



# THE ORIGINS OF APARTHEID



## UNDERSTANDING APARTHEID

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- “The struggle of memory against forgetting”

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## THE GLITTER OF GOLD: LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF APARTHEID

### JOURNEYS TO THE GOLDFIELDS

- Where was this source of cheap labour to come from?
- Why migrant labour?
  - Abe Bailey – a self-made man
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  - What do these journeys tell us?

## What is history?

History itself is a **dynamic** subject and is constantly subject to change. By recovering and investigating some of the hidden stories of the past, we construct a new and broader understanding of human experience. It is therefore important to recognize that history is not a fixed body of information. Rather, it is a process of continually finding out and asking new questions about the past. As we gather more information from new sources, our view of history may change and with it, our understanding of the world we live in.

Studying history involves understanding the broader context of the period or events we are learning about. This helps us to make informed judgements about the usefulness and reliability of the source material available to us about these events.

### GRADE 8 and 9

**Content:** The conservation and representation of South Africa's cultural heritage

### GRADE 11

**Content:** How has the South African past been publicly represented in museums?

### GRADE 12

**Content:** New identities and the construction of heritage

# UNDERSTANDING APARTHEID

## Apartheid – why study it?

Learning about apartheid is a difficult and challenging process. You will discover many painful truths about our country and develop an understanding of the darkness of our past. However, you will also gain an insight into the courage, determination and creativity of ordinary people who eventually defeated apartheid.

This book encourages you to go on a journey of understanding from the tortured history of South Africa's past to the hope for the future that the democratic elections of 1994 offered. On the way, you will encounter many different perspectives of the apartheid past, which will challenge your minds and touch your hearts.

The Apartheid Museum is a heritage site which was developed to commemorate and explain the atrocities of the apartheid past. Visitors to the museum are also encouraged to go on a personal journey of discovery through engaging with the exhibits, photographs and oral histories of people who lived through these experiences. This book follows a path similar to that taken by the Apartheid Museum and it uses many of the same resources to help you on your journey through our past.

# MEMORY AND THE APARTHEID MUSEUM



▲ The separate entrances to the Apartheid Museum.

The separate entrances to the Apartheid Museum – one for ‘whites’, one for ‘non-whites’ – are a haunting reminder of our not-so-distant past, when blacks and whites were racially **segregated** in all aspects of their lives. This separation of the races was a daily reality, and one which brought great hardships for black South Africans. And yet today, not that many years after the death of apartheid, there are many young South Africans who do not know that this was how South Africans lived. Sadly, there are a growing number of young South Africans who do not care.

Milan Kundera, a Czech **dissident** and writer, recognizes the importance of remembering the past. “The struggle of [people] against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.” What Kundera means is that the past is always in danger of being controlled and manipulated by those in power.

In the past, the histories of ordinary South Africans were deliberately forgotten. South African museums housed exhibitions that related mainly to the rich and powerful, while the memories and experiences of ordinary people were regarded as irrelevant. The new approach to the study of history allows us to appreciate the lives of ordinary people and to honour their contribution to our society.

The Apartheid Museum aims to keep memory alive by presenting the story of apartheid and how it affected the lives of millions of ordinary South Africans.

“The overriding message is to show local and international visitors the **perilous** results of racial prejudice and how this, in the case of South Africa, caused enormous suffering and nearly destroyed the country,” says John Kani, Chairman of the Board of the Apartheid Museum.

## New words

**dynamic** – constantly moving or changing

**segregated** – separated and treated differently, in this case, because of their race

**dissident** – a person who opposes the established government

**perilous** – dangerous, full of risk

*History will remember  
the ones who struggled unnoticed  
as small and as many as the grains of sand  
on our beautiful shores.*

▲ Sweet Freedom, a song about Wilton and Irene Mkwayi by Jennifer Ferguson.

Apartheid is an old story. You dwell on that, it just turns you sour.

Only through understanding what happened in the past, and how apartheid has hurt us as a people, can we begin to heal, and reconciliation can take place.

What's past is past. We need to move forward. The sooner the ugly memories of apartheid fade, the better.

By remembering what happened here in South Africa, we can try to make sure that this kind of thing never happens again.

The fact that we carry any knowledge of the past is not a matter of people constantly remembering: people remember because teachers and writers constantly seek to remind them.  
*Professor Kader Asmal, MP,  
Former Minister of Education*

We need to study apartheid in order to understand the problems we face as a society today.

