published journal provides revealing insights derived from numerous interviews, including with Ramgobin.⁷⁷ Phyllis Naidoo, a former NIC and South African Communist Party (SACP) stalwart later active in exile, has written about the political nexus of Grey Street in Durban. As Ramgobin does, Naidoo also recognises the enormous political significance of what occurred in the Grey Street locale.⁷⁸ In style very similar to Ramgobin's vignettes in *Prisms* she presents profiles of the various people who lived, worked

Democratic Front In South Africa, 1983-1991, (Ohio University Press, Athens, 2000); Ineke van Kessel, *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams, the United Democratic Front and the transformation of South Africa*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 2000).

⁶¹ See respectively Bhana, S, and *Gandhi's Legacy. The Natal Indian Congress, 1894-1994*, (University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1997); Houston, G, *The National Liberation Struggle in South Africa: A Case Study of the United Democratic Front, 1983-1987*, (Brookfield, Vermont, 1999); Seekings, J, *The UDF. A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1991*, (Ohio University Press, 2000) and Van Kessel, I, *"Beyond Our Wildest Dreams": The United Democratic Front and the Transformation of South Africa*, (University of Virginia Press, 2000)

⁶² Alison Drew, *Discordant Comrades. Identities and Loyalties on the South African Left*, (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2000).

⁶³ See Saleem Badat, *Black student politics: higher education and apartheid from SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990*, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, 1999).

⁶⁴ Bob Clarke, *Anglicans against Apartheid, 1936-1996*, (Cluster Publication, Pietermaritzburg, 2008).

⁶⁵ James Sanders, *Apartheid's Friends; the rise and fall of South Africa's secret service*, (John Murray, London, 2006), Kenneth Grundy, *The rise of the South African security establishment*, (South African Institute for International Affairs, Johannesburg, 1983) and South African Institute of Race Relations, *Administration of Security Legislation in South Africa*, (SAIRR Research Department, Johannesburg, 1979).

⁶⁶ See Michael Lobban, *White Man's Justice. South African Political Trials in the Black Consciousness Era*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996).

⁶⁷ See for example David Welsh, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, (University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 2010).

⁶⁸ Hans Erik Stolten, (ed), *History Making and Present Day Politics. The Meaning of collective memory in South Africa*, (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, 2007).

⁶⁹ For biographical sketches of UDF activists, including Ramgobin, see <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/governance-projects/organisations/udf/biographies.htm> and *Interview with Mewa Ramgobin*, Southern African Freedom Struggles 1950-1994, <http://www.disa.nu.ac.za>.

⁷⁰ Pippa Green, *Choice, Not Fate. The Life and Times of Trevor Manuel*, (Penguin, Johannesburg, 2008).

⁷¹ See "Sir Simon Davey" in *Prisms*, pp. 166 – 169.

⁷² Chikane, F. *No Life of My Own. An Autobiography*, (Wipf & Stock, Eugene, reprint, 2010).

⁷³ Meer, I, *A Fortunate Man*, (Struik Publishers, Cape Town, 2003)

⁷⁴ Interview with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, session 22, 10th March 2003.

⁷⁵ Dhupelia-Mesthrie, U, *Sita. Memoirs of Sita Gandhi*, (Durban Local History Museum, Durban, 2003) and *Gandhi's Prisoner? The Life of Gandhi's Son Manilal*, (Kwela Books, Cape Town, 2007)

⁷⁶ Meer, F, (ed), *Treason Trial – 1985*, (Madiba Publishers, Durban, 1989). A full record of the trial is available in Gilbert Marcus's papers at Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

⁷⁷ Hiremath, JR, *Summering in South Africa. Diary by and Indian Indian*, Willey Eastern Limited, New Delhi, 1993).

⁷⁸ See the `Lodson House Circles` vignette

and were politically active in the area.⁷⁹ Similarly, there are now cultural heritage trails honouring the writers and poets of Grey Street and a similar trail through Ramgobin's one time colleague Alan Paton's Pietermaritzburg.⁸⁰ Attempts continue to develop a sustainable heritage trail in Inanda.⁸¹ Phoenix Settlement itself is a diminished site; overrun and encircled by encroaching informal housing.

