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During apartheid, freedom songs played a pivotal role in fighting for human rights, social change and emancipation from oppressive rule

Words by **Shannon Manuel**

IN THE 46 YEARS THAT THE LEGAL SYSTEM OF INSTITUTIONALISED RACISM, apartheid, was in place in South Africa, liberation music refuelled and united a movement against it. Whether subtle or forceful in their contempt of the apartheid regime, freedom songs were vehicles of protest and often changed over time to express evolving concerns.

Artists who spoke out either saw their music removed from the shelves at stores or the apartheid government punished them for protesting the human rights atrocities in the country.

Legendary South African musician Sipho "Hotstix" Mabuse says, 'Music has always been central to profiling or highlighting societal issues. In fact, artists in general, particularly writers, those who wrote books or poetry, and musicians, because they could reach many people. In our case, during the Black consciousness era, we were conscientised in ensuring songs became part of profiling the struggle as it was.'

'And, of course, we'd sometimes write songs covertly. But those who were brave enough would do so overtly. I mean, in our case, we understood what our role *should've* been. So we were overt in terms of how we wrote our songs, which we'd be invited to perform at major protest concerts.'

'We were touring Zimbabwe during the ground swelling of the arms struggle in Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique. So, we were very aware South Africa required the arts to play an intensified role, particularly musicians, to advance the struggle – we did that through our music.'

You can roughly divide the movement against apartheid into five stages: the Defiance Campaign of the '50s – brought to an abrupt halt by the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 and the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela in 1964; suppression and exile of the liberation leaders marked by underground

movement and activity from the countries bordering South Africa in the '60s; the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and student uprisings in the '70s; total disruption and increased international pressure in the '80s; and negotiation toward democracy culminating in the release of Mandela in 1990 and holding free elections in 1994.

Throughout each of those stages of opposition, songs were a communal act of expression that shed light on the injustices of apartheid, and an instrument of organisation that helped to maintain the struggle during its most trying times. Music, ultimately, played a prominent role in the eventual reform of the South African government.

It also accompanied celebrations, funerals, student rallies, religious revivals, cell meetings, training camps, union meetings and many other social gatherings. And it was combative and rebellious in tone, making specific references to life under apartheid. Music was increasingly accompanied by toyi-toying, a repetitive, energetic, militant form of singing and dancing demonstrators performed as they moved through the streets. To this day, the toyi-toyi stands out as a powerful resistance against the status quo at protests and gatherings countrywide.

During apartheid, people often sang songs of protest in groups accompanied by toyi-toying, which ANC exiles learned from Zimbabwean guerrillas when they joined forces with the Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU) in the late '60s. The 'bark' of the toyi-toyi, however, is said to have originated from the uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) training camps in the North African states of Algeria and Morocco.

Though there's a long list of musicians who used their music, and popularity, to push back against political oppression, a few, in particular, symbolise this time. Artists Hugh Masekela, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Miriam Makeba, Johnny Clegg and Brenda Fassie used their music to campaign against the profound injustice of apartheid and continued to enjoy global recognition long into the new democratic dispensation.

'Music has a way of awakening the senses and sparking people's curiosity. You can share a stirring speech or well-written, compelling message and the population might be responsive, but there's something unique about the unifying experience of song and music that connects to something deep within people, often reminding them of their humanity in revolutionary ways,' says Dr Lindsay Michie, an associate professor at the University of Lynchburg in the US who teaches students about music and its impact in revolution and social change.

'If someone hears a song with a message that's also catchy or compelling, then they might want to know its background and what it's about. I remember hearing the song 'Nelson Mandela' by The Specials when I was a student in the '80s – it was so memorable, its message straightforward. »



OF STRUGGLE



I think it became popular not just because it was a tune you could dance to, but people like me felt drawn to the message behind it,' she says.

'And there's no doubt music energises and inspires people at marches and demonstrations. It's a great way to motivate people when their energy or attention starts to drag – you see this with many movements, which two excellent films highlight: *Amandla*, about the role of music in the anti-apartheid movement, and *Soundtrack for a Revolution*, which explores the role of music in the civil rights movement. I love teaching about both those movements in terms of music because they share many parallels. Plus, activists and musicians from both struggles would communicate across the Atlantic.'