## Activity 1: Remembering the past

GRADE 8: LO 3, AS 6  
GRADE 9: LO 3, AS 4  
GRADE 11 and 12: LO 4, AS 1

### New words

**reconstructing** – creating a description of something that happened using the facts that are known

**collective memory** – memories of what happened to a community which are shared by all its members, even if some of them were not present when the events took place

Where do you stand on this issue?

1. Have a class debate in which you look at the role of memory, the past, and the place of history in our lives.
2. Discuss this issue with your parents. What do they think about the past and the study of history? Do they have similar or different feelings to you?

### “The struggle of memory against forgetting”

Memory is about remembering and forgetting; it is about including and excluding events in the past; it is about **reconstructing** a new meaning of what happened; it is the key which unlocks the hidden voices and experiences of the past. It is for this reason that memory is an important theme of the Apartheid Museum. The Museum attempts to jolt our **collective memory** and to reconstruct aspects of our recent past in a reliable way.

As you enter the Museum, you are confronted with the figures of ordinary South Africans from a wide range of different walks of life. In the Museum, the fragile memories of these individuals and their families are contained in memory boxes. These are personal items chosen by the families, which represent valuable experiences in their past. They show us where they have come from, and what was important to them in their past.



▲ John Nkadimeng – son of Mahudu Nkadimeng, who came to work on the gold mines as a migrant labourer in the early 1900s – as pictured on the ramp of the Apartheid Museum.



▲ Prospero Bailey – grandson of Abe Bailey, a mine owner in early Johannesburg – as pictured on the ramp of the Apartheid Museum.

Below are the contents of the memory boxes belonging to the Nkadimeng and Bailey families. We have chosen to focus on the memory boxes of these two families because, later in the book, we examine the contribution of John Nkadimeng’s father and Prospero Bailey’s grandfather to the early history of Johannesburg.



▲ These clay pots and this calabash for drinking milk remind John Nkadimeng of his childhood in Sekhukhuneland. John was still very young when his father, Mahudu Nkadimeng, died.



◀ Prospero Bailey’s father, Jim Bailey, founded Drum magazine which documented black culture and politics in the cities in the 1950s and 1960s. This magazine is an item in the memory box of the Bailey family.

## Activity 2: Remembering your own history

Create your own memory box.

1. Choose two or three items that are particularly meaningful to you and your family or that represent aspects of your own history.
2. Write a brief explanation of why you chose each item.
3. Present your memory box to the class.
4. Is the class able to gain a sense of who you are and what was meaningful in your past, through your memory box? This should form the basis of a class discussion.

Note: You are dealing with sources of information about your own history. Treat these items with care.

GRADE 8: LO 3, AS 7

GRADE 9: LO 3, AS 4

GRADE 11: LO 4, AS 1

GRADE 12: LO 4, AS 3

# EXPLAINING APARTHEID: DIFFERENT APPROACHES

GRADE 11

Content: Historiography and the origins of apartheid

## How did apartheid come about?

The Apartheid Museum encourages visitors to ask the question: how did apartheid come about? The answer to this question is not simple, and has been the subject of heated debate amongst historians. The word apartheid means separation. The fact that the government of the day found it necessary to separate people suggests that there was a natural mixing of people at the time. The decision to separate groups of people on the basis of race was deliberate; it was not something that occurred naturally. Through the course of this book, we will explore why the apartheid government was determined to keep different races separate.

There are four broad interpretations or theories that try to explain apartheid.

### 1. The Afrikaner Nationalist Approach

Afrikaner Nationalists believed in the superiority of the Afrikaner nation. They believed that their identity was 'God-given'. They feared that the Afrikaner's very existence was threatened by the mass of Africans that confronted them in South Africa; that the Afrikaner nation would be swamped and overcome if there was continued mixing of the races. Afrikaner Nationalist historians explain apartheid in 1948 as the consolidation of these beliefs through a range of laws that were passed to prevent the mixing of the races and to preserve this 'God-given' Afrikaner identity.



▲ Dr Hendrik Verwoerd was the prime minister of South Africa from 1958 to 1966 and is often given the title of the 'Architect of Apartheid'.

## Race and apartheid

Although it is impossible for us to talk about apartheid without referring to the issue of race, it is important to note that race is not a scientifically verifiable way of defining people. Race is something that is socially constructed in order to justify the superiority of one social group over another.