It is presumed that the reader of this collection will have an informed knowledge or access to this tradition and its published public reference pointers and main historical analyses and contexts. Yet editors do not desert readers. Historical sources do not `speak for themselves`. A line must thus be found between providing editorial clarity of context, presentation and reference and making those analytic and interpretive decisions which must rightfully be the reader's.

This is a vitally important but difficult balance. This is so for three important reasons.

First, within this collection is unique and vitally important primary material. Few other personal collections offer such rich insights into the internal dynamics of South Africa anti-Apartheid liberation politics. No prison letters such as these have yet been published or are in a public archival domain.⁸² So too no other political leader of that time has provided important primary documentation on the very complex liberation politics between February 1990 and March 1994. This was an exceptionally crucial, difficult and very fluid moment in liberation politics.⁸³ Similarly Ramgobin was the only NIC or Natal UDF leader who, in the post-1990 period, rose to prominence in the ANC⁸⁴.

Second, appropriately led by the post-1994 South African government, South Africans have fashioned a rich public heritage: monuments, fictive and non-fictive literatures, and a wider arts and public culture on the anti-Apartheid struggles. Much within this collection amplifies these very public heritages. Much offers entirely new and important perspectives. Much of Ramgobin's material challenges current public perceptions on that remembered and re-imagined past.

Finally, the pro-democracy anti-Apartheid and liberation struggles live on in contemporary South Africa. But they live on not only as heritage and memory. This past lives on in legacies. These documents point to the importance of recognising that legacy, in all its rich complexity.

Readers will understand these points as they read further. To best assist in this vitally necessary pursuit, these documents are presented in as logically clear and cleanly accessible form as possible.

This published collection is divided into seven Parts. These Parts correspond to a particular sort of primary material. Where appropriate each Part is divided into Sections, again according to the status of the material. Within each section the numerical sequence listing each document commences anew.

In the main, all Ramgobin's writings are in English, with some use of words from *Hindi*, *isiZulu* or *fanagalo* - South Africa's pidgin *lingua franca* - and other languages. These words or phrases have been retained, with English translations provided. The majority of the chosen material derived from the Directorate of Security Legislation is originally in *Afrikaans* and has been fully

⁷⁹ Naidoo, P, *Footprints in Grey Street*, (Author's manuscript copy)

⁸⁰ See the `Grey Street Writers' Literary Trail` Guild and `Alan Paton's Pietermaritzburg` Literary Trail.

⁸¹ For details on the Inanda Heritage Trail see www.durbanexperience.co.za/

⁸² In this regard, there are three important works, two containing invaluable prison letters: Ruth First's, *117 Days*, (Penguin Classics reprint, London, 2009), Jenny Schreiner's, *Time Stretching Fear*, (Mayibuye Books, Cape Town, 2000), and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's very recently published *491 Days. Prison Number 1323/69*, (Picador Africa, Johannesburg, 2013).

⁸³ Gastrow's *Who's Who* editions (1985, 1987, 1990, 1992 and 1994) provide an invaluable perspective on this fluidity in liberation leadership. From the 1987 edition onwards volumes provided easily readable listing entry name per edition.

⁸⁴ Part 6, Section 3, Document 11.

translated into English.

The material in this collection covers a time period of around thirty years. There are many authors. Over the years writing styles, always highly personalized, change. No attempt has been made to alter intrinsic writing styles. Documents have however been cleaned up, with obvious grammatical and spelling errors corrected. Such editorial intervention does not detract from the original style, syntax and meaning but does allow for improved readability and comprehension. Aged handwritten and typed material is all too frequently difficult to read or illegible. Such illegible words or phrases are indicated.

All editorial citation for Mewa Ramgobin is as MR. All editorial comment appears as italicized within square brackets. All text, punctuation and other references printed in normal text are original to the document. Unless otherwise significant, all addresses have been abbreviated to place and date.

In selecting material for publication Mewa Ramgobin and I have carefully considered issues relating to confidentiality. All the material presented in this collection is between fifty-five and twenty years old. Nevertheless documents have been omitted for reasons of confidentiality. Documents have been included within this collection but with names or sections of the material withheld. This allows for public disclosure of important material whilst protecting individuals, including state officials, and preserving confidences. These editorial decisions are so indicated in the relevant documents. No document, whatever its security classification, that was used to persecute or prosecute Ramgobin and his colleagues or that formed part of any public trial record has been redacted in any substantial or meaningful form.