In addition to teaching, Dr Michie has authored numerous works relating to the role of music and social change, her passion stemming from a love of music and an interest in social justice movements. 'It makes sense that I started to notice the intersection of the two and how powerful music can be in drawing attention to issues and as a catalyst for action,' she says. 'This was particularly true when I lived in the former Transkei and witnessed the powerful connection between struggle and music.'

As a photojournalist in South Africa during the final years of apartheid, she witnessed firsthand the impact music had on the spirit and movements of oppressed citizens during that turbulent time.

'It was such an exciting era, but fraught at the same time because nobody really knew how things were going to turn out. One minute, there'd be events of great magnitude and hope, such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu

and their comrades' release from prison; but the next minute, there'd be violence, crackdowns and tragic deaths, such as the assassination of Chris Hani. It felt as if the country was teetering on the brink of something enormous, and, living in Mthatha, I felt it was somehow incredible that an ordinary person like me (and a foreigner) was getting a firsthand glimpse of a historic event,' she recounts of her experience.

'There were many protests and demonstrations at the University of Transkei (UNITRA, now Walter Sisulu University (WSU)), where I was teaching, and in Mthatha and Butterworth (now Gcuwa) where I also taught; and what I couldn't get over was the electric energy of the marches and demonstrations I attended – people were clearly determined and driven, but also somehow joyful. They not only sang as they demonstrated; they danced – which was new to me. There might be singing and dancing at demonstrations and marches in the US, but that's nothing like toyi-toyi. There's something so powerful about that combination of music and physical movement that reaches way back in South Africa's history and seems to come from the very bones of its people. So, I began to understand how that sort of emotion could create fearlessness when facing the intimidating weaponry of the apartheid authorities. In fact, it seemed those driving the tanks and holding the guns were in many ways more intimidated than the dancing singing crowds they faced.'

In the early years of apartheid, famous composers and poets such as the ANC activist Vuyisile Mini, who was executed by the apartheid authorities, churned out songs tested in the crucible of public protests. He's remembered for the songs he composed and delivering them in his powerful bass voice,

sometimes militant and at other times nostalgic. He's remembered for composing one of the most popular liberation songs of the '50s, 'Pasopa nansi 'ndondemnyama we Verwoerd' (meaning, look out, Verwoerd, here are the Black people), a song directed at politician Hendrik Verwoerd, who's commonly regarded as the architect of apartheid.

Protesters and ANC organisers composed hundreds of other songs at the time, but they were never committed to tape. Those songs became community property, acting simultaneously as oral history and inspiration and sometimes even as a means of planning future protests right under the nose of the oppressors.

By the late '50s, that early defiance was beginning to shift. In 1960, South African police gunned down dozens of peaceful protesters in Sharpeville, rounding up or imprisoning artists and leaders or forcing them into exile. Open defiance became a thing of the past in South Africa. Instead, songs of mourning spilt out into the public sphere: songs including 'Thina Sizwe', which lamented the loss of the land to the white man and questioned when it'd be won back.

In 'Nonqonqo (To Those We Love)', Letta Mbulu voiced the fear and sadness of countless women whose men were in jail, naming the ANC leaders, Mandela and Sisulu, who were rotting in the New London jail.

Then there's 'Senzeni Na?', also by Mbulu, sometimes described as the South African equivalent of 'We Shall Overcome'. It repeats the phrase 'What have we done?' over and over as a beautiful, poignant question with a double meaning: 'What have we done to deserve this treatment?' but also, 'What have we done to fight and end this oppression, and what more should we do?'

People would sing 'Senzeni Na?' at funerals, protest marches and rallies during apartheid and the post-1994 dispensation.

'I associate it with that time in the '60s when it seemed the apartheid regime had successfully cracked down on opposition. And many people were mourning anti-apartheid leaders' deaths, imprisonment and exile. But this turned out to be merely a short period of re-grouping as the BCM began to emerge in the late '60s,' says Dr Michie.

