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The University of the Western Cape-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives housed in the main library at the University of the Western Cape provide a unique and often fragile documentary record of South Africa's history and culture, particularly with regard to the apartheid period, the freedom struggle and political imprisonment in South Africa (SA).

The initial core was collected during the years of exile by the London-based International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF). After the unbannings in 1990 and IDAF's closure, the IDAF collection was relocated to SA to form the nucleus of the archives of the pioneering Mayibuye Centre for History and Culture in South Africa, based at the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

When Cabinet decided on establishing the Robben Island Museum (RIM) as the first official heritage institution of the new democracy it also recommended that the IDAF/Mayibuye collections be incorporated into the museum. After intensive negotiations the Mayibuye Centre was disbanded and its collections and those of the Robben Island Museum were merged to form the combined UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, still part of RIM but located on the UWC campus where the resources can be more safely preserved and more easily accessed by researchers, students and community groups.

Officially opened in June 2001, the Archives are vast - comprising different forms of material that are in many ways an inside history of the struggle - people and organisations risking their lives to record the struggle against apartheid from within, at a time when repressions and censorship were rampant.

Historical papers

The historical papers section consists of more than 350 collections of personal and organisational documents, many of which were banned under apartheid. Significant organisational documents include those of



Nelson Mandela opens the Robben Island Museum on Heritage Day, 1997

UWC-Robben Island MAYIBUYE ARCHIVES

the African National Congress (ANC); the Congress of Democrats; the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU); the United Democratic Front (UDF); and from abroad the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement; the Dutch Anti-Apartheid Movement (AABN); and the Australian Anti-Apartheid Movement as well as legal and research publications and welfare correspondence.

The personal documents include papers of Archbishop Desmond Tutu (more than 10 000 documents); the prison writings and correspondence of Ahmed Kathrada; Mkwazi Wilton Zimasile; Brian Bunting; Albie Sachs; and Kader and Louise Asmal among other political activists and leaders. Papers from the Black Sash as well as from attorneys Richman and Mallinck and Bernadt, Vukic and Potash are also to be found here.

The extensive collection of South African press clippings covers a wide variety of subjects - biographies, culture and media, the economy, education, the environment, extra-parliamentary politics, homelands, and the military to name but a few.

Many of these collections require special care owing to the frailty and instability of the material used and steps are being taken to ensure their long-term preservation including the transferral of documents to different media formats and the use of new technology.

Photographic library

The photographic library consists of approximately 30 000 negatives, 80 000 prints and 4 000 transparencies. The subjects covered include the history of colonialism; the history of apartheid; images of apartheid; liberation movements;

forced removals and resettlement; repression; political prisoners, trials, labour and trade unions; women; culture, education; the armed struggle, and personalities.

The photographic library is geared to network with community groups and social documentary photographers in the hope of starting cooperative projects and enriching the core collection.

Photographic material is available for editorial reproduction at commercial rates with some reductions for community and non-commercial publications.

Film-video libraries

The film-video library comprises 10 000 documentary recordings, several hundred hours of news footage, stock footage from more than 200 film and video production projects and a comprehensive catalogue and shot list to facilitate access. It also includes recording, viewing and dubbing equipment appropriate to all the video formats. Most of these films and videos were banned in SA before 1990.

Sound and oral history collection

The sound and oral history section comprises 28 collections with more than 2 000 recordings on cassette and tape. The oral history collections record interviews with exiles and former political prisoners whilst other collections record speeches and interviews with activists from across the political and social spectrum and document in sound format, seminal events and conferences.

The audiovisual conservation project has been designed to provide the best care for the sound and oral history collections whilst RIM is continually seeking ways of expanding its research and oral collections before ex-prisoners and the older people of the struggle are no longer around.

Art works collection

The art works collections represent a range that includes not only works of high quality from SA but works by internationally recognised artists as well. Particular collections are the Mozambican collection of Albie Sachs; the works of Tyrone Appolis; Sandra Kriel; Mphati Gocini; Hilda Bernstein, and Selma Waldman and the Abe Berry cartoon collection. The Jean and Himie Bernadt collection is a collection of works by leading SA artists.



The Art against Apartheid collection is perhaps SA's most valuable international art collection, the result of a France-based association called Artists of the World against Apartheid's global appeal to artists to contribute to a collection of anti-apartheid works. The Art against Apartheid collection formerly displayed in Paris and then in Parliament is now in the Mayibuye Centre, carefully stored pending a decision on its further public display in SA.

Posters collection

The posters collection with more than 2 000 posters offers a fascinating visual history of grassroots campaigning and cultural events at home and abroad produced on a number of different materials. One of the biggest components is the originals from the Community Arts Project (CAP) in Salt River, Cape Town, a bustling art centre for many community organisations. CAP helped train activists and screen-printed posters giving notice of mass marches, rallies, women's groupings and other political meetings throughout the 1980s. There are also over 50 banners and murals.

Exhibitions collection

The exhibitions collection contains more than 30 varied exhibitions put together over the past three decades with titles such as *Children under Apartheid*, *Women under Apartheid* (both sponsored by the UN Centre against Apartheid), *Beyond the barricades* and its sequel *Beyond the handshake: The struggle against apartheid*, *Builders of the nation* depicting the history of labour in SA, and *You have struck a rock*, a history of the struggle of women in SA.

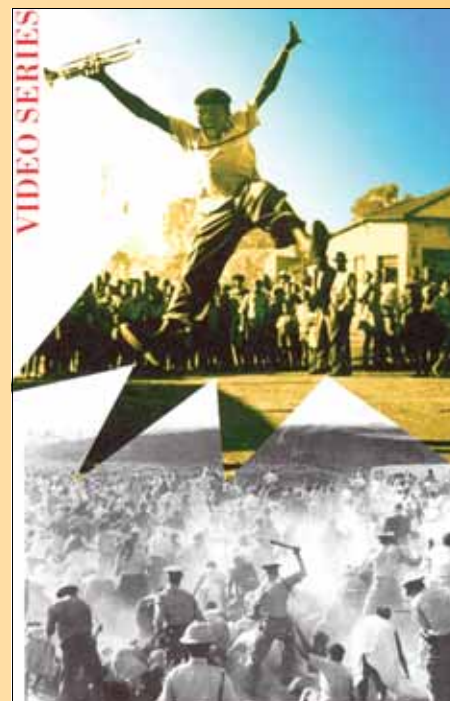
These and other printed portable exhibitions are convenient for use in programmes for schools and community events.

RIM's Archival collections are available to researchers and the general public Mondays to Fridays 09:00-16:00 by appointment only, after completing an application form. Materials can only be consulted in the Archives Reading Room under the supervision of staff. Copies where they exist will be used in lieu of the original.

Catalogues, or indexes or detailed computer databases are available for the different types of material.

Contact details:
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Note: The cooperation of Leatlhaba Phayane, collections coordinator is gratefully acknowledged.



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Clockwise from top right:

The South African Native National Congress delegation to England, June 1914 - part of one of the Photograph Collections

One of the video series showing Hugh Masekela (top - photographed by Eli Weinberg) and below a police attack on women in Cato Manor, Natal, in 1959

Millenium commemoration dancers on Robben Island, January 2000, from the Posters Collections

*Art against Apartheid Collection: A section of a work by Mozambican artist Valente Ngwenya Malangatana entitled **Apartheid***

*From the Art Works Collection: Tyrone Appolis at work on his mural entitled **Healing Waters** at UWC's B Block*