Mewa Ramgobin has opened up his private political papers as an expression of faith in a developing common South African humanity. In presenting this volume Mewa Ramgobin and my essential aim is to provide a wider informed public with important new material sources presented in an accessibly scholarly and readable fashion. We trust that this collection will stimulate historical reflection, greater humility and compassion, and the vigorous, disciplined and ethically based thought so imperative to the wider pursuit of freedom. This after all is core to the very chronicle of Ramgobin's public political life.

As this collection was finalised for print, some South Africans celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the formation of the UDF, on the 20th August 1983. Since 1994, the South African government has placed South Africa's anti-Apartheid and `Struggle` history centre-stage in the country's public heritage. 2012 was declared `Heritage Year`.⁸⁵ However, the South African and ANC President made no speech, at any venue, which covered the anniversary of the UDF's founding. Nor did the Presidency issue any public statement or message on that occasion. So too for the South African Deputy President, the Minister of Arts and Culture, the Premier of the Western Cape, and the Western Cape Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) for Culture.

But there was an anniversary event on Tuesday the 20th August 2013. And it was at the Rocklands Civic Centre; the very hall where some 15,000 people had gathered on a cold, windy and rainy Saturday thirty years past. Focussing on this anniversary event *The New Age* newspaper hosted one of its regular breakfast time `Business Briefings`, covered live by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC).

The keynote speaker was Popo Molefe, a past secretary general of the UDF, more recently ex-Northern Cape Premier, and currently a leading businessman. Revealingly, Molefe remembered the core mission of the UDF as being the "unbanning [of] the liberation movements", with the consequent decision to "close down" the UDF after the ANC's unbanning being thus demonstrably politically correct. Molefe pointed to the value of self-sacrifice and asked rhetorically if South Africans still hold true to such values.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ <http://www.sabc.co.za/news/> 31st December 2011.

⁸⁶ Siyabonga Mkhwanazi, "UDF achieved its aims – Molefe", *The New Age*, 21st August 2013.

Veteran Western Cape journalist and newspaper editor, and then youthful activist, Ryland Fisher noted how no ex-senior UDF leaders aside from Popo Molefe attended the “low-key” breakfast event. The ranking government leaders in attendance were newly appointed Minister of Human Settlements, Connie September; then a young unionised textile worker, and a Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Marius Fransman, who thirty years ago was “in his early teens”. Fisher pointed to a larger political picture. On its unbanning the ANC was keen to disband the UDF, “maybe sensing [it] could pose a threat to South Africa’s oldest liberation movement.” Pointing to the present, Fisher saw the lacklustre tone of this 30th anniversary as showing a serious missed political opportunity: for “government, the ANC, and especially former UDF activists.” Fischer pointed to the importance of the “values” embodied in the UDF politics. Whilst not elucidating further, he issued a call for contemporary South Africans to reflect on this vital issue.⁸⁷

Two further articles, by liberation and trade union stalwarts Ronnie Kasrils and Jay Naidoo used the anniversary to publicly decry how heirs to the `struggle` have now veered very far from original ideals and principles.⁸⁸ The importance of these and Fisher’s calls is clearly shown in a leader page article by a “*The New Age* reader”. Here the formation and history of the UDF is placed in historically inaccurate, analytically barren, ANC-centred macro-heroic narrative contexts of most unhelpful, evidentially devoid, and intellectually confusing sorts.⁸⁹

A further article and a leader article also covered the anniversary. The article provided a brief historical outline of the UDF’s formation, rather than also its organisational history, and then interviewed former UDF members, and youth now living in the Rocklands area. They stressed how the area remains in poverty, with political promises not having been kept. The Rev. Frank Chikane, one of the co-accused with Ramgobin, stressed how corrosive corruption was an entirely unexpected development within a movement with powerful spiritual dimensions.⁹⁰ The leader article was by Pravin Gordhan, then a key university student and activist, later underground cadre, and currently Minister of Finance.⁹¹ Carefully avoiding the larger issues of relations between exiled liberation movements and UDF activism; the *exiles* and *inziles* of Ramgobin’s writings⁹² and `Terror` Lekota’s later public statements⁹³; Gordhan made important points. Gordhan spoke of deepening a politics of principle, of the enormous power of ethically rooted ideas and action, and of the need for a new public politics for the greater good. Here Gordhan spoke not of the stale Lenin-esque senses of the cadre, but of volunteerism in ways strikingly similar to Ramgobin.⁹⁴