'Shona Malanga' is another powerful, organising song that became prominent in the tumultuous years of the '70s and '80s when the struggle reached new levels, and comrades would sing about meeting, organising and fighting. It's hard to find decent versions of many of those struggle songs on YouTube and the internet because they were grassroots songs shared in training camps in the border countries or among activists marching in the streets.

'There are many wonderful jazz songs too, such as 'Scullery Department' by Kippie Moeketsi, an instrumental he wrote out of frustration and played at white clubs with fellow musicians – but they had to enter through the back door, usually the kitchen.'

If music was the heartbeat of the liberation movement in South Africa, no song was more familiar to all involved than what became known as the African National Anthem, 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika'. Early on, the song evolved into a symbol of resistance and unity that often served as a prelude and coda to all anti-apartheid meetings and demonstrations.

'Our songs raised people's hopes because once we were brave enough to say things as they were, it encouraged listeners to stand up for themselves and say, forward we go, backward never,' says Mabuse.

'Musicians would be at every political event. Of course, those who were conscious and brave enough – remember, whether you're a musician or not, if you did something that could be considered as adverse, chances were you'd be locked up. Some musicians were locked up.'

When Dr Michie lived in Mthatha, there was a small group of Xhosa women who worked on the hospital grounds and took her in hand and made it their business to teach her 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika' when it was the anthem of freedom. 'I hardly knew any isiXhosa, and they made me repeat all the words and get the tune right until I had it down pat. I'll never forget that nor the version they taught me. They worked as cleaners and cooks in the houses on the compound and had families to take care of, so you'd think they'd have a hard time including activism in their lives. But I saw that revolutionary spirit in them, which was inspiring,' she says.

'I also remember how a group of us would be having a serious discussion about politics (everything we talked about then was political), and someone would spontaneously break into a song that was somehow relevant to our conversation. It often expressed what we were trying to say, only better.

'I recall attending a rally held on the outskirts of Mthatha for Mandela just after he was released, in which chanting, music and toyi-toying dominated. Iimbongis praised the anti-apartheid leaders and celebrated their release. The music and rhythm of the movement were pretty electrifying and felt very much a part of that region. Some British volunteers tried playing a Beatles song on their car radio, 'Give Peace a Chance', but it really didn't fit in. The contrast seemed awkward. It was good they were there to witness it, but it wasn't *their* struggle; the music for that rally had to be South African.'

The aim of apartheid, as with most oppressive regimes, was to create division to maintain control. Music had a way of transcending many of the bitter divides colonisation and apartheid laws had manufactured. It combined various elements and often local languages, which had a uniting effect.

'During my first week in Mthatha, my friends took me to a Lucky Dube concert with Stimela as the opening act. There was a lot of tension at the time, as the South African government was manipulating division among activists and pushing the narrative of Xhosa versus Zulu. Although the audience was predominantly amaXhosa, numerous other nations and identities were present. With suspicions and emotions running high, it could've turned ugly. But the music was so good that it rose above those divisions,' says Dr Michie.

'I was blown away by the performances and the crowd's energy in the crowd – it seemed as »

**'That music seems to come from
the very bones of its people'**

if everyone felt united at that moment and enjoyed their experience. I think it was also significant because, in many ways, it was an event outside the influence of the apartheid government, in a homeland that was supposed to support the geographic segregation the system had created but instead had become a sort of headquarters of resistance associated with the ANC.

Besides uniting communities, music played a prominent role in communicating messages to local people. South African artists concealed messages in their songs. For example, Johnny Clegg and Juluka wrote and performed songs with anti-apartheid messages, one of which he borrowed from a Zulu proverb demonstrating how a small bull can defeat a large one using superior weaponry. Yvonne Chaka Chaka recorded a song called 'I'm Winning My Dear Love', which all her fans understood as "Winnie Mandela" and would sing those words at her concerts. The song 'Shona Malanga' turned a song about domestic workers into an invitation to protest. And Dorothy Masuka helped transform a children's song, 'Khauleza', into a freedom cry, "Hurry up, mama, hurry up!" giving it a new meaning in the context of the anti-passbook protests.