## 2. The Liberal Approach

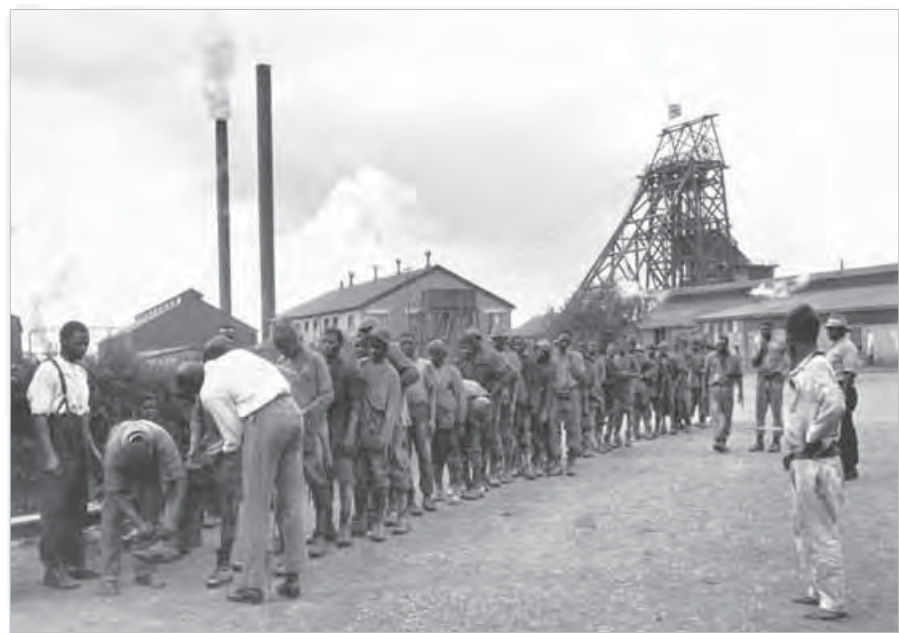
Liberals believe in a society which upholds human rights and the **fundamental freedoms** of the individual. In an economic sense, they believe in the freedom of the market with minimal state interference. In trying to explain why apartheid arose, they emphasize the importance of race and argue that the idea of white **supremacy** played the most important role.

Liberals are opposed to racial **discrimination** and condemn apartheid as a form of racial hatred which dates back to very early struggles over the land. They deny that there were any economic benefits to be gained from apartheid and place the blame for apartheid on the National Party which came into power in 1948.



▲ *Big Business, which claimed to be liberal, benefited from segregation and apartheid policies which provided them with a source of cheap labour and greater profits. This cartoon suggests that Big Business was hypocritical. It portrays Big Business as a Pinocchio-like figure, whose nose grows longer with every lie he tells.*

## 3. The Radical Approach



▲ *Migrant workers provided the cheap, unskilled labour required by the gold mines on the Witwatersrand.*

Radical historians tend to focus on the economic and social development of South Africa. They examine **class differences** and the struggles that took place between the different classes to explain why South African society emerged as it did. They view apartheid as a continuation of the **segregationist policies** that were developed as a result of the labour needs of the gold mines.

These policies were established in order to create a large supply of cheap labour which was needed for the profitable extraction of gold through deep-level mining. To sustain this system of **exploitation**, radicals argue that the authorities could not allow black workers to become skilled, or to be permanent residents in the city. Nor could they be granted citizenship or any other rights that would enable them to challenge the system.

#### 4. The Social History Approach

Social historians study the lives of ordinary people and the impact of their actions and thoughts on the course of history, rather than the lives of the rich and the powerful. This is often referred to as 'history from below'. Social historians make use of a range of different kinds of sources in order to reconstruct history, including oral interviews, fiction and poetry, songs and pictures, as well as more official sources. They see oral history as a particularly useful means of focusing on the voices of ordinary people, whose thoughts and ideas are usually not found in official sources, as they were not usually recorded.

In explaining apartheid, social historians examine the role played by ordinary people in resisting the growing restrictions placed upon them. This resistance often led policy makers to pass increasingly harsh laws in order to control them. It also shows how poorer people of all races initially mixed in the cities and highlights the fact that racial mixing was more natural than racial separation.



▲ An ordinary family affected by the Depression in the 1930s.