In September 1993 a ceasefire was agreed to between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the Mass Democratic Movement. Commencing in 1987, political contestation in Natal and KwaZulu was marked by extraordinary levels of political intolerance, violence, havoc wrought on many communities, and the killing many thousands of civilians. Much of Ramgobin and other’s endeavours were aimed at ending this violent struggle for political supremacy at all costs. This twentieth anniversary passed almost without notice.⁹⁵

Mewa Ramgobin’s private political papers offer us critical insights into wider issues so vital to South African’s maturing democracy. Reading through the documents will offer readers a real sense of humanity; of people interacting as historical actors, none in full control of their own destiny. This sense of humanity in action is often lost in the great public narratives. Readers will see vitally important features all too easily overlooked in public heritage narratives of South

⁸⁷ Ryland Fisher, “Lessons from the Front still apply”, *Saturday Star*, 24th August 2013.

⁸⁸ See Ronnie Kasrils, ‘Heirs to the Struggle do it no justice’, *Mail & Guardian*, 23rd to 29th August 2013 and Jay Naidoo, “We are drifting down”, *The Times*, 19th August 2013.

⁸⁹ See Siyanda Mhlongo, ‘The Freedom Charter must be our moral guide’, *The New Age*, 21st August 2013.

⁹⁰ Glynnis Underhill, “Poverty sours UDF’s glory days”, *Mail & Guardian*, 23rd – 30th August 2013.

⁹¹ Pravin Gordhan, “a formidable show of resistance”, *Sunday Times*, 25th August 2013.

⁹² Part Six, Section 4, Document 9.

⁹³ For insights into this intriguing and important public debate see for example <http://lists.fahamu.org/pipermail/debate-list/2008-December/019082.html>

⁹⁴ See “Volunteerism”, *Prisms*, pp. 36-38.

⁹⁵ Sihle Mavuso, “Ceasefire remembered”, *The New Age*, 6th September 2013.

Africa's recent past. Readers will also see the vast and complex range of political and moral philosophies which Ramgobin draws on, often implicitly, as he develops his political views. `The Struggle` is a composite rubric, attempting to embrace a very wide variety of political views, and strategies and tactics. In this they will also realize that Mewa Ramgobin's writings offer us a wider context. The anti-Apartheid struggle was a vital feature in a far wider and longer human quest.

In the poem Ramgobin penned in the British Consulate, he wrote of the larger issues of humanity. Much later on, in the early 1990's, he wrote of how political parties come and go, but the ideas, philosophies and spiritual principles which they draw on in their temporal quests, will far outlive them.⁹⁶ Although he rarely was able to set forth these views in any systematic fashion, this quest is central to Ramgobin's life interest.

Throughout his political life, Ramgobin was continually concerned with a wider more spiritual and philosophical quest. Born and brought up in Inanda, Ramgobin lived in a world where African theology; Mission School Christianity, for boys and girls; African independent apostolic Christianising faith communities; and Hindi and Muslim temples and mosques existed side by side and together. People knew each other. They related, with respect. And then, of course, there was his abiding interest in Gandhi; in his syncretic compassion, his moral courage, and his spiritually based political bravery and principle. Indeed, during the UDF period Ramgobin often saw the need to develop a more Gandhian sense of resistance and liberation politics in action; rather than a politics of increasing levels of violent confrontation.⁹⁷

Ramgobin's mental world view is not a specifically anti-Western one. Indeed, from his youth onwards, Ramgobin saw much that was aspirational in American enterprise, culture and democracy. He recognises the enormous benefits of modernity, but understands the need for societies across the world to seek to harness and channel that modernity into forces for their post-imperial and post-colonial benefit. What Ramgobin truly and vehemently opposes are triumphalist forms of superiority and prejudice: cultural, national, political and racial. After all, Ramgobin experienced these attitudes and behaviours first-hand; living and working in Durban.