I like sharing the story of Lucky Dube's song 'Liquor Slave' with my students, which was supposedly about alcoholism, but at his concerts, he and the audience would sing 'legal slave' to highlight the oppression of Black people in South Africa. It's one example of how people would use music to speak in code, operating below the radar of authoritarian regimes.

The song 'Meadowlands' was sung about the forced removals of people from the dynamic township of Sophiatown. It has a happy sound to it with a pennywhistle accompaniment. To white people who couldn't speak the language, it sounded like the residents of Sophiatown were happy about moving farther beyond the outskirts of Joburg to the soulless township, Meadowlands. On the contrary. The song contained additional lyrics targeting white people with phrases such as, "We'll shoot you, we'll kill you. Be careful what you do" and that serious but comedic act of rebellion went over white people's heads.

When evaluating music during apartheid, some have pointed out saying "selective pockets of resistance" define the protest movements, and liberation music fails to tell the entire story.

It relates to the fact the "luminary names" of exiled musicians who found success abroad are often considered prominent revolutionaries in the struggle. But they eclipse the influence of musicians and activists within the country, who didn't become internationally acclaimed voices and had to do things underground but were equally vital to the struggle.

There's no doubt more well-known musicians, such as Makeba and Masekela, who were in exile, played a crucial role in keeping the issue alive overseas through their music and activism. And although they could enjoy the privileges of popularity and freedom within the democratic countries where they lived, I think the burden of alienation from their region of birth, roots and loved ones and disconnection from the struggle as it played out in South Africa took its toll. But, yes, there were people involved in the resistance connected to music who consciously decided to stay and deal with the country's enormous challenges. Those who may not be as well-known are Patrick Pasha and Dudley Tito. And the Freedom Fighters, who wrote and composed music to bolster the spirits of the people at the training camps in MK. Masekela invited the jazz musician Pat Matshikiza and his band members to perform with him in the US. But they decided not to join him because they saw remaining in South Africa as a form of cultural resistance and a way to maintain artistic freedom, holding onto their unique form of African jazz.

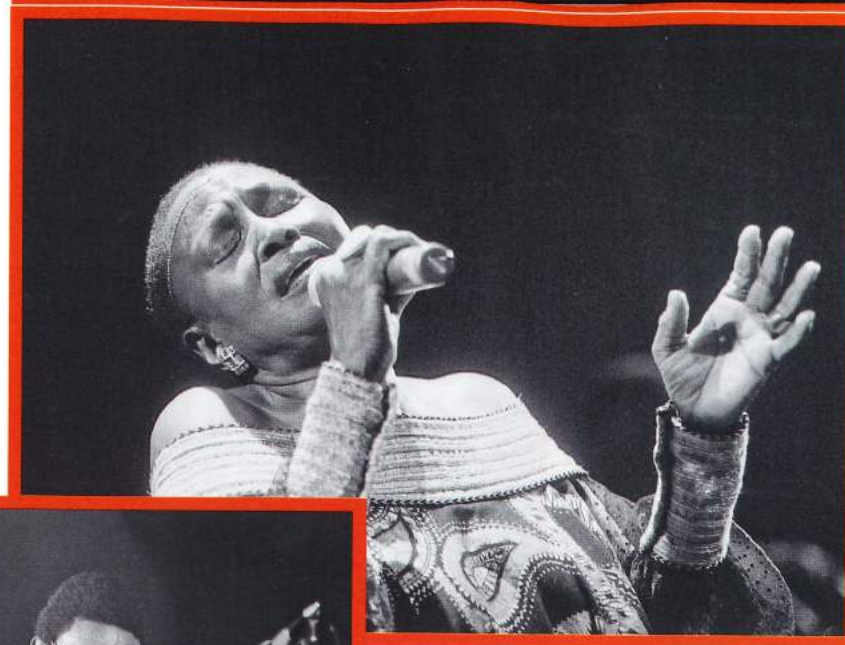
One of the issues I address in my book about music and spoken word in the Eastern Cape is how this region has produced a vast number of extremely talented musicians and is an area with a long tradition of fierce resistance to oppression. Some of the most well-known activists are from there, including Mandela and Steve Biko. But past and present musicians from the Eastern Cape have often struggled to gain recognition. They've often faced the dilemma of either leaving for more prosperous opportunities or staying and using their music to highlight and deal with the continuing challenges of this historically impoverished region, which has been hit hard in recent years – first by AIDS and then Covid-19.