#### New words

**fundamental freedoms** – the right to vote, the right to a fair trial, freedom of speech, religion and the press

**supremacy** – a belief that one group is superior to all others, the highest in authority

**discrimination** – treating one person or group worse than others (in this case, because of their race)

**class differences** – according to radical thinkers, society is divided into different classes. The ruling class owns business and industry, and is therefore very powerful. The working class works for the ruling class and has little power. This imbalance of power often leads to conflict between these two classes.

**segregationist policies** – policies that promoted the separation of people and treated them differently according to their race

**exploitation** – the process whereby workers earn wages that are less than the value of their labour and goods they produce

#### Activity 3:

#### Understanding different schools of thought (★)

1. Identify the differences between these four approaches to understanding apartheid.
2. As you work through this book, see if you can identify which interpretation/s of apartheid are being presented by the people who produced it.

GRADE 11: LO 2, AS 3

## GRADE 8

**Content:** Industrialization in South Africa: changing work and lives in South Africa on the mines, the land and in the cities

## GRADE 11

**Content:** How unique was apartheid South Africa – how was segregation a foundation for apartheid?

# THE GLITTER OF GOLD: LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF APARTHEID

To understand the roots of apartheid, it is important to examine how South African society changed when gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand in 1886.

It is no accident that the Apartheid Museum was built at Gold Reef City, on the site of an old disused mine. The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand was central to both South Africa's industrial development and to the politics of segregation. It was here, on the goldfields of the Rand, that the journeys of many people intersected.

Within a period of ten years of the discovery of gold, Johannesburg had developed into the largest city in South Africa. Prospectors, labourers, fortune hunters, shopkeepers and immigrants from all over the world flocked to the city. Residential areas were hastily constructed and, in the poorer sections, slums developed. Racial mixing became a feature of these slums. The policies of segregation, and later apartheid, were attempts to stop this racial mixing.

“There can be no doubt that the historian ... will point to the period between the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand and the establishment of the city of Johannesburg as a turning point in the history not only of Southern Africa but of the whole continent.”

*R.V. Selope Thema, 1886–1955, leading newspaper editor, intellectual and African Nationalist.*



► Johannesburg in 1886 when gold was discovered.

## Activity 4:

## Examining a photograph as an historical source (\*)

Photograph of Johannesburg, 1886

1. In the Apartheid Museum, a whole wall has been dedicated to the photograph above of Johannesburg in 1886. Why do you think the Museum has chosen to use such a large and dominant photograph of early Johannesburg?
2. What are the main features of this photograph?
3. Why do you think the photographer took this photograph? What was he trying to convey?
4. Do you think Selope Thema's comment about the importance of Johannesburg is a suitable quote to accompany this photograph?
5. What other caption could have been used for this photograph? Give a clear reason for your choice.

GRADE 8: LO 1, AS 2

GRADE 9: LO 1, AS 3

GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 3

► Johannesburg, looking east along the Reef in 1906, only twenty years after the discovery of gold.





## Activity 5:

## Comparing photographs

1. Compare the photograph of Johannesburg in 1906 with the one above it taken in 1886. List the main changes between 1886 and 1906 that you can see in the photographs.
2. Give two reasons why you think these changes took place.
3. What, for you, is the most surprising change to have taken place in the twenty years? Give a clear reason for your answer.
4. Provide a more interesting caption for this photograph of early Johannesburg in 1886 than the one provided here.

GRADE 8: LO 1, AS 2 and 3  
GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 3

*"I am slowly being confirmed in my opinion that Johannesburg is Hell. Every man living for himself, every man fighting for gold, gold, gold and tramping down everything that stands in his way."*

▲ Letter from Olive Schreiner to Miss Green, 25 January 1899.

# JOURNEYS TO THE GOLDFIELDS

Let us consider the journeys to the goldfields of two people, Abe Bailey and Mahudu Nkadameng, after gold was discovered in 1886. They represent the many thousands of people who came to Johannesburg to seek their fortunes – and in the process shaped the history of South Africa.



▲ Alfred Beit

▲ Joseph Robinson

▲ Abe Bailey

▲ Cecil Rhodes

▲ Julius Wernher

Abe Bailey, and the other **mining magnates** like Cecil John Rhodes, Alfred Beit, Julius Wernher and Joseph Robinson, were known as Randlords. They saw an opportunity to make large fortunes on the gold mines, and of course, many of them did. They were able to gain control of the gold mines with the capital (profits) they had made on the Kimberley diamond fields. They made themselves and the gold mines even stronger and wealthier by forming the Chamber of Mines to protect their interests.