Ramgobin's core mental worlds seek spiritual and political richness in cultures and societies emergent from centuries of oppression and exploitation. His views are longitudinal, not of latitudes. And looking into South Africa he recognises these very same dynamics, but now through centuries of migration, existing within one country. In landmark speeches to the National Assembly Ramgobin showed how all of South Africa's languages have words for the same vital set of human emotions: of humanity and compassion.⁹⁸ In this way, as properly defined and publicly celebrated, *ubuntu* thus joins rather than supplants other key words and terms in other South African languages expressing the same human emotion.

Along with the political priests so influential within the UDF, Revs. Allan Boesak, Frank Chikane, and Ds. Beyers Naudè, Ramgobin also speaks and writes of `love`, `compassion` and `reconciliation` as vital humane qualities in the conduct of all public affairs.⁹⁹ And he understands these vital humane attributes not as weaknesses, but as immensely strong.¹⁰⁰ Ramgobin's writings in *Prisms of Light* are never politically negative; even when dealing with political adversaries. Rather there are vignettes revealing humanity in trying times.¹⁰¹

From this wider interest, Ramgobin was able to understand deeper meaning in six critically important and very South African issues. Throughout this work Ramgobin and his colleagues are continually referring to themselves as `South Africans`. And they do this often in conditions

⁹⁶ Part 6, Section 4, Document 18 and Interview with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, Tape ..., date.

⁹⁷ See Part 2, Section 6, Document 8.

⁹⁸ Hansard, Debates of the National Assembly, First Session, First Parliament, 26th May 1994, Speech by M. Ramgobin, column 179, and Third Session, First Parliament, 1 0th June 1996, Speech by M. Ramgobin, columns 3374-3379.

⁹⁹ Part 6, Section 1, Document 1.

¹⁰⁰ Part 3, Section 4, Document 1.

¹⁰¹ Edwards, "Waiting to Live: The Way Forward", *Prisms*, pp. vi-xxxiii.

of extreme personal adversity: as banned, house arrested, detained and arrested South Africans – even standing trial for treason.¹⁰² Here was a belief and insistence on the dignity of human commonality, not a search for social difference. The term ‘South African of Indian-origin’ appears only twice in this entire collection.¹⁰³ Similarly in these documents Ramgobin takes us into a world where non-racialism was an absolutely pivotal guiding and binding idea. And, through his senses of the importance of philosophically and spiritually rooted ideas and their necessary expressions and resonance in politics, Ramgobin reminds us of what should be a central issue in post-Apartheid South Africa. Early in his life Ramgobin expresses this concern, in reviewing Vinoba Bhave’s Bhoodan Movement. Early on Ramgobin saw how freedom and liberation could not produce a politics of competing powers and self-interests. For him, by definition an emancipatory politics had to produce a generally understood, ethically based and politically legitimate understanding of a greater public good. That is why Ramgobin and his colleagues placed such public stress of on the Freedom Charter.¹⁰⁴ Despite private concerns over its continued relevance, it gave poetic expression to the need for such a greater common good.¹⁰⁵ Fifthly, from his own personal and often painful experiences of power plays within liberation politics, Ramgobin offers important cautions against undemocratic practises and their legacies in post-Apartheid South Africa.¹⁰⁶ Finally, Ramgobin exhorts us to understand the ways in which political and spiritual principle must be bound together into morally courageous action.¹⁰⁷

In reading this collection people must reflect on this primary issue and its six very important related issues. They are legacies of that remarkable period in South African affairs. And they await further responsible development in post-Apartheid South Africa. These are unfinished legacies of struggle that must be responsibly addressed and understood. They are the emancipatory and progressive developmental issues of politics and public policy in post-Apartheid South Africa.

This collection is about a place and period in an enduring struggle for human freedom, in its most spiritually deep sense of liberation and humane understanding. In opening his private political papers to a wider public Ramgobin is bravely offering us a rare chance to reflect on this deeper understanding. Mewa Ramgobin is giving us important glimpses into the person behind the public profile he so rightfully enjoys. It is a rare and good person of moral courage who offers such a gift. This is a gift we should all cherish, respect and learn from.

¹⁰² Part 2, Section 1, Document 45.

¹⁰³ Part 6, section 1, Document 27 & 32.

¹⁰⁴ Part 3, Section 1, Document 1.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, 11th February 2003

¹⁰⁶ “Lusaka Lights”, *Prisms*, pp 186-189, Part 6, Section 1, Document 26, and Interview with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, 12th February 2003.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Mewa Ramgobin by Iain Edwards, 11th March 2003.