MUSIC'S MANY FUNCTIONS

In class, we often look at different roles music plays within a movement – whether it's telling a story, communicating in code, uniting and energising people at demonstrations and marches or, in some cases, such as punk music, causing chaos and disruption.

Preserving identity is another; for example, indigenous people in the US held pow wows and maintained their languages through song and dance in the face of numerous policies that sought to erase their culture. Another example is the song 'Plyve Kacha', an old Ukrainian folk song that caused a great stir of emotion when sung in the Ukrainian version of *The Voice* as an assertion of their identity in the face of Russian encroachment. The entire audience rose to its feet as soon as they heard the familiar tune.

Calling to action is another – you often hear it in songs used in demonstrations in the anti-apartheid and civil rights movements. Civil



rights songs such as 'Woke up this Morning with My Mind Stayed on Freedom' and 'Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around' motivated demonstrators and, by the way, like many of the songs used during the civil rights era, these songs were old gospel songs revived for the movement of the '60s and were originally coded messages for the underground railroad during slavery.

South African musicians in exile often used songs that told a story to educate the outside world about the experiences of Black people in South Africa. An example is Hugh Masekela's 'Coal Train (Stimela)', about the role of the train in separating Black men from their families and taking them into the mines.

Another thing that interested me was the development of South Africa's punk music in the '70s and '80s, similar to the one in the UK, which connected Black and disaffected white youths by combining punk and reggae music. South African musicians added local influences, such as the ghema and African guitar music.

All these movements follow a distinct pattern, including how threatening authorities find music and how quickly, and sometimes violently, they try to shut it down. This demonstrates how powerful music can be as an organising tool.

During apartheid, it was illegal to perform 'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika' – you could get up to eight years imprisonment just for singing it. In the '80s, apartheid authorities poured tear gas into the air conditioning at one of Roger Lucey's concerts, and the South African Bureau of State Security destroyed his career because it considered his lyrics a threat to the state. Mzwakhe Mbuli had a hand grenade thrown into his house and was shot at. In Chile, Victor Jara was beaten, shot and killed by Chilean authorities under the dictator Augusto Pinochet for singing liberation songs. "Those are extreme responses to a song that started as a hymn and prayer calling on blessings for South Africa, musicians who merely sang about police brutality and oppression here, and a folksinger whose music championed unity among the working classes.

Another intriguing element is how strong a weapon music can be, even in seemingly subtle ways. Songs can be purely instrumental but still awaken

a response, such as Jimi Hendrix's distorted rendition of the 'Star Spangled Banner' at Woodstock, his guitar screaming echoes of war that reinforced the anti-Vietnam war sentiments of American youth. Then there are South African songs 'Mannenberg' and 'Ndinovale Ndinomngi (Pondo Blues)'. Audiences at jazz events would roar in recognition of their significance to their identity and struggle.

The fight against apartheid reached a fever pitch in the '80s, and – finally – the rest of the world took notice. It started with Peter Gabriel, whose 'Biko' brought the little-known story of murdered activist Steve Biko to western ears with a stark, arresting vocal track bookended by clips of the actual songs sung at Biko's funeral. South Africa's cause took centre stage as artists worldwide started recording anti-apartheid music.