However, these Randlords were confronted with three problems when it came to mining gold. The first was that the gold reserves were deep underground and deep-level mining was extremely expensive. Secondly, the gold-bearing ore (rock) was 'low-grade'. A lot of ore had to be dug out and then the gold had to be extracted from the ore. This was also expensive. Thirdly, the price of gold was internationally-fixed, which meant that the Randlords could not transfer their high production costs to consumers by charging them very high prices.

In order to make large profits in the mining industry, it was necessary to limit the cost of producing gold. A major area where costs could be cut was wages. The Randlords

### GRADE 8

**Content:** Industrialization in South Africa: changing work and lives in South Africa on the mines, the land and in the cities

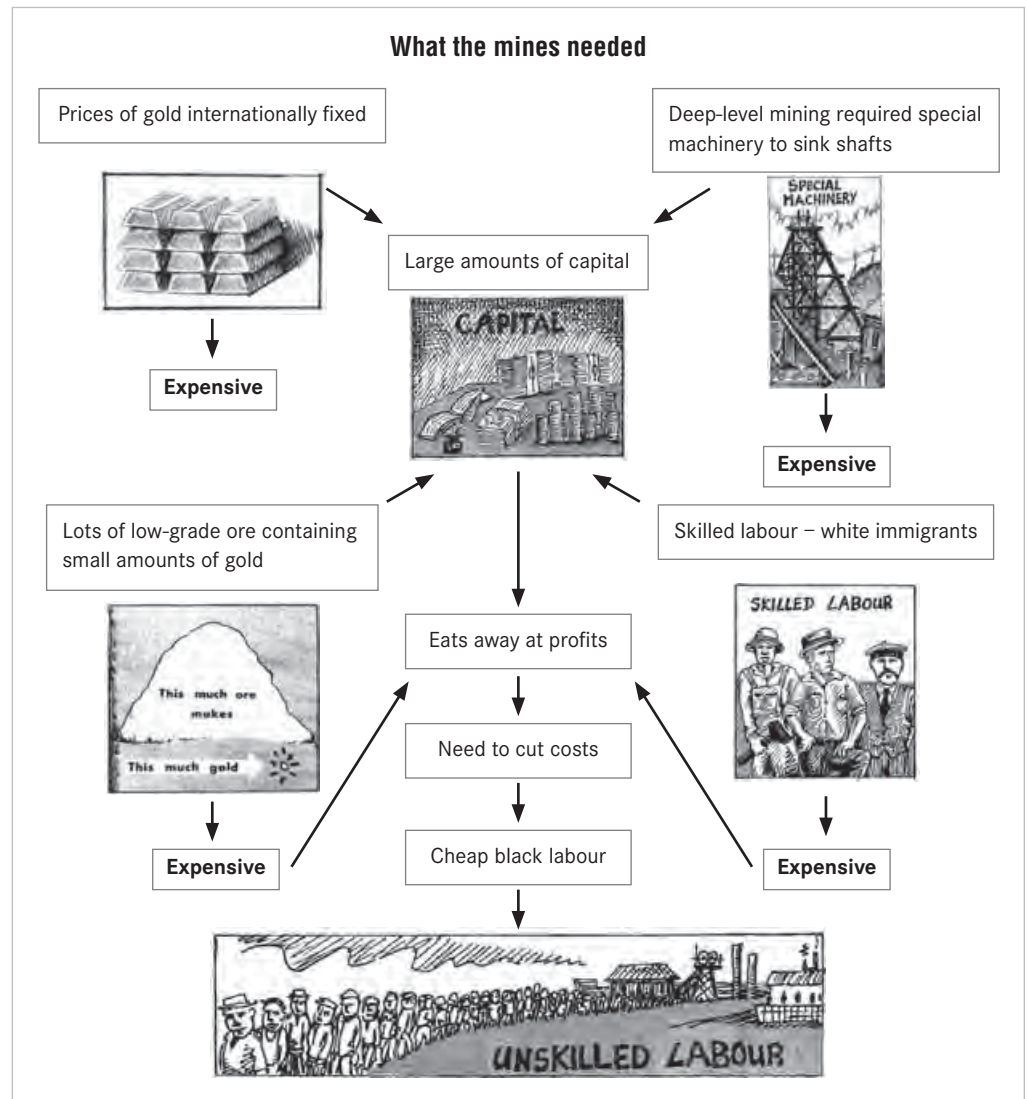
### GRADE 11

**Content:** How unique was apartheid South Africa – how was segregation a foundation for apartheid?

### New word

**mining magnates** – wealthy men who controlled the mining industry

believed that they could find a cheap source of labour by using black migrant labour. (The life of one migrant labourer, Mahudu Nkadimeng, will be examined later.)