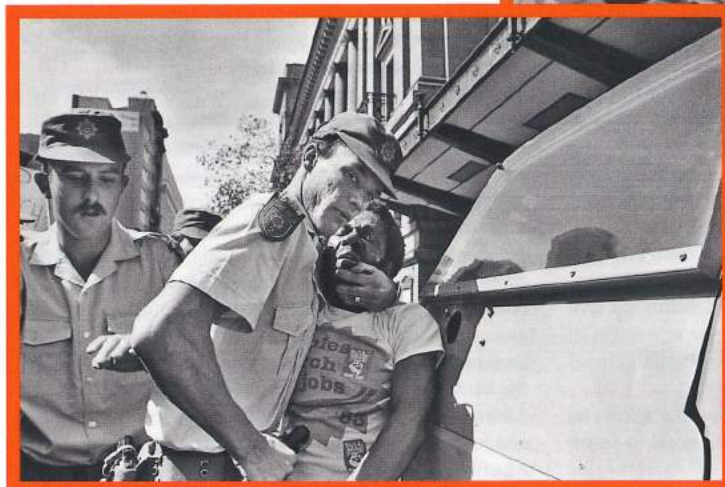
Struggle music, and the feelings and memories it embodies, continues to have an impact, as evidenced in one of South Africa's most beloved films *Sarafina!* 30 years later, a musical film that inspires a spirit of hope and perseverance. It's a fictional retelling of the youth-led 1976 Soweto uprising, when many young people died protesting the unfairness of the Bantu Education Act that dominated in the apartheid era. One of South Africa's most iconic symbols of the struggle for social and political freedom and justice, *Sarafina!* was conceived and directed by Dr Mbongeni Ngema, who wrote and arranged the music and lyrics with additional songs by Masekela. The film also starred Whoopi Goldberg and Leleti Khumalo. The crown jewel of the timeless soundtrack is 'Freedom Is Coming Tomorrow', a rousing call of hope.

Mandela was in prison when Johnny Clegg wrote a song about him. Clegg could've gone to jail for talking about Mandela, but we'd reached a stage where that didn't matter anymore. People had already sacrificed so much of their lives to liberate us. Garnering support was an incentive for our struggle. It wasn't just Black musicians. A group of Afrikaans musicians also wrote protest music,' says Mabuse.

PRISON, MUSIC AND WOMEN'S VOICES

Historical musicologist at the University of Cape Town and founder of Music Beyond Borders (MBB), Dr Janie Cole, explores the impact freedom songs had in apartheid prisons. MBB preserves cultural heritage, builds archives, and produces publications, documentaries and innovative multimedia digital projects rooted in music history centring around themes »

'Mzwakhe Mbuli had a hand grenade
thrown into his house and was shot at'



of oppression, crimes against humanity, and cultural encounters, from the early modern period to contemporary times, and explores the power of music as resistance, for survival, against trauma, to create community, identity and memorialisation, and as an archive. It captures the rich cultural heritage and diversity of the human experience by using real life stories to promote public awareness and incite civic engagement to defend humanitarian values.

'I was inspired to found MBB to focus on the role of music in social change, surviving trauma and supporting human rights after interviewing former political prisoners of apartheid in 2011. I conceived of MBB as a platform for cultural heritage, preservation and signalling the importance and power of survivor and perpetrator testimony for creating a compelling voice for raising awareness and education. After surviving 9/11, I couldn't listen to music for a long time, which, as a musicologist, I found surprising and baffling. So, I became interested in how you can link it to trauma, memory and healing.'

MBB is currently making an educational film about music and resistance in the apartheid prisons, with a specific focus on Robben Island and women's jails, against the backdrop of the broader anti-apartheid struggle.

'Music was a critical source of resistance and propelling social change in the anti-apartheid struggle. Against a backdrop of popular

uprisings and violent protests, it became an integral part of the liberation movement, tracing the history of the struggle for democracy and racial equality and evolving in response to the changing political climate and conditions nationwide. It united people from different walks of life, political affiliations and ethnic backgrounds. As Anthony Suze, Robben Island political prisoner 501/63, said in our interview: 'Songs were inspirational, they created the mood. If you want to go into a fight, you sing. That song becomes the opium that takes over the body, mind and soul.'

'Studies chart the development of so-called freedom songs from the '50s period of non-violence, countered with the armed struggle of MK, the Soweto uprising and the '80s revolutionary spirit of the BCM, culminating in the state of emergency. Broader social histories of Black South African musical styles, traditions and performance genres from this period provide further invaluable analyses of the musical soundscape, political consciousness and Black identity developing before and during the apartheid era in relation to the evolution of colonial and apartheid society and their ambiguities. The apartheid prisons, arguably an extension of the struggle, reflected this musical soundscape of Black identity, but we still know little about the role music played as resistance for political prisoners, and yet, it's a central chapter of apartheid history.'

'I hope our work will fill these historical gaps. It's also important to note that political prisoners not only drew on freedom songs for inspiration but all sorts of musical genres and styles; hence, the musical soundscape reflected the prison space melting pot of political prisoners from many different walks of life and musical backgrounds.'

Dr Cole explains the real strength of her organisation's film is the intimate interviews with former political prisoners, especially women, and their accounts of prison and struggle music, which is moving, often humorous and defiant. Another highlight is the film's soundtrack, which includes new songs recorded by former Robben Islanders and a repertory of previously unrecorded ones by former women political prisoners.

'We hope the film will be a significant historical documentation of apartheid and music's critical role as resistance in prisons and the broader struggle at the time. Our biggest responsibility is to do justice to the lives of former political prisoners and the country's music and struggle history. We hope it'll make a difference using testimony – itself an act of resistance – to educate and engage universal themes of tolerance, diversity, non-racialism and justice to prevent history from repeating itself.'

MBB is concentrating on capturing the vibrant musical heritage and struggle stories of apartheid to preserve the heritage and raise awareness. Dr Cole explains one aspect of her vision for a film about music and resistance in the apartheid prisons, for example, is to raise consciousness about past and present gender-based violence.

'Race, gender-based violence and division is the South African apartheid story, but it's also an international one; #blacklivesmatter, the #metoo movement, and so on. If there was ever a time and responsibility to expose a shameful history and capture its heritage before time runs out, it's now. By exposing the history of societal violence against women, we can draw attention to gender-based violence that plagues societies today, especially in South Africa. Those women must be heard, and their abusers held accountable.'

'When I first started researching the role of music and resistance in the apartheid prisons, focussing on Robben Island and women's jails, I was most impacted by stories of abuse, torture and conditions there. I'd read Mandela's now famous comment, from his 1994 autobiography, on the conditions in South Africa's apartheid prisons, which reflected the reality of thousands of political activists: "It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones – and South Africa treated its imprisoned African citizens like animals." The accounts I heard verified the worst of Mandela's statement, especially those of women who suffered gender-based violence. The women's struggle stories during apartheid and imprisonment are particularly overlooked historically, but their treatment at the hands of the security police was different to men's, in that it was misogynistic, very harsh and devastating.'

'We've aimed to concentrate on the unknown 'foot soldiers' of the struggle, as opposed to its liberation leaders, whose stories have already been told countless times. A large portion of our film centres

on women's struggle stories and music, as those are the most historically overlooked, and offer a fresh, woman's perspective on the traditional struggle narrative, which tends to favour and celebrate men's centrality in the struggle.'

Through her research and documentary, Dr Cole seeks to answer questions about how music expresses the dynamics of subjugated communities, especially those where communication is repressed by censorship or forbidden entirely, and effectively acts as resistance and prevention in the face of an oppressor. And how music-making can function as a space where those marginalised by an oppressive regime find a voice to express their identities, experiences and grievances.

'Music is an integral part and manifestation of cultural identity. Music and songs were a means of communication between people of different ethnic backgrounds and political beliefs to come together and served as identifiers of culture and identity. The apartheid state systematically attempted to stamp out and degrade Black, coloured and Indian culture, including traditional songs, many of which were readapted and became the basis of struggle songs. The protest songs were thus strong signals of identity and had political impetus.'

Mabuse agrees, 'Music is absolutely political. I think it's misguided to believe it isn't significant. Because if we look at struggles worldwide... I mean, it wasn't until musicians in Europe started performing that even young people were aware of the struggles there. Musicians made people aware there's poverty in Ethiopia. So, the power of music is much, much bigger than many people think.'

Dr Cole concludes, 'It was an integral part of the fight against apartheid, so you can't separate it from the history. Especially in South Africa, singing is the primary cultural expression, so it was only natural it'd become a popular form of expression, especially for an oppressed, marginalised community. It's inconceivable to think about resistance to the apartheid regime without a musical soundtrack. It's impossible to say what it would've been without one.'

'Protest songs were symbols of
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