### Activity 6: The needs of the gold mines

GRADE 8: LO 2, AS 2  
GRADE 11: LO 2, AS 3

Study the above diagram and then answer these questions:

1. What is meant by the term 'capital'?
2. List four factors from the diagram which show that gold mining was an expensive enterprise.
3. Explain how the internationally-fixed gold price affected the ability of the Randlords to make profits.
4. In what way did deep-level mining make gold mining expensive?
5. How did the fact that the ore was low-grade contribute to the expense of mining gold on the Witwatersrand?
6. "The Witwatersrand deposits are at once the richest and the poorest in the world." Explain this statement made by the historian C.W. de Kiewiet in 1941. (★)
7. What is the difference between skilled labour and unskilled labour? (★)
8. Why do you think the use of white skilled labour was expensive? (★)
9. "The mines needed cheap black labour in order to survive." Write ten lines to explain this statement. (★)

## Where was this source of cheap labour to come from?

During the late nineteenth century, the majority of Africans in South Africa worked as **independent peasant farmers**. Although they faced pressures from natural disasters and many had lost their land to white farmers, many African farmers made a successful living working on the land. As a result, they did not have to go and work for wages on the mines in order to make a living.

However, as deep-level mining increased, the demand for cheap labour intensified. The Chamber of Mines asked the government to provide a cheap labour supply. The South African government was willing to help the mine owners because it benefited from the gold mining industry, particularly through taxation.

Over time, the government introduced a number of measures to force more Africans to work in the mines. These included introducing taxes which only Africans had to pay, such as the **hut tax** and the **poll tax**. Most importantly, it passed the 1913 Land Act. This Act forced Africans to live in **reserves** and undermined the independence of African farmers by making it illegal for them to work as **sharecroppers**. This was clearly the beginning of territorial segregation, which will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

## Why migrant labour?

The Chamber of Mines preferred to use migrant labour on the mines because they could pay the workers very low wages. They justified the low wages by claiming that the migrant worker's family earned an additional income in the reserves. Because migrant workers were supposedly only part-time workers, the mine owners did not have to provide them with any kind of social security.

Mine owners also preferred migrant labour because the workers could be controlled more easily. The men had signed employment contracts. If they broke their contracts by deserting, which many people did, they were arrested and got a criminal record. The migrants were also housed in closed compounds which were tightly controlled.

The conditions on the mines were very bad in the early decades. Workers often laboured fourteen hours a day. Deaths from major accidents, pneumonia, TB, **silicosis** and malnutrition were extremely high. On some mines, a hundred workers out of every thousand died each year.

## Abe Bailey – a self-made man

There is no doubt that the Randlord, Abe Bailey, was a self-made man. His wealth enabled him to live a life of luxury and to enter into politics. But being rich and powerful did not necessarily make him a self-serving person. Abe Bailey became a noted **philanthropist**, making large donations to support the arts, sport and nature conservation. His son, Jim Bailey, founded the famous *Drum* magazine in 1951, followed by *Golden City Post*.



▲ Abe Bailey, a Randlord and philanthropist who supported arts, sport and nature conservation.

These publications provided a crucial outlet for black journalists and readers in the 1950s and 1960s. *Drum* played a particularly important role in documenting black culture and politics in the cities during a time of severe apartheid repression.

## New words

**independent peasant farmers** – farmers who own their own plots of land (usually small) and live off the proceeds of the land

**hut tax** – all African communities had to pay a tax for each of their huts

**poll tax** – a tax of one pound (South Africa's currency at the time) for every adult male African

**reserves** – areas where it was legal for Africans to own or lease land

**sharecroppers** – farmers who lived and worked on white-owned farms. In exchange, they were expected to give half their crop to their landlords

**silicosis** – a disease caused by breathing in the dust that collects underground from drilling the rocks. This disease is also known as phthisis

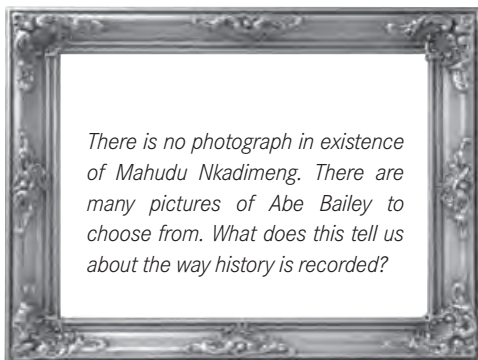
**philanthropist** – a wealthy person who donates money to charity and to the promotion of good works in society

## Activity 7: The self-made man or woman (\*)

GRADE 11: LO 3, AS 3

1. Many young South Africans today admire the notion of the 'self-made' man or woman. Entrepreneurship is seen as positive and is often encouraged, yet some of the information on the Randlords implies that the self-made person usually succeeds at the expense of the environment or other people. Do you think this is true?
  - Give an example of a self-made man or woman whose success was achieved at the expense of others. Give an example of a self-made man or woman whose success was achieved at the expense of the environment.
  - Give an example of a self-made man or woman whose success was achieved at no cost to the environment and other people.
2. Having considered these options, is the self-made man or woman a good thing or not? Debate this issue in class.

### Mahudu Nkadimeng – a migrant worker



Self-made men often made their wealth through exploiting the labour of ordinary people. This was certainly the case in the mines. The Randlords could not have become so wealthy if they had not been able to exploit the labour of ordinary migrant workers. Mahudu Nkadimeng was one such ordinary migrant worker.

In the early 1900s, Mahudu Nkadimeng left Sekhukhuneland (today a district of Limpopo Province) and came to work on the

gold mines as a migrant labourer. As a migrant worker, he rarely saw his family, and his son, John, grew up not knowing his father.

Men came to work on the mines as migrants for a whole variety of reasons. This extract from an interview conducted by social historian David Coplan, provides one explanation of why men came to Johannesburg:

*"I wanted to put on my trousers. I was ashamed of my loincloth, mostly because all the boys of my age were already regular miners that came back in their trousers, smoking cigarettes and speaking strange languages, relating exciting stories about their adventures."*

▲ In *Township Tonight* by D. Coplan, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1985.

Mahudu Nkadimeng worked underground in the mines. Conditions underground were brutal. Both white and black underground workers faced the possibility of death through accidents in the form of rockfalls or from a number of respiratory diseases like TB, pneumonia and silicosis (phthisis). Mahudu Nkadimeng contracted silicosis from working underground. After a month-long, nightmarish journey on a donkey-cart, he returned home to Sekhukhuneland where he eventually died of the disease.

Although Mahudu Nkadimeng was just one of many thousands of migrant workers who lived and died in the mines of Johannesburg, this did not mean that the Nkadimeng family was lost to history. His son, John, grew up to be a noted trade union **activist**, who worked tirelessly for liberation in South Africa. In 1976 John Nkadimeng went into exile, only returning to South Africa in 1990. In the new South Africa, he served as our Ambassador to Cuba.



▲ John Nkadimeng, the son of Mahudu Nkadimeng, as pictured on the ramp of the Apartheid Museum.

### What do these journeys tell us?

The journeys of both Abe Bailey and Mahudu Nkadimeng took unexpected turns. Their children did not necessarily follow the paths that history might have set for them. Jim Bailey did not use the wealth that he inherited from his father for his own purposes; rather, his magazines have contributed towards our understanding of urban black culture in the 1950s and 1960s. And John Nkadimeng, the son of a poor migrant worker, did not **sink into obscurity**. He played an important role in the liberation struggle, fighting for the dignity of workers through his trade union work.

### New words

**activist** – a person who participates actively in a political movement in order to bring about change

**sink into obscurity** – disappear from the public eye and not be well-known by your society



### Summative Assessment

Look at all the sources that have been used in this chapter. Then, test your ability to understand and work with these sources by completing the table that follows.

The questions listed in the table are the kinds of questions that you should begin to ask of all sources.

Working with sources	Memory boxes	Photographs of Johannesburg	Diagram: What the mines needed	Quote from interview by historian, D. Coplan
1. Type of Source – written/visual/oral/artefact/audio-visual				
2. Who wrote or produced the source?				
3. When was the source produced? At the time, or long after the event?				
4. What is the point of view of the person who wrote or produced the source? (★)				
5. Do you trust this source? Give reasons for your answer. (★)				

GRADE 8: LO 1, AS 2  
 GRADE 9: LO 1, AS 3  
 GRADE 11: LO 1, AS 